

“ Europe’s Largest Mosque Opens in Chechnya ”

“ MWL launches interfaith summit in Sri Lanka ”

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DR. AL-ISSA OPENS MWL PAVILION DURING RIMINI MEETING



Letter From the Editor

Interfaith Harmony Summit

The relationship between Muslims and other Buddhist or Christian communities in Sri Lanka is always based on mutual respect. Muslims have been receiving the State's attention since earliest arrivals with commercial journeys a thousand years ago, and then became a bridge of communication between ethnic Hindu Tamils and Buddhist Sinhalese groups.

This Sri Lankan model of the Muslims' coexistence with others is unique in history. This was expressed by Sri Lanka President, Maithripala Sirisena, in his speech delivered at the opening of the Interfaith Harmony Summit, organized by the Muslim World League, as he said, "Throughout eras, Sri Lanka has been enjoying peace and harmony among citizens of different faiths. Terrorist bombings are cowardly acts and vicious and brought serious harm to the Sri Lankan nation. The terrorist organization that perpetrated that crime does not believe in dialogue and does not represent Islam. Muslims suffered after the bombings because the aggressors attribute themselves to Muslims. Peace is the choice of the wise and is an easy choice. I believe that this summit will spread the message of peace, harmony and coexistence among the people of Sri Lanka".

The evil bombings that took place in the last week of April are in fact deviation from the values of peace, coexistence and love established by Islam and expressed by the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, in his speech at the summit. He said, "The summit reflects the determination of the followers of religions to clarify the truth of religions advocating love, peace and har-

mony. No religion has ever been evil to humanity. In Islam, Allah Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an about the Messenger of Islam Muhammad, peace be upon him, 'And we have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds.' Yet, the wicked and the intellectually hijacked did not accept it, so they made religion a bridge to pass their goals. It is our duty as religious leaders, references and figures to stand in the face of this false claim to explain the truth to the world with a living witness".

The Interfaith Harmony Summit has achieved concrete results in the return to normality. The pioneering step and positive initiative of the Muslim World League has played a role in undermining the language of hatred among the people, and restoring confidence and serenity.

One of the positive outcomes of the summit is the Sri Lankan President's appreciation for MWL's efforts to hold the summit and donate USD 5 million to the Relief Fund of Injured Victims of Terrorist Acts. The Sri Lankan President decorated Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa with the highest Sri Lankan order, for his role in promoting interfaith peace, and in his capacity as a permanent ambassador for peace.

Terrorism, perpetrated by individuals fully attributed to Muslims and raising religious slogans, distorts the image of Islam and Muslims. Those are the most affected by terrorism, because it stirs others against them and their religion. It is a threat to the civilized values of Muslims. Thus, Muslims regard terrorism, as an intruder in Islam and it is their duty to warn against it and against the danger of misconceptions leading to it.



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MWL Annual Hajj Conference
on Islamic Civilization





Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa opens MWL pavilion during Rimini meeting



Rimini - MWL

Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa inaugurated the pavilion of the Muslim World League (MWL) in the exhibition accompanying the Rimini Forum for Friendship among People in Italy. This event makes Muslim World League the first Islamic organization to participate in this international fair that was attended by more than one million visitors.



Al-Issa gives his lecture at the Rimini International Forum

The MWL pavilion showcased photos and footages about the projects carried out by the MWL and the International Organization for Relief Welfare and Development. The Muslim World League displayed also a raft of documentaries about persons whose sufferings from poverty, disease and illiteracy were ended, thanks to the MWL arduous efforts.

The pavilion highlighted the MWL keenness to apply the human values of Islam by helping the needy regardless of their religions, ethnicities, cultures or races. It showcased a model for the MWL's emergency room for monitoring disasters around the world and ensuring a swift response based on the level of risk.

The pavilion was visited by a large num-

ber of diplomatic and academic delegations and political leaders led by the Speakers of the European Parliament and the Italian Parliament together with a huge number of European, especially Italian, youth. The attendees were briefed on the MWL vision, mission and goals and a raft of its initiatives and programs around the world.

The MWL Secretary General Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa delivered a lecture at the forum as the first Muslim figure taking part in this international forum. He underscored the danger of the political Islam and attempts of some organizations to achieve their political goals by exploiting the Islamic religion.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa addressed the ways of combating terrorism and violence, and the importance of drying up the sources of

extremism by using strong and clear-cut arguments that would refute their thought and ideas that are based on the manipulation of interpretations of religious texts. He stressed that concepts of political Islam distorted the image of the religion and offended it, pointing out that Islam organizes a Muslim's life in this world and in the hereafter.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa added, "The history of the followers of religions in general was not free from this imbalance and the human history is a proof that the religious extremism, violence and terrorism were not confined to one category. This indicated by the bloody events of Christchurch, Colombo, Pennsylvania and California.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa stressed the need to pay attention to the discussions in the virtual world because the electronic platforms have become one of the sources further used by the militants to recruit young people with the purpose of committing crimes in the name of Islam that sent the Prophet as nothing but mercy to people of the whole world.

Following the lecture, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa answered many questions, indicating that all nations have no choice except un-



derstanding the inevitability of difference and diversity that requires building bridges of unity, love, cooperation and coexistence, not walls of enmity, hatred and racism. A large number of academicians, politicians, researchers and huge number of European young people attended the meeting.



Aside from attending the lecture

Europe's Largest Mosque Opens in Chechnya and Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa Delivers First Friday Sermon

Grozny - MWL

The President of the Republic of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov received the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa at the Presidential Palace in Grozny. The Chechnya's President appreciated the visit of the Secretary General to take part in the opening of the largest mosque in Europe. The meeting tackled a number of topics on Islamic affairs.





Dr. Al-Issa gives Friday sermon

At the request of Mr. President and in the presence of representatives of kings and heads of Islamic countries and a large gathering of senior scholars and a number of ministers, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa delivered the first Friday sermon in the mosque right after the official opening ceremony.

The sermon showed the virtue of the construction of mosques and that they serve as amongst the great edifices of Islam and their message throughout the Islamic



Islamic leadership in Jumaa Prayer



Chechen President receives world Islamic leadership

history adopted the supreme values of Islam, where figures graduated from and lit the world with the guidance of the tolerant Shari'ah.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa pointed out that extremist approaches tried, in recent times, to use the message of the mosques to serve their intellectual delinquency, but the Islamic awareness has been in the face of this delinquency, depending on the texts of the Shari'ah and their correct interpretation and knowledge of their purposes.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa also emphasized that mosques are awareness platforms that guide the nation from their pulpits. He also stressed the importance of a myriad of issues in the life of the nation, especially issues related to some of its youth who need well-established scholars to

take their hands and deal with their perplexity.

In the sermon, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa also praised the presence of His Excellency the Chechen President in the Conference of the Makkah Document under the auspices of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz, may Allah protect him, last Ramadan, which was unanimously endorsed by more than 1200 muftis and scholars in Makkah.

His Eminence Grand Mufti of the Republic of Chechnya, Sheikh Salah Mezhev, also asked Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa to deliver the closing speech of the opening ceremony after everyone performed the Friday prayer. During his speech, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa praised the good efforts to



Handing over the Gifts to the Chechen President

build the houses of Allah, and expressed gratitude to the Chechen President for the warm welcome and hospitality the MWL's delegation received.

Representatives of kings and heads of Islamic countries and a large gathering of senior scholars and a number of ministers attended the opening ceremony and the first Friday sermon delivered in this mosque, which accommodates thousands of worshippers.



Great presence of Muslim scholars and students during opening ceremony of the mosque

President of Chechnya Receives MWL Secretary General



Grozny - MWL

President of the Republic of Chechnya Ramadan Kadyrov received the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Essa at the Presidential Palace in Grozny, where he appreciated the visit aimed at participating in the opening of the largest mosque in Europe.

The meeting witnessed a number of topics related to Islamic affairs.

At the request of “Kadyrov” and in the presence of representatives of kings and heads of Islamic countries and a large gathering of senior scholars and a number of ministers, “Al-Essa” delivered the first Friday sermon in the mosque imme-



diately after the official opening ceremony.

The sermon addressed the virtue of building mosques, and that it is among the major edifices of Islam, and that its message throughout Islamic history adopted the supreme Islamic values that brightened the world under the guidance of tolerant Shari'ah.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Essa said that there are extremist approaches that attempted in recent times to use the message of the mosque to serve its intellectual delinquency. However, Islamic awareness has faced this deviation and still depends on the texts of the Shari'ah and its correct interpretation and knowledge of its purposes.

He said: Mosques are platforms for awareness to guide the nation and the vision of the platforms, and stressed the importance of a number of issues in the life of the nation, especially some of its youth,

where it requires well-established scholars to guide them and address their confusion.

In the sermon, he praised the presence of the Chechen President of the Conference of the Makkah document under the auspices of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz last Ramadan, which was endorsed by more than 1200 muftis gathered in Makkah.

Mufti of the Republic of Chechnya, Sheikh Saleh Majiev, asked Sheikh Dr. Al-Essa to deliver the closing speech for the ceremony after everyone performed Friday prayers, in which he praised the efforts of goodness to build the houses of God.

Attended the opening ceremony and the first Friday sermon held in this mosque, which accommodates thousands of worshippers representatives of kings and heads of Islamic countries, a large gathering of senior scholars, and a number of ministers.



MWL launches interfaith summit in Sri Lankan capital

Colombo-MWL

The Muslim World League (MWL) launched in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo the summit entitled: “Harmony of Religions” in the presence of President of Sri Lanka Maithripala Sirisena and the participation of the Pope of Vatican, a set of religious leaders from religions of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism together with more than 2000 high-ranking figures of religious scholars, politicians, intellectuals and media figures.



The Secretary-General extends condolences to the Archbishop of Colombo

The opening ceremony of the summit began with the Sri Lanka's national anthem, a documentary about the Republic of Sri Lanka and the arduous efforts of MWL around the world to promote harmony, stability and peace together with providing humanitarian work to all through its International Organization for Relief, Welfare and Development (IORWD). The opening ceremony also included an operetta and different cultural



The presence of a large number of followers of different religions



Sri Lankan Parliament Speaker appreciates Al-Issa visit

shows that reflected the importance of harmony and co-existence among followers of religions, cultures and ethnicities.

Sri Lanka's President delivered a speech and extended gratitude to the Muslim World League for convening this conference together with a five-million USD donation in favor of supporting the families of the victims and the injured of the terrorist operations. He added: "Christians were not only affected by terrorist operations. It is important for us to halt the language of hatred and racism among the people. Throughout its history, there have been safety, prosperity and peace in Sri Lanka among followers belonging to different religions. These terrorist op-

erations are criminal and cowardly acts and the terrorist organization that carried out this crime does not believe in dialogue or represent Islam. Muslims suffered after these bombings because perpetrators attributed themselves to Islam. Peace is the option of the wise people. I believe that this summit will spread the message of peace, harmony and co-existence among people in the Republic of Sri Lanka."

Sri Lanka's President wrapped up his speech saying: "We are pleased to award the highest order in Sri Lanka to the Secretary General of the Muslim World League for his strenuous efforts in promoting peace among followers of the religions. We would like to be a permanent ambassador of peace."



Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa addressed the summit saying: “I am so pleased to be here in this historical summit that is held after this painful tragedy that hit the Republic of Sri Lanka this year. In this year also, New Zealand’s Christchurch was rocked by a horrific terrorist attack on Muslim mosques and the US State of California’s Jewish synagogue was also hit by a brutal terrorist attack together with a Jewish synagogue in Pennsylvania, USA.”

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said that it is an important summit on “Peace of Religions”. It stresses the determination of followers of religions to clarify the truth of religions calling for love,

peace and harmony. Religion has never been a threat to humanity. Allah the Almighty says in His Holy Quran: “And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.” But the evil and intellectually-hijacked individuals reject this truth and used the religion as a bridge to pass their heinous goals. We as leaders and religious figures should confront this false claim to clarify the truth to the world by a living and concrete demonstration.

Many safe and peaceful places, including places of worship, have been subjected to acts of terror that have rocked the world. So, all leaders of different religions should disavow all criminal acts that not only affected Muslims, but the whole world as well.



Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa also said: “All participants in the summit should determine to effectively work to face powers of the terrorist evil. We all hope that Colombo Communiqué includes all recommendations of the participants in this important summit.”

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa stressed: “Our world will remain safe and peaceful despite the practices of the forces of evil and terrorism. These evil forces will remain isolated and chased despite their hellish plans due to our strong will.” This summit, he added, confirms the strength of the good. “We do not deny that there

was tolerance on allowing materials that promote violent extremism and terrorism, most notably the discourse of hatred, racism and condescending arrogance towards those of other faiths and ethnic ideologies.”

Solving the issue of terrorism is represented in criminalizing the discourse of hatred and racism together with facing the phenomenon of having contempt for followers of the other religions and cultures. Youth should be brought up on the right principles and teachings of Islam. They should be taught how to accept others and live in peace with



all followers of the religions.

Everyone needs the intellectual awareness that leads to a wider national awareness, a matter which results in promoting harmony and stability. All individuals should respect the constitutions, laws and culture of the countries they live in. We, on the land of Sri Lanka, realize that it is the country with the Buddhist majority and all people must understand this fact and deal with it through the exchange of love, respect, peace and harmony.





Srilankan Ulama Council with the SG of the MWL

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa concluded his speech with the initiative to establish a charitable fund for the families of victims of terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka and the entire world. He announced that the MWL's International Organization for Relief, Welfare and Development would donate USD 5 million in favor of the fund regardless the source of attacks, location, victims and their injured

The participants stressed their full support for the recommendations of the summit and all sides should work together to combat the international terrorism. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa met with the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and the Speaker of the Parliament to-

gether with a raft of senior Islamic, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu leaders who all stressed that the timing of the visit of the Secretary General of the Muslim World League was very important.

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League paid a visit to the Sri Lankan Cardinal, the preacher of the church which was blown up in Colombo. He expressed condolences to the families of the victims and the injured. The Cardinal stressed that perpetrators do not belong to Islam and that Muslims in Sri Lanka are "friends of ours and we exchange appreciation, love and continued cooperation with them."



MWL Annual Hajj Conference on Islamic Civilization

Makkah - Mina

The Annual Hajj Conference of the Muslim World League recommended building bridges of communication and civilizational dialogue that respect the human existence, history, and culture without discrimination. The conference stressed that the Islamic civilization is comprehensive and integrated, combining material masterpieces, faith intents, and moral practices.



The Muslim World League holds the annual pilgrimage conference in Mina

The conferees urged Muslims to enrich the human civilization with unique civilizational contributions which will help human beings solve their moral, social and environmental crises and to get back on the right track that enables it to add positive contributions to human civilization and revive sublime Islamic values. Disorder and chaos have produced nothing but cruelty and extremism as a result of deviant ideas and thoughts held by some Muslims. Such ideas and thoughts do not reflect the Islamic nation's authentic heritage and its glorious civilizational history, which made it lead the human civilization for centuries.

The conferees stressed the importance of developing an Islamic discourse that is characterized by moderation and balance in its judgments, seeks honesty and truth in its material, takes into account the aesthetic in its spirit and style, shuns defamation and rage in its dealings and keeps elevating everyone's awareness and behavior in its objectives and

message.

Participants recommended the use of social media to demonstrate the Islamic civilization's endeavors towards forging sincere relations with others based on mutual recognition and respect as part of the civilizational integration. Moreover, recommendations were made to use modern technology to maximize the benefits of Islamic civilizational heritage and apply these benefits in a way that serves modern humankind and prepares them for living in the universe in line with the faith approach, which strikes balance between soul and materialism.

Participants also called on religious and cultural institutions and centers to promote the achievements of the Islamic civilization, its foundations and its positive impact on the humankind, and to introduce educational programs about the creative accomplishments of the Islamic civilization and how it interacted with other human civilizations so as to create today's humankind civilization.



MWL Guests during annual Conference in Mina

The conference called on universities and scientific and educational institutions to coordinate and cooperate with one another to issue a scientific encyclopedia on the Islamic civilization that will serve as a collective memory of the achievements of the Islamic civilization. Participants praised the MWL's efforts in preserving the meanings of the Islamic civilization and promoting its material and moral features all around the world.

Participants expressed their thanks to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and his Crown Prince for their efforts exerted in serving the Islamic nation, taking great care of the Two Holy Mosques and the holy sites, and launching successful and integrated initiatives to serve the pilgrims during the performance of Hajj and create an atmosphere of security, faith, peacefulness.

Sheikh Abdulaziz Al Asheikh, Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chairman of the Senior Council of Ulama

and Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Muslim World League inaugurated the conference. He stressed the emergence of the Islamic civilization on foundations that qualified it to lead the world and humankind towards happiness, achieve stability, ensure the rights of everyone and preserve the noble values based on the tolerant teachings of Islam.

His Eminence pointed out that Islamic civilization is characterized by pursuing an approach of moderation with no excess or negligence and with no injustice or prejudice, a balanced civilization that could bring together spiritual and material aspects of humankind. He also praised MWL's efforts in serving the Muslims and achieving their aspirations through the activities and initiatives it offers on various occasions.

His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League, delivered his opening speech, welcoming the confer-



Attendees are in the Mina Conference

ence's guests and participants. His Excellency expressed the importance of highlighting the civilizational meanings in Islam and applying these meanings to judgments, behavior, and achievements, and demonstrating how these meanings were applied in the Islamic civilization through its glorious history, contemporary reality and its desired future.

His Excellency made clear that originality and contemporariness are the main features of the Islamic civilization that make it stand out in terms of reforms, creativity and excellence. He said that a true Muslim is an ambassador of Islam and a model of its values and principles. He added, "Conservatism has earned the Islamic civilization its moral-

ity and values."

Egypt's Minister of Awqaf Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar Jomah delivered a speech in which he emphasized the deep-rooted Islamic civilization, highlighting its models throughout history. Speaking in details about knowledge and sciences as the pillars of every civilization, His Excellency said, "The concept of science expands to include every science that benefits people in their religious or worldly matters, and not private or limited to legitimate sciences alone."

His Excellency said Allah Almighty's words "So ask the people of the message if you do not know" extend beyond legitimate sciences, as Allah Almighty did not say ask the people of Islamic jurisprudence alone



One of the Sessions is going on during Annual Conference in Mina

or the people of hadith alone or the people of interpretation alone. This extends to the people of medicine in medicine-related affairs and the people of engineering in engineering-related affairs, and so in all other sciences. Knowledge and industries that are beneficial for humanity, and that the giving of the Qur'an does not run out until the Day of Judgment, but it gives every generation as much as they give to the religion of Allah Almighty and their devotion to it.

His Excellency stressed that Islam elevated and honored the humankind, as Allah Almighty says, "And we have certainly honored the children of Adam". Islam also honored the woman and preserved her dignity, as our Prophet, peace and blessings be upon

him, said: "If anyone has a female child, and does not bury her alive, or insult her, or favor his son over her, Allah will enter him into Paradise."

His Excellency pointed out that sincere work, mastering and showing sincere intention in it for the sake of Allah Almighty will make one enter the Paradise, but not their name, who they are, degree or career. That preference among the creation has one measure: "Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you" and "The most beloved people to Allah are those who are most beneficial to people." Our true religion ordered us to treat all people the best in words and deeds, as Allah Almighty says: "And speak kindly to people ". Thus, Mus-



Speakers from all over the world attended the conference

lims are required to work on highlighting the civilizational aspect of Islam as a tolerant religion and regaining control over the religious discourse from hijackers and those who use religion for personal interests. They should work very hard to replace hatred and fighting with peace and dialogue.

His Excellency pointed out saying: “We must transform with all these concepts from an elite culture to a comprehensive popular and societal culture, and work to bring this out to the entire world in its different languages and on a large scale online and through research. This is also what the international conferences aim to highlight, consolidate and transform into a culture that extends beyond the elites to the common people in every part of the world.”

His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Hidayat Nur Wahid, Member of MWL Supreme Council and Vice-Chairman of the Shoura Council of Indonesia, delivered a speech in which he explained the concepts of the Islamic civilization and its pillars. He said: “Hajj embodies the lofty civilizational values held by the obligations of Islam.”

Then, His Excellency Dr. Abdullatif Bouazizi, Director of the Higher Institute of Islamic Civilization at Zaytouna University in Tunisia, delivered a speech in which he thanked Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz and his Crown Prince as well as the MWL Secretary General, and its entire staff members for their blessed efforts in serving the pilgrims.

His Eminence added, “We, researchers,



Men and women are during the sessions in the conference

responded to the call of the Muslim World League to take part in the Annual Hajj Conference under the theme “The Civilizational Meanings in Islam” to highlight the civilizational meanings in Islam and the most important pillars of civilization in the Prophet’s biography. It is also to highlight the civilizational values in the ritual of Hajj through the Prophetic teachings, along with demonstrating the virtue of this civilization whose benefits reached to the entire world and which spread security and peace throughout it as well as goodness and charity. It is the Islamic civilization whose creations will be shown by researchers in every field, and which spreads the values of coexistence and tolerance everywhere.”

Dr. Abdullatif Bouazizi explained: “The

MWL’s selection of the theme of “The Civilizational Meanings in Islam” is not a matter of lamenting a glorious past or entertaining the soul with time-honored glory that is lost and was experienced by our ancestors. As you can see, the conference tackles the points of strength in the history of our Islamic civilization and its aspect of excellence and creativity. This aims to provide motivation and find the will to understand the causes and results of this strength, and invest it today in our reality.”

His Excellence emphasized that this year’s Hajj conference prepares for new civilizational centers, which by the grace of Allah and then the World Muslim League, will build glory and refuse humiliation, bring justice and end injustice.



Elderly Rights in Islam and International Law

Tasnuva Jahan

Elderly rights in Islamic law is covered under verses of Holy Qur'an and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Undoubtedly, elderly issue is very timely in all perspectives. It is clear that the fastest growing older population silently becomes a major challenge for the world for many reasons. The elderly population is simply different from rest of the population by their age as aging comes with several challenges including biological, emotional, spiritual, and social changes. Major international human rights instruments do not contain any explicit provisions to older persons except few scattered references. The older people can be seen as a vulnerable part of the population due to insufficient social security instrument, weakening of traditional family ties, and so on. This article aims to demonstrate the elderly issues in the Islamic perspective and highlight the international human rights for older persons.

Introduction:

Elderly rights are one of the crucial rights in the society, in general. There is a debate that the rights of the elderly people are somewhat ignored. As a population, they raise a number of issues. The elderly matter is typically debated through the 'human rights: medical, welfare, political, economic' and so on (Richard A Posner, 1997). They are often considered to be fragile, dependent, also a burden to society. At present, 125 million people are over 80 years old in the world. By 2050, the people aged 60 or older will have risen to 2 billion (WHO, 2018). The pace of population ageing is also increasing dramatically throughout the world. Concurrently, it is challenging as there are no explicit references to elderly within the international law. Though several countries are increasingly taken into account the issue but often in a random way (Frédéric Mégret, 2010). All members of humanity are entitled to same theoretical rights but the elderly issue is particularly dependent on specific fundamental features of one's human condition. Old age is a very distinctive characteristic of the human experience. And failure to identify particular elderly needs in terms of human rights is a problematic construction of old age (John Williams, 2003). Islam provided a code of human rights more than fourteen centuries ago. In Islam rights of older persons have been conferred by the Creator. No one has the authority to make change or amend these rights, which are inherent to human beings. Even a Muslim government is responsible to implement these rights within the framework. However, maintaining a high quality of life for elderly member has become an essential issue. Internationally,

these issues need to be addressed with special care and protection otherwise they can lead to discrimination and affect the opportunities of older people.

Elderly rights in Islam:

Islam pays particular attention to this subject matter. To explore the Islamic perspective on elderly people and rights of the senior citizens this paper discusses in light of the Quranic texts, Hadith, and the views of Muslim jurists. Islamic Law sets out a number of spiritual, ethical and legal measures and principles such as dignity, kindness, respect, support, and solidarity in regard to the elderly rights or human rights. The basic concept of Islamic human rights is based upon equality and admiration for humankind. Islam respects a human for being a human not for race, gender, color, age or any other reason.

In fact, the Holy Qur'an is full of declarations showing that belief in this or that world is one's own concern. Quranic texts give a perfect idea of the intensity of the choice of accepting one way or another. According to Surat Al-Isra, Verse: 7, 'If you do good, you do good for yourselves. And if you do evil, you do it to yourselves.' Any types of good deeds and actions are beneficial not only to the person but also to society. Islamic philosophy is that everyone has obligation to understand the rights of others in every potential way. Our society will become an ideal society in regard to the rule of law and human rights if people are involved in fulfillment of their rights with this religious consciousness. Islamic approach shows worth to old age in respect to the societal contributions of the elderly in general. Also, older people are not seen as social detachment



or disregard of responsibility. Intellectual contributions recognized by early Muslim jurists' during their old age undoubtedly testify to this view. The contents of Surat Luqman indicates the knowledge and wisdom of the old people. Luqman's advice to his son shields a wide range of behavioral aspects of a one's life. The notion of good deeds lay out in several Hadiths in relation to old age. Islam's encouraging view of old age as the Creator's blessing in life for increased goodness, virtue besides reform (Al-Tirmidhi, 1998, 4: 143). The Muslim religion considers a longer life as something that brings with it prospects, not only for older persons and their families, but also for communities as a whole.

Similarly, kind-heartedness towards

the elderly established from Muslim's spiritual and traditional systems and attributes into daily life. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'He is not of us who does not have mercy on young children, nor honor the elderly' (Al-Tirmidhi, 1998, 3: 386). Another tradition describes 'Part of respect for Creator is to show respect to an old Muslim' (Ibn Al-Qattan, 1997, 4: 371). Muslims are also instructed to take care of the old owing to their weakness. According to the Prophet (peace be upon him), 'Part of worshiping Allah is honoring the grey-haired Muslim' (Abu Dawood, Hadith 4843). Thus, taking care of the elderly is reflected in Islam and notably through the analysis of accountabilities held by the Muslim community to them. Islamic

perspective on old age is basically considered by religious principles and spiritual practice. The elderly has the inherent right to life and dignity protected by Quranic law. Surat Ar-Rum, Verse 54, states that, 'it is Allah Who created you in a state of weakness; then after weakness gave you strength, then after strength made you weak and old. He creates what He pleases. He is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.' The verse clarifies that Allah may grant a long life and sound health to whomsoever He pleases.

Muslim religion permits the individual to do justice with everyone and notice all the phenomena that he/she may contain. It encourages the individual to utilize the world around him for the well-being of humanity. Second Muslim Caliph Umar bin Al-Khattab set a good example of justice and legal precedent towards the non-Muslim elderly. In this case, an aged Jewish poor person who had resorted to begging to fulfill his necessities and pay off the governmental taxes dues. Upon knowing the fact, Umar provided him with financial support and exempted him from the payment of taxes. Moreover, he issued a different public policy not to overstrain the poor or frail citizens. This policy was based on the principle of justice (Abu Yusuf, 1968). It also established a right to the elderly without any kind of distinction to age, race or religion.

Islamic traditions reflect on respect to the elderly and parents. According to Surat Al-Isra, Verses 23-24, "Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. If one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them a word of disrespect or scold them, but say a generous



word to them. And act humbly to them in mercy and say, (My Lord, have mercy on them since they cared for me when I was small.)" It is evident that Islam has created a shield of safeguard for parents against any types of abuses. It has created moral and ethical significance to meet the different needs of elderly parents. Family bonding is an obligation in the Islamic faith. Paying respect to parents or the elderly falls within the category of Islamic virtues. Islam poses so much significance on it that it is linked with glorifying the Almighty Allah.

It is clear that the societal and religious



life of any community encourages its members to take care of the older people. It may be in terms of respect shown to the older people or traditional approaches or through appreciation of their previous efforts as well as sacrifices. Many of the Islamic principles and values on elderly rights and care are revealed in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. But conceptual framework is essential for a substantive implications of the socio-economic rights of elderly in Islam.

International approach:

According to Article (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (UDHR) 'Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind,

such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.' The UDHR is not a legally binding instrument but it has the basis and some moral besides political significance for subsequent human rights documents. Article (2) of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (ICESCR) ensures non-discrimination as regards the enjoyment of all rights contained within for all people 'without distinction as to race, sex, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.' According to Article (9) of the ICESCR states, 'everyone has the right to social security, including social

insurance.’ None of the main human rights instruments clearly prohibits discrimination on the basis of old age.

However, The Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging, 1982 was adopted by the World Assembly on Ageing. It is the first and visible international instrument on ageing. It promotes regional and international cooperation. It includes outlining principles and recommendations on areas such as health, family, social welfare, income security and employment. General references are made to human rights through the applicability of the principles of the UDHR to older people. The UN Principles for Older Persons were adopted by United Nations General Assembly resolution A46/91 of 1991. These Principles are preceded by a confirmation of faith in fundamental as well as equal human rights in the context of the elderly. Articles 1-5 deal with the right of access to food, water, shelter and clothing, health care, social support and self-help through income or income opportunities to other dealings and to participate, to leave and access to any appropriate educational programs and live in safe places with the elder’s conditions. According to article (6), older persons would be able to reside at home whenever they want. Nevertheless, resolution A46/91 of 1991 is not binding. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (MIPAA) was adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing, with a political declaration. It focuses on three priority themes: elderly development, health and well-being, and ensuring supportive environments. But MIPAA is not a human rights treaty. States have no legal obligation to implement its recommendations. Even there is no independent moni-

toring tool. (Alexandre and Alan, 2004)

In some societies, the older people may be looked at as the sources of certain wisdom and guardians of social continuity. On the other side of the coin, they may be seen as a burden to society (Debra and Jeralynn, 2006). These views can shape the elderly rights debate. Nevertheless, international human rights law has never been comprehensively applied to the elderly. As a result, there is a lack of legal certainty to protect the equal rights of older people.

Conclusion:

Islamic concept of old age and elderly right is comprehensive and deeply rooted in the divinely texts. It contains a balance between rights and duties to every human being. Everyone has to make possible ways to realize those rights and duties. Unfortunately, it has been neglected and misinterpreted by some Muslims as well as by the opponents of Islam. The lack of understanding about the concept of Islamic human rights has escalated to countless confusions in the contemporary world. Elderly right is required to bring about a well understanding of Islamic values within a modern context. Existing international human rights instrument fails to clarify the rights and issues that currently deprive the elderly of their dignity. Consequently, it is the outcome of current protection gap. The most effective way to fill out this protection gap is to create the comprehensive human rights framework on older people’s rights within the legally binding standards. It is also crucial to assessing the progress in national law, especially on how the implementation of the international human rights law could be strengthened.



Abubakr Al-Siddeeq: A Landmark Figure

By Ahmed K. Izzeddin

If a single person is to be named as the friendliest companion of the Prophet, may peace be upon him, little controversy would arise around this most plausible candidate: Abubakr Al-Siddeeq (573 AD – 634 AD). This, among Sunni Muslims, is absolutely true. Even some Shiites do. Muhammad bin Ali bin Abu-Talib, also known as Muhammad bin Al Hanefiyyah is reported to have said: “I asked my father (i.e. Ali bin Abi-Talib): After the Prophet peace be upon him, who among all people is the best? He said, Abubakr”. Abubakr’s full name is Abdullah (Abubakr, Al-Siddeeq) ibn Othman (Abu Qahafah) ibn Aamir ibn Amr of Teem and Quraysh. Between the brackets are accompanying nicknames.

Abubakr was the first man to embrace Islam, and the second person after Khadeeja bint Khuwailid, the Prophet's first wife. He was the first to call for Islam and the first to be harmed because of his Islamic faith after the Prophet Muhammad himself. He was most famed for his company of the Prophet during his perilous migration from Makkah to Madinah, following persecution by the Quraish tribe, to which they both belong, due to their then new religion.

Al-Siddiq (meaning the absolute believer) has a distinguished place in the history of Islam. His early belief and trust in the call initiated by the Prophet of Islam in Makkah, amongst utter denial by the most powerful of the influential Quraish tribe, invited much persecution on him, from his own people. He bravely endured the hardship, moved and bolstered by his profound love and respect towards the then new Prophet, for whom he provided a real companion and friend in need.

When the prophet received the divine direction to migrate from Makkah to Madinah, he selected Abubakr Al-Siddiq for his companion in that secret and vigilant journey, which marked a significant shift in the history of Islam. Unlike the earlier migration to Abyssinia, the one to Madeenah included the Prophet himself, and turned the destination into the first seat of the Muslim state.

The Prophet's wife and Abubakr's daughter, Aesha bint Abubakr, reported that her father never consumed any wine in his life, including before the inception of Islam. Nor did he bowed or prostrated to an idol. When the Prophet proposed Islam to Abubakr, he never vacillated, as

was reported by the Prophet himself. He then started to invite others to the religion of Islam, and succeeded in convincing several who later became companions of the Prophet, including Al Zubair ibn Al Awam, Othman ibn Affan, Talha ibn Obeidullah, Saad ibn Abi Waqqas and Abdurrahman ibn Awf, who formed the first group of Muslims guided by Abubakr.

When the severity of persecution heightened upon the then few Muslims in Makkah, the Prophet issued his permission for them to start migration to Madinah. Abubakr approached the Prophet for a special permission to migrate, but the Prophet told him: "Do not hurry. You may be awarded a companion". This made Abubakr eager for the company of the Prophet, and that turned to be true.

The Significance of Abubakr

The reader may justifiably ask: why, among all leading Muslims and companions of the Prophet, may peace be upon him, Abubakr is chosen for this article? Well, for space constraint only a few reasons may be proffered here.

Abubakr was the first free man to embrace Islam, thereby affording crucial support to the cause at an early stage, in the face of the most powerful tribe in the region at the time. He was the closest to the Prophet, leading to their joint migration from Makkah to Madeenah, in a tellingly hazardous adventure, given that the Qurashites would not easily allow Muhammad's call - such a potential challenge to their deities - escape to a haven where it could burgeon and threaten their divinities, which was exactly what history went on to record as a living fact,



with tremendous impact well beyond the boundaries of the Arabian peninsula.

Abubakr was also the Prophet's father-in-law, following Muhammad's marriage to Aesha, Abubakr's daughter, who in turn became the Prophet's most beloved among his wives, and an important source of religious knowledge for the Muslims of her generation, due to her brightness and closeness to the cradle of divine revelation.

Towards the last days of the Prophet's life, when he was feeling sick, he directed his Muslim companions to tell Abubakr to lead the prayers on his behalf. This was understood by them and by many scholars and historians to indicate the prophet's choice for a successor. Even if that was not the literal intention of the Prophet, suffice it that such a prestigious role of a

prayer leader, or imamate, is assigned by him to Abubakr. It is no wonder, then, that Abubakr was selected by the Muslims for the greater leadership succession on the very day when the Prophet passed away, on Monday, the 12th of Rabea I, 11 A.H. (the eleventh year of the Hijirite calendar) [1].

The Leader of the First Non-Divinely-Governed Muslim State

Abubakr was described by his own daughter, Aesha, as being introverted. This was immediately following the orders of the Prophet to his companions to that Abubakr should lead the prayers during the Prophet's terminal illness. She thought her father was too quietly reserved that if he led the prayers he would not recite the Quran in an audible voice. For that role

she explicitly preferred the most forthright Omar ibn Al Khattab. However, this credible description fell in sharp contrast to Abubakr's firmly audacious position in the face of the mutinous refusal by some of his subjects to abide by the public duty to pay alms or zakat (Islamic taxation mostly directed for the benefit of the poor)[2].

The timing of the zakat mutiny was crucial. It marked a line between subjugation to the divinely guided head of state, the Prophet, and the leadership of a comparably non-divine entity, in the person of Abubakr, the successor or Khaleefah of the Prophet. Should Abubakr treat such defiance softly, the emerging Muslim state could have irreparably suffered at its very infancy. It is submitted by this writer that Abubakr's era marks the very beginning of the Muslim state in its civilian version, following the directly and instantly divinely guided state under the leadership of the recipient of revelation – Prophet Muhammad himself. In other words, during the time of the Prophet, divine revelation was on-going, and the acts of governorship uttered by the leader was instantly guided, corrected and redirected by the Almighty God through His revealed word, carried to the Prophet by Archangel Gabriel. Upon the decease of Prophet Muhammad this has ceased for good. The Muslim state thereby entered a markedly new phase. The head of state became an ordinarily human being receiving no direct instruction from the Creator. A civil state – in that specific sense – has emerged.

The mutinous zakat payment refusal therefore represented an existential challenge to the emerging Muslim civil state and, seemingly, Abubakr understood such challenge as it is. His reaction was there-

fore decisively proportionate. Aesha herself, one would imagine, could have been amazed by the daringness of the audacious statesman, Abubakr, who decided to wage war against the mutiny.

Again, the audacity of Abubakr jolted many who were knowledgeable of his renowned deservedness, at a great incident in the lifetime of Prophet Companions, namely, the decease of the leader of the Muslim Ummah. The sad news caused a great shock to the great men around the greatest of all men. Abubakr was understandably among the most grief-stricken, due to his continued closeness to the Prophet. However, he stood high to the challenge, and bravely faced the news as being in redemption of the divine promise that all men do die. Indeed, the Quran was most directly to the point on this calamity: "Muhammad is no more than a messenger: many were the messenger that passed away before him. If he died or were slain, will ye then turn back on your heels? If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah. But Allah (on the other hand) will swiftly reward those who (serve Him) with gratitude"[3].

Upon hearing of the news, Abubakr speedily went inside the room of Aesha where the Prophet passed away; he opened his face, kissed him and praised him. Then he went outside to meet the Muslims shocked by the incident, including the usually unwavering Omar ibn Al Khattab, who forcefully denied the news. Abubakr firmly addressed all in most lucidity: "Whoever worshipped Muhammad, Muhammad has died. Whoever worships God, God is alive and He does not die".

A distinguished leader was being revealed.



Malaysia's Islamic Civilization Park features replicas of 22 world famous Islamic monuments

By Aftab Husain Kola

Islamic world, as well as many countries with Muslims as minorities, are teeming with Islamic monuments which serve as defining landmarks. In order to see these landmarks, mostly mosques, one need not visit individual countries. A visit to Malaysia's Terengganu which is home to Taman Tamadun Islam, the Islamic Civilization Park, featuring scaled-down replicas of 22 famous monuments from the Islamic world, would suffice.

About 400km from Kuala Lumpur, Terengganu lying on the east coast state of Peninsular Malaysia is steeped in tradition. Blessed with half a dozen islands lined with coral reefs and white powdery beaches and a cultural hub, Terengganu is the soul of Malay ethos.

Located 2.5km west of central Kuala Terengganu, the capital of the state Terengganu, Taman Tamadu Islam provides 'edutainment' and visitors can learn about the spread of Islamic civilization by marveling at the detailed replicas of 22 famous mosques and monuments from around the world. Opened in 2008, Taman Tamadu Islam has two zones. Zone A is free to the public and contains the stunning Crystal Mosque, built of smoke colored glass and steel and surrounded by water. Taman Tamadu Islam is the main part of Zone B, for which you need to pay to enter. The monument park here features 22 monuments from 21 countries from all over the world across Asian, European and African continents.

Spanning 10-hectares, the park carries the concept of Edutainment Park, which means that apart from being able to feast on the graceful monuments, the visitors are provided with origin and the history of the monuments. Many of the monuments are old when technology was not developed. The monuments are the symbol of the human civilization and they are still around until today, which proves the grandeur of architectural design in the past.

It is important to emphasize here that even though the monuments in the Taman Tamadun Islam are based on the Islamic civilization, the park also appeal to the non-Muslims as they get to learn about the great Islamic civilization.

All the information of the monuments are explained in three languages – Malay, Eng-

lish and Arabic. This is to provide information to visitors which come from all over the world. Other than providing a splendor view of the great architectural elements in the monuments, the park also provides interactive activities in the selected five monuments.

Most of the monuments are mosques. Among the most distinctive sights in any place is a mosque. From simple, open space surrounded walls of sunbaked brick of the bygone era to the recent ones that are architecturally stunning edifice, the mosque is intended to function primarily as a religious center and also occasionally serve as a educational and social place for the town's Muslim population.

There is no denying the fact that if a mention about mosques is discussed the first to come to mind is The Haram Mosque in Makkah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Also called the Grand Mosque or the Sacred Mosque, Masjid Al Haram in Makkah along with the Kaabah, the black square building in the central courtyard towards which Muslims all over the world turn for Prayer, is Islam's holiest sanctuary. The place is a beacon of guidance and a sanctuary of Peace radiating true faith.

Second of the 22 monuments erected in this Islamic Park is Prophet's Mosque (masjide Nabawwi) in Madinah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It was in Madinah, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) found at last the faith and unshakable support denied him by his own tribe. Without exception, pilgrims to Makkah also visit Madinah, where they pray in the mosque built by the prophet (peace be upon him). The most distinctive sight in Islam's second holiest place is the sprawling, exquisitely beautiful Prophet's Mosque. The Prophet's Mosque (The Masjide Nabawwi) is home to the Prophet's tomb and those of Abu Bakr and Omar, Is-



lam's first and second Caliphs. Pilgrims have to just offer salaams when they approach the burial enclosure as nobody is permitted to do any kind of tomb worship which is strictly forbidden in Islam. The mosque was built by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the year 1 AH (622 AD) near his home. The mosque was expanded many times over the years starting with first expansion in the days of Caliph Umar ibn Al-Khattab in 17 AH (638 AD). 250 umbrellas on the columns in the mosque's courtyards offer shade to people who pray. The elegant architectural elements inside the mosque is feast for the eyes

The Islamic Park could not miss out its own National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur. Embracing an area of 13 acres, the National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur serves as an important symbol of the Islamic country of Malaysia. It has a capacity to accommodate 15,000 people and the entire mosque complex is covered in greenery. The defining features of the mosque are the 73 meters high minarets and its 16 pointed star concrete which is its main roof. The main roof's design was inspired from the idea of an open

umbrella while the minarets were like a folded umbrella. The concrete main roof utilizes the concept of folding plates in order to obtain larger space at the main gathering hall.

Then the Park features Kudus Al Minar, Indonesia, a graceful old mosque with its red-brick minaret was built in 1549 by Sunan Kudus. The Javanese religious heritage Menara Kudus Mosque or Al-Manar Mosque is located in Kudus in the Indonesian province of Central Java. Dating from 1549, it is one of the oldest mosques in Indonesia, built at the time of Islam's spread through Java. Thailand, a predominant non-Muslim country is also included. Its Central Pattani Mosque,

was built in 1954, the construction of this mosque took almost nine years. Closely resembling the Taj Mahal of India, it has a large, central dome surrounded by four smaller ones and two minarets. The mosque contains a large prayer hall and long corridors. It is fronted by a big pond.

Brunei is home to many beautiful mosques though a tiny nation. Its Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque, an architectural delight to the eye, is also featured in the park the Omar

Ali Saifuddien Mosque, locally called Masjid Omar Ali, was opened in 1958 in Negara Brunei Darussalam, a tiny nation flanked by South China Sea along the northern coast of the Island of Borneo. A timeless architectural work of art, the mosque is named after the current Sultan's late father, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, the 28th Sultan of Brunei. Topped by an exquisite dome made of real gold, the mosque is an epitome of classic Islamic architecture.

A major part of India was ruled by Muslims for several centuries. The result is the magnificent Taj Mahal, considered the greatest architectural achievement in the world of Indo-Islamic architecture. The monument, which was declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1983, was built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the memory of his favorite wife, Arjumand Banu Begum, better known as Mumtaz Mahal. Pakistan's Badshahi mosque in Lahore too finds a place in the Islamic Park.

How could one miss out Palestine? Yes, the park is home to the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem. From Iraq, the Great Mosque of Samarra located in Samarra city, about 120 km north of Baghdad, on the banks of the Tigris River and built in the 9th century, and commissioned by the Abbasid caliph Al-Mutawakkil, is showcased.

Iran's Lutfallah Mosque, built in 1617-18, and located at the center of the east side of Isfahan's Maydan, or grand royal square (512 by 159 meters), built by Shah 'Abbas I between 1590 and 1602 and from Afghanistan - Mausoleum of Abu Nasr Parsa are a feast for the eyes.

Turkey. Syria and Egypt are homes to stunningly beautiful Islamic monuments. The Islamic Park feature Aleppo Citadel, Syria; ohammad Ali Mosque, Egypt, Suley-

man Mosque, Turkey. Once described as 'the glory and the wonder of the civilized world' the - Al Hambra Citadel, Spain, set on a long, wooded hill rising some 500 feet above Granada in Spain, sits majestically in the park. Other msoqyes to be featured in the park include Kalyan Minaret, Uzbekistan; Agadez Grand Mosque, Niger; - Kul Sharif Mosque, Russia; Minaret of Xian, China; Sultan Mosque, Singapore; and Great Mosque of Qairawan, Tunisia.

Crystal Mosque

On the same island, but outside the perimeter of the Monument Park is the famous Crystal Mosque, a convention center, a shopping arcade, food court and river cruise jetty. Tourists san also enjoy a paddle ride in a lake. Guest houses which can accommodate 6 - 7 guests each are available for rent.





The Religious Education of Muslim Women

By Shah Abdul Hannan

*The Madrasas in present-day South Asia are bearers of the remarkable revival that Islamic religious education witnessed in colonial India during the late nineteenth century. This renewal began in particular earnestness with the establishment of the Darul Uloom Madrasa at Deoband in 1867. However, women were not part of this revivalist project in formal religious education. Although on the level of informal religious education, they were taken into serious consideration by some Ulama who sought to promote individual piety, to re-Islamize household rituals and daily cultural practices, and to facilitate individual knowledge and observance of Qur'an and Hadith-based religious injunctions as opposed to folk customs (Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, 1988).*

One of the most well-known among these reformist Ulama who showed significant concern for enhancing women's informal or household religious knowledge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the Deoband Madrasa-trained scholar Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi (1864-1943). His encyclopedic work 'Bihishti Zewar' (The Ornaments of Paradise), was primarily aimed at women (although men are encouraged to follow it as well) and contained a vast amount of extremely detailed religious prescriptions for conducting numerous daily religious and household activities and for purifying bodily, mental and emotional states. His emphasis on both Muslim men's and women's equal obligations to seek knowledge and education was remarkably egalitarian for contemporary society, particularly the then worldview of many Indian Ulama and the Muslim elite (Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Reform and Islamic Women: Maulana Thanavi's Jewelry of Paradise*, in 'Moral Conducted and Authority', edited by Barbara Metcalf, 1982, pp. 184-195).

However, despite Maulana Thanavi's reformist emphasis on the egalitarian message of Islam, like most Ulama of his time and of many decades later, the Maulana was opposed to women's access to public space and possibly could not therefore imagine women's access to even the most basic levels of Madrasah education, let alone women's access to higher levels of formal religious scholarly capacities.

The historical neglect of women's formal religious education continues to shape the sphere of women's access to religious scholarship in present-day South Asia, even though some changes are under way in the margins. The neglect of women's religious education in South Asia (and possibly elsewhere) is evident today not only in the abysmal gaps

between the numbers of male and female Madrasah students and traditional religious scholars but also in the dearth of scholarship on women's Madrasahs in South Asia. Thus, for instance, neither of the two most comprehensive, recent, and otherwise illuminating and timely scholarly articles on Madrasahs in South Asia (see Mumtaz Ahmad's and Yogi Sikand's respective chapters in *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*, eds. Satu Limaye et al, Honolulu, Hawaii University Press, 2004) mentions female Madrasah students even in passing. This essay will briefly discuss and analyze the current situation of religious education of Muslim women in Bangladesh and adjacent areas from a historical perspective.

Gaps Between Islamic Canonical Teachings and Muslim Historical and Cultural Practices

Even though Islam has emphasized access to knowledge for all, the education of Muslim girls and women, particularly in the areas of religious scholarship and authoritative expertise, has been seriously marginalized in most parts of the Muslim world historically. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that, "Securing education is an obligation for all Muslims ...". The Qur'an has emphasized education unequivocally. The revelation even began with the word 'Iqra' meaning read, recite. (Qur'an, Surat Al-Alaq, Verse 1). The Qur'an asks "Are those who know and who do not know equal?" (Surat Al-Zumar, Verse 9).

The Muslim community failed to implement its obligation to educate all its members, male and female. Studies of the Muslim history of various countries reveal that in the establishment of educational institutions, equal opportunities were not created for boys and girls. Of course, rudimentary religious



education was imparted to all at home, such as recitation of the Qur'an, the formal and technical rules of Salat and Siam (prayer performance and fasting), and fundamental religious values of modesty, honesty, respect for elders (adab), duties towards one's parents, etcetera. But higher education and the realm of religious scholarship and authority became the preserves of men alone. Furthermore, despite the Qur'anic emphasis on the equality of all human beings and on the Prophetic stress on access to knowledge for all, discriminatory practices were found even with regard to men, let alone women. Thus, prior to the nineteenth century, access to Madrasah teaching and education was largely restricted to the communities of elite Muslims- the ashraf nobility who were mostly migrants from Central Asia, Iran, and Arabia, and their descendants. The indigenous Muslims-the ajlaf- were expected to remain satisfied with the most elementary knowledge of Islam (Yogi Sikand, 2004, "Reforming the Indian Madrassas: Contemporary Muslim Voices" in *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*: 120).

However, sociopolitical changes began

to sweep across the Muslim world during the 19th and 20th centuries. With the establishment of British colonialism, the Dar-ul-Uloom Madrasah at Deoband was established in 1865. This remains the largest traditional Madrasah in South Asia till this day. In the absence of Muslim rulers as patrons of Madrasah education, and concerned with the threat colonialism and intensifying Christian missionary work in the region posed to the production, sustenance, and enhancement of Islamic knowledge and sensibilities, Ulamas began to establish small and large Madrasahs which increasingly turned to the ranks of ordinary ajlaf Muslims, with whom Ulamas and Madrasahs had had little contact until then. The ordinary Muslim came to symbolize the survival and well-being of Islam and to serve as the repository of Islamic knowledge and moral reform. In the wake of these changes, Muslim girls did not remain untouched by such reforms for too long. But it would not be till the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century that Muslim girls began to gain access to higher education. At least, this was the case in former Bengal.

Women's Religious and Formal Education in Bengal

The eminent lady who played the greatest role in mobilizing for formal and higher education for women in Bengal specifically, was Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hussein, who against numerous personal/familial, cultural, and financial odds, established an Urdu-medium school for girls in Calcutta in the year 1911; by then Urdu had come to dominate the elite Muslim culture in Bengal, to be gradually replaced by Bengali in later decades. Named the "Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School," this school opened at 13 Waliulla Lane in a tiny classroom, with only 8 girls in attendance. In 1917, it became a middle English school. Begum Rokeya added a class every year till her school became a high school in 1931 (Sonia Nishat Amin, 1996, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal 1876-1939*, E. J. Brill, pp. 156- 7).

While this was the first stable beginning of modern education among Muslim girls in this region, there were other and even earlier efforts in various parts of Bengal and in certain parts of India to make modern education accessible to girls. Thus, for instance, a primary school for girls from strictly purdah observing families were founded in 1873 in Comilla by another pioneering Bengali woman, Nawab Faizunnessa Chaudhurani who herself had received a good education at home in Urdu, Bengali, Sanskrit, and Persian. This school became a Junior High School (till the 8th grade) in 1889 and a regular High School in 1931. It operates today as Nawab Faizunnessa High School for Girls (Amin 1996: 149-50). In 1897, on the request of Nawab Shamsi Jahan Firdaus Mahal of Murshidabad, Lady Mckenzie, the wife of the governor of Calcutta, Muslim Girls' Madrasah was inaugurated at Calcutta. Begum Firdaus

Mahal funded the construction of the building. She also provided a monthly grant of Rs. 150 while Nawab Ahsanullah of Dhaka contributed Rs. 1000. In 1898, 46 girls enrolled at the Madrasah (Amin 1996: 147). However, not much is known about the exact contents of the Madrasah curriculum. The first formal school for girls in Dhaka, Eden Female School, was established in June 1878. This was the first government secondary school for girls in the region and remained thus for many years. A college section was introduced in 1926, making the Eden Girls' School and College the first institute for higher secondary education for women in Eastern Bengal (Amin 1996: 151-3).

However, there was no effort in the area of Bengal to create opportunities for women to obtain higher religious education. Women traditionally received some basic Islamic education at home. In certain ashraf or upper aristocratic families, the quality of Islamic education that girls received at home could be quite remarkable and as high as the quality of the education received by the boys in those families. In many middle and upper class families, a girl would be introduced to the Qur'an at the age of 5 through a lesson in Arabic letters taught by female tutors from modest backgrounds called 'ustadnis'. These female tutors would also teach some Persian, Urdu, some basic accounting skills, a little sewing and embroidery, and later Bengali and English as well (Amin 1996: 136). Once women began to attend non-religious public schools, they began to be instructed in subjects such as mathematics, history, and geography, but some basic religious instruction continues to this present day in the form of the course "Islamiat," which is a compulsory course for Muslims in state schools in Bangladesh. However, a Muslim woman did

not have any opportunity to become an Alim (religious scholar) through education at an elite Madrasah (a religious seminary with 16 years of coursework and training).

Only during the last 2-3 decades did the Ulama finally open the doors of formal, elite Madrasahs to women. Separate women's Madrasahs, both of the Kamil/Alia variety (that is the Madrasahs which follow the govt. approved course curriculum of a few modern subjects and a revised form of the Dars Nizami syllabus) and the Kaumi variety (which follow the Deoband and most traditional/standard Dars Nizami) have been established. However, as far as traditional Islamic courses are concerned, the courses are essentially the same in both the Kamil/Alia and Kaumi systems of religious education. The Kawmi Madrasahs are private. They do not receive any financial support from the government and are supported by religious endowments or by zakah and sadaqa. While most of the Alia Madrasahs, except the five fully state controlled major Ali Madrasahs, are privately owned and administered, the Government of Bangladesh pays 80 percent of the salaries of their teachers and administrators. To varying extents, Madrasah education, by virtue of its charitable spirit and affordability, has made possible some degree of social mobility for thousands of lower and lower middle class people throughout modern South Asia (Mumtaz Ahmad, 2004, "Madrasa Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh" in *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*).

There are several Kawmi Madrasahs for girls. In Dhaka, there are two such Madrasahs which award the Dawra degree to girls. The course syllabi used in girls/ boys Madrasahs in both Alia and Kawmi systems are the same.

There is a shortage of female teachers.

However, the problem is not a serious one since male teachers in many cases teach in these Madrasahs. Male and female Alims tend to be equal in knowledge and abilities. In fact, a senior Alim, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad informed me that the girls tend to perform better as students than the boys since the former appear to take their school duties more seriously. In my view, women Alims can be deployed, as in Turkey, as Muftis wherever their services are required. However, it must be stated that as things stand currently, in order to be compatible with present socioeconomic demands, the Madrasah curriculum requires significant improvement and diversification in coursework, while sustaining a focus on the core religious courses. A serious inclusion of modern disciplines would not only help bridge increasing gaps between Madrasah-educated and layeducated Muslims but would also help produce Muslims who are religious scholars, able to effectively administer the increasingly diversifying and specialized public and private sectors, and able to establish needed dialogues both within the Muslim community and between Muslims and non-Muslims of different faiths and persuasions. A Muslim, educated in this manner, would truly embody the Islamic ideal of a comprehensive person and system where any separation of one area of life (such as "religion") from another (such as "politics" or "economy" or "society" or "culture" or "education") is not recognized. Every dimension exists as a part of a whole just as every organ and part of a human body operates as an integral part of a whole.

Madrasah Education in Bangladesh

Let me briefly discuss the development of Madrasah education in the Bangladesh region over the last 200 years. Warren Hastings, the Governor General of British India,

on the request made by the Muslims in 1780, asked Maulana Majduddin, an accomplished scholar of the traditional Islamic Sciences to prepare a course curriculum and to launch a Madrasah. The Madrasah took off in 1780 according to a variant of the Dars Nizamia curriculum. This curriculum, which historically served as a model for many Madrasahs throughout the world, was developed in its original form for the Nizamia Madrasah in Baghdad, founded by the eleventh century Seljuq Vizier Nizam-ul Mulk Hasan ibn 'Ali during the Abbasid period. The 1780 Madrasah in Bengal was launched in a rented building in Kolkata (Calcutta). The original Nizamia syllabus had represented a blend of naqli 'ulum (revealed sciences), including the Qur'an, the hadith, fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and Tafsir (Qur'anic commentary), on the one hand, and the aqli 'ulum (rational sciences), including Arabic language, grammar, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, astronomy, medicine, physics and mathematics, on the other. However, the Nizami syllabus, as adopted in colonial South Asia and as shaped by cultural and political forces, came to distinguish between "religious" and "worldly" knowledge and to stress the "deenie" sphere of knowledge to the neglect and virtual exclusion (until very recent decades) of areas of modern "duniyavi" knowledge (Sikand 2004). Thus the first Madrasah in Bengal followed traditional courses in Arabic grammar, Arabic language, philosophy, logic, Fiqh, usul-al-fiqh, theology (Kalam), Tafsir, and Hadith, all largely based on classical texts. This was the beginning of the Alia Madrasah system (Dr. Muhmmad Abdus Satter, 2004, *Bangladeshe Madrasah Shikkha* [Madrasah Education in Bangladesh], Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1st Edition, pp. 120-129).

Many commissions and committees have

been formed since then to deal with the various aspects of public education and Madrasah education, but the courses basically remained the same and the Madrasah text books in Fiqh, Usul-al-Fiqh, Tafsir and Hadith have all remained essentially the same. Virtually no significant changes have been effected with the passage of time and significant shifts in socio-political and economic conditions both locally and globally. Contemporary texts and disciplines have not been included in any significant way in the Madrasah curriculum although the subjects of English, Science, Bangla, History, Geography, and Mathematics have been included in the lower stages of Madrasah education (Dr. AKM Azharul Islam and Professor Shah Muhammad Habibur Rahman, *Bangladesh School and Madrasah Shikkhaniti O Karjokrom* [Curriculum and Education Policy of Schools and Madrasahs of Bangladesh], The Islamic Academy, Cambridge, UK, Chapter 4). Thus, for instance, texts used for the core religious subjects date back to the seventeenth century at the latest and the eleventh century at the earliest. However, this Alia system of Madrasah education in Bangladesh is quite unique in its five distinct sub-divisions: ibtedai (elementary), dakhil (secondary), alim (higher secondary), fazil (B.A.), and kamil (M.A.) (Mumtaz Ahmad, 2004, "Madrasa Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh" in *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*).

Until recent decades, we find Madasa education in Bangladesh and possibly in South Asia to be characterized by the following features:

1. The method of instruction was Urdu.
2. No reference whatsoever is made to female education.
3. Strict dependence on extremely dated and classical texts.



4. Initially separate books were prescribed in Fiqh, Usul al Fiqh and Kalam for Sunni and Shia students even though these students used to study in the same Madrasah (Dr. Muhammad Abdus Satter, *ibid*, pages 172-199.).

However, as I said before, the Ulama in the course of the last 20/ 25 years have become aware of the need of higher religious education for women. Below, I note some of the figures related to the female student community following the Alia system of religious education:

Now I turn to the Islamic Studies Department in colleges and universities. This degree is open to both men and women. The course curriculum has been patterned on the key elements of the syllabus followed at the Dars Nizami Madrasahs, where the subjects taught include Arabic, Fiqh, Usul al Fiqh and Hadith, history, and Islamic philosophy. However, the course coverage of the Islamic traditional sciences is less here than in the Kamil or Dawrah Madrasah courses. A serious stu-

dent can develop into an Alim if he or she undertakes advanced personal study. However, my conversations with scholars revealed that completion of the Islamic Studies course currently prevalent in the universities can hardly be said to transform one into an Alim (This is the opinion of Prof. Mustafizur Rahman of Dhaka university, Arabic Department, a former Vice-Chancellor of Islamic University, Kushtia, and Nasima Hasan, an M.S. in Islamic Studies from Dhaka University, now a teacher at the International Islamic University Chittagong, Dhaka Campus).

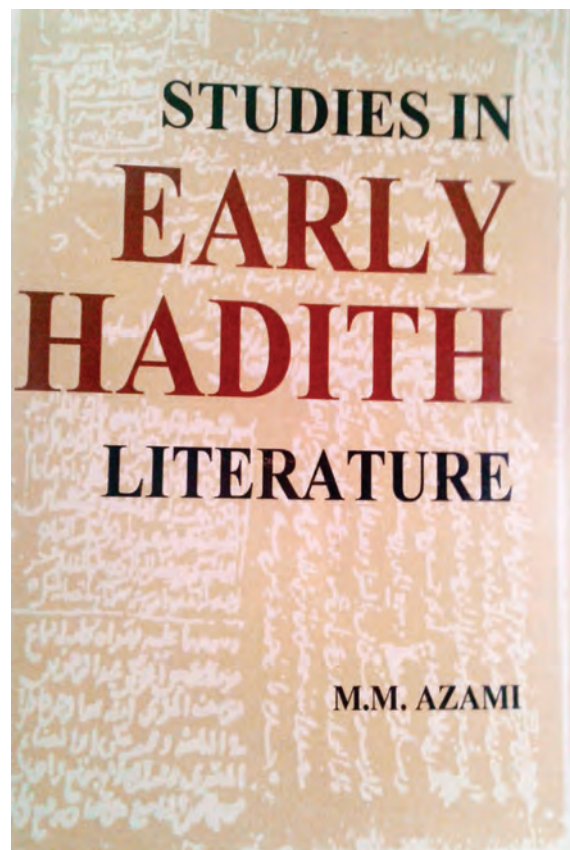
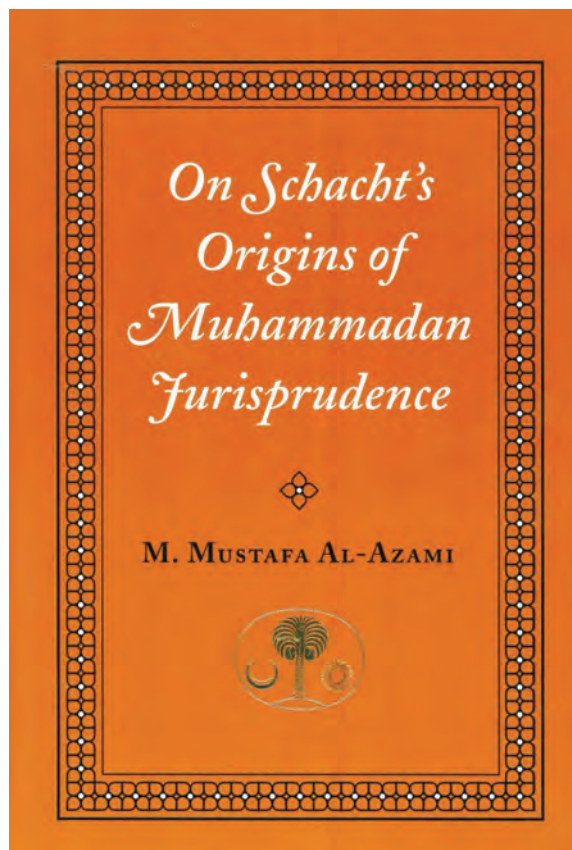
Let me add that in recent times, some women are taking part in television programs in Bangladesh. These women are largely university educated and trained in general subjects, but have pursued the informal study of Islam on a personal level. A few hold degrees in Islamic Studies or Arabic. The emergence of modern, self-styled religious thinkers or scholars, who secure religious knowledge through informal and personal or

Islamic organizational study of Islam, is evident throughout Muslim communities today notably in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. This culture of self-styled religious authority is particularly evident in the sphere of electronic communication. This phenomenon speaks to the gaps in traditional religious education and to the inability of many traditional religious experts to respond satisfactorily to the issues increasingly central to the experiences and needs of younger generations of non-Madrasah educated Muslims in the present-day world.

In conclusion, I will say that Islamic education among women is increasing and diversifying both at informal and formal levels even though the standard of religious education in most of these cases leaves much to be desired. Most female students of religious scholarship today are becoming traditional Alims, as deficient as male Alims in responding to the needs of the rapidly growing numbers of Muslim recipients of modern/non-religious mass higher education, those ranks of Muslims from which the leaders of contemporary Muslim societies and states continue to emerge. Voices for reforming the Madrasah system grow stronger every year and these voices are diverse, but the pace of any real reform has been painfully slow for a number of reasons that scholars have discussed (see, for instance, Yogi Sikand in *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*, 2004).

The atmosphere of distrust created by the US-led war against “terrorism” is certainly not helping the cause of Madrasah reform since many orthodox ulama, who have always resisted reform, now feel more certain than ever that under the guise of liberalizing and modernizing Islamic education, the West and its secular allies are bent on gradually

eradicating the force of Islam altogether from the educational and cultural spheres. However, I feel that despite various difficulties and legitimate doubts and concerns, Muslims must move beyond a reactive politics which is often unproductive and harms Muslim interests in the end. While one must learn from history and study it carefully, one should not be determined by it. Muslims and the Ulama in particular, must become pro-active instead and take whatever initiatives necessary to sustain, improve, and enhance Islamic education such that it impacts life positively all over the world, not only in Muslim majority societies. The Qur’an, after all, was revealed as guidance not only for Muslims, but for “humankind.” We should not allow our fear of the uncertainties of the future and the formidable strength and ploys of our adversaries to prevent us from determining, with clarity, the priorities of the Muslim ummah, however diversely constituted. We allowed colonialism to paralyze our advancement for many precious decades. It is no secret, for example, that nineteenth and twentieth century nationalist efforts to define Indian women strictly in terms of the domestic sphere were in large part a reaction to the colonial project of domination and imposed transformation in the Indian subcontinent. Today, we must not allow the current age of imperialism or neo-colonialism to freeze our progress as Muslims for the next hundred years. If Madrasah reforms are undertaken effectively, substantially, and thoughtfully, with an emphasis on the overall kind of Muslim person, scholar, scientist, and leader we want to produce for the twenty-first century and beyond, then it is my belief that both men and women of this generation and the generations to come would benefit from these reforms immensely.



Dr. M. Mustafa al-Azami's Contribution vis-à-vis the Occidental Critique of Orientalism

Owais Manzoor Dar

'Orientalism', derived from the root 'orient' meaning 'the east', commonly refers to the acts of western scholars, academics, and professionals, who study the culture and affairs of the Eastern part of the world with the aim of intellectual colonization. It is either as "The study of the East ('the Orient'), especially the 'Islamic East', by European and American scholars during the 19th and 20th centuries is known as Orientalism"; or the "ongoing Western tradition of intellectual inquiry into an existential engagement with the ideas, practices and values of the East, particularly in the religious field".

In post-colonial era, a paradigm shift ensued in Islamic literature. The primary as well as secondary sources of Islam have been questioned. Orientalists, in some ways, were efficacious in constructing doubts in Muslim mind, and their patronizing call to Muslims to 're-think' their traditions. The recognition of Islamic traditions has been obfuscated, the pre-supposition that the Quran's claim to revelation is vacuous, hadith literature is forgery of later Muslim scholars, and denied the Muslim belief that the origins of Islamic legal code are rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

These challenges were not basically new to Islam. The attempts to distort Islam and its sacred texts is as old as the religion itself. But Allah has taken the responsibility of its preservation on its own. The Qur'an mentions: "Surely we have revealed the Reminder and we will most surely be its guardian" (Surat Al-Hijr, Verse:9). However, Orientalists study of Islamic literature 'was not what Islam is and what Islamic foundations say, but rather how Muslims perceive their faith, and how Orientalists want them to perceive it.' It was a question of representation: 'Muslims cannot represent themselves, they must be represented'.

Subsequently, the Muslim scholarship had to (re)think how to counter these narratives and decolonize the Muslim mind. Among the critique of Orientalists' scholarship the name of Dr. Muhammad Mustafa Azami (1932-2017) stands out for his scholarship on the subject. Dr. Azami is grounded in both traditional Islamic scholarship (having graduated with Masters from Darul-Uloom Deo-

band, India 1952, Al-Azhar University, 1955 respectively), as well as Western academic (Ph.D. Cambridge, 1966 on the topic "Studies in Early Hadith Literature"). He worked in many universities of the world both as teaching and visiting faculty which include: –Ummul Qura University (Makkah), University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, USA); St. Cross College (University of Oxford, UK); Princeton University (USA); and University of Colorado (Boulder, USA), University of Wales (UK). He is the world renowned scholar and expert in the traditional classical sciences. Dr. Azami is mostly known for his academic rebuttals of Orientalist narratives regarding the Qur'an, Hadith and Jurisprudence etc. He makes no attempt to hide his intent to take such challenges directly; served Islam at a level, that Muslims as well as non-Muslim scholars of the world acknowledge his deep knowledge and insightful understanding and devoted himself to address the modern mind and proved the authenticity, significance and importance of Islamic literature. He not only answered orientalist paradigms rationally, but created a counter argument drawing upon their paradigmatic shift that Orientalists had created.

The enthusiasm to contribute these subjects, the clarification, understanding of new issues and the transmission of Islam to new generations is primarily the duty/ responsibility, laid on the shoulders of every member of Muslim community, who has the knowledge of divine message (the Qur'an and Sunnah) by Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) on the occasion of histori-

cal Hajj sermon (Hajjatul Wida) in following words: “so it is incumbent upon those who are present to convey it to those who are absent” (Sahih al-Bukhari, H.No. 7078). The enthusiasm resulted in devolvement of enormous Islamic literature and progressive scholars, who dedicated themselves to different Islamic Sciences like; Sciences of Qur’an (Ulum al- Quran), Principles of Quranic exegesis, (Usul-tafsir), syntax and coherence of the Quran (Ijaz al-Quran), in the field of Hadith sciences (Ulum al-Hadith); principles of Hadith interpretations (Usul al-Hadith), its teaching, its commentaries and explanation and (Al-jarah-wa-tadal) Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) etc. and its teaching, commentaries, authenticity and transmission in all possible ways.

Orientalism, from its inception, started challenging Islam as a religion, though the strategy behind these efforts has fluctuated according to the intended goal. During the first phase, the notable Orientalists were John of Damascus (675-750), Peter the Venerable (1084-1156), Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Ludovico Marraci (1612-1700) etc. Their objective was ‘to establish a protective fence around Christians to counteract the rapid advance of the new faith in Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Libya’ etc. But, ‘their pens dipped in unsophisticated yet willful ignorance and falsehood’. The change in political fortunes and the start of colonialism from 18th century onwards, the second phase of Orientalism, ‘witnessed a shift in posture from defensive to offensive, aspiring to the mass conversion of Muslims or, at the least, of shattering any pride and resistance

that emanated from the belief in Allah.’ The notables of this phase include Theodor Noldeke, Ignac Goldziher, Snouck Hurgronje, Gotthelf Bergstasser, William St. Clair Tisdall, Arthur Jeffery and Joseph Shacht. The third phase, ‘beginning in the mid 20th century on the heels of the foundation of Israel, has actively sought to purge all verses that cast an unfavourable light on the Jews’. Among the followers of this school are Andrew Rippin, Patricia Crone, Norman Calder and not least of all Wansbrough, whose theory, ‘that the Qur’an and hadith are a community product spanning two centuries which were the fictitiously attributed to an Arabian Prophet based on Jewish prototypes,’ is doubtlessly the most radical approach to ousting the Qur’an from its hallowed status. The two phases growth in multi-faceted ways; ‘assailing the Qur’an to a cultural text, a by-product of a particular era.’ All these concepts are meant for Muslims to shake their faith and dismiss their sources which they inherited. So, in the process they became more susceptible to western ideology and somewhat efficacious in colonizing the Muslim mind.

The Quran is primary and the essential source of the Islamic weltanschauung. From the Prophetic era, the Muslims have performed significant roles in its preservation, compilation and propagation. Orientalist presupposition that Qur’an claim to be a word of the God is vacuous. ‘They reject all reports that mention recording and compilation of the Qur’an during Prophet Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) epoch. Many of them even deny the final compilation occurred during Abu Bakr’s reign, while

some accept the role of third caliph in this regard. Only fifteen years lapsed between the Prophet's demise and Caliph Uthman's distribution of written copies of Qur'an to the different provinces of Muslim world. Inspecting this interval with serious misgivings, 'Orientalists have often focused on the possibility of deep-seated corruption crawling into the text within the timespan'. The Orientalist spotlight has been cast on the Arabic script with discussions of its shortcomings, though 'it took only half a century from the Prophets death for the script to evolve and extinguish its initial ambiguities'. This created a chaos among the Muslims. The provocative article "What is the Qur'an" by Toby Lester in *The Atlantic Monthly* (January 1999) argued that 'Muslim, despite believing in the Qur'an as unaltered Book of Allah (a divinely revealed text), were thoroughly incapable of defending this view in scholarly fashion'. Dr Azami felt it necessary to take on this challenge and explain the stringent methodology used by early Muslim scholars in accepting a text as genuine, or rejecting it as fake in his book "The History of the Qur'anic Text from Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments" with detailed research and persuasive text which debunks the whole narrative of Orientalists. He analysed Lester's article critically and argued: the majority of Lester's references, are non-Muslims. Among these references, 'Dr. Puin himself denied all the findings that Lester ascribes to him, with the exception of occasional differences in the spelling of some Qur'anic words'. Dr. Azami further argues theo-

retically that the Qur'an reveled verbally but from the Prophetic era, the Companions used to keep written records of its verses. During the period, 'approximately sixty-five (65) companions who functioned as scribes for the prophet at one time or another' (Azami, 2009 p.68) 'Upon, the descent of revelation (wahy), the prophet routinely called for his scribes to write down the latest verses Zaid b. Thabit narrates that, because of his proximity to the prophet's Mosque, he was often summoned as whenever the revelation (wahy) commenced.' Whenever the verse pertaining to jihad was reveled, the prophet called Zaid b. Thabit with inkpot and writing material (board or scapula bone) and began dictating; 'Amr b. Um-Maktum al-A'ma, sitting nearby, inquired of the prophet, 'what about me? For I am blind.' And so came, 'For those who are not among the disabled.' There is also evidence of proofreading after dictation; once the task of recording the verses was complete, Zaid would read them back to the Prophet to ensure that no scribal errors had crept in. So, the Companions were the first to record the Quranic Verses. He further explores 'there exists Mushafs in the Hejazi script from early first century of Hijrah (late 7th-early 8th C.E) as well as dated manuscripts of portions' of the Qur'an belonging to the first century' (al-Azami, xvi). 'The established practice at the dawn of Islamic literary history was that any religious text (hadith, Tafsir, fiqh etc.) had to be transmitted by those who had learned the work directly from its authors, they in turn teaching it to the next generation'. Full records of 'these

transmissions were kept, allowing us to peer into the pedigree of every book regarding Shariah'. In sum, he debunked Lester's every argument distinctly in particular and other orientalist(s) in general, and highlighted their intellectual dishonesty.

The hadith, the storeroom of the Prophet's Sunnah, functioned as an essential source of the Muslims, be they individuals or communities. Dr. Azami in his *Study in Hadith Methodology and Literature* describes the means which were used to teach Ahadith and to learn and preserve them. He discussed the three methods used by Prophet to teach his 'Sunnah or Hadith' as: 'Verbal teaching, Written medium (Dictations to scribes), and practical demonstration.' The companions later used three methods of learning: '(a) memorization (b) recording (c) through practise.' He argues 'the companions used to listen every word of the Prophet with utmost care, recording it in writing, and then put into practice whatever they learn by heart or by writing.' This is the sketch; he presents how the companions learn Hadith in the lifetime of Prophet. He further argues 'the pattern remains almost the same except the Messenger was no more among them.' Dr. Azami's in his most exhaustive work 'Studies in Early Hadith Literature' demystified the widespread notion that Hadith were solely orally transmitted until Umar b. Abdul Aziz (d.101A.H.) ordered Al-Zuhri (d.124A.H.) to record them. He compiled a list of Pre-classical individuals who either personally wrote Hadith or allowed Hadith to be transmitted from them in written form. The

list includes over 50 companions, 49 first generation Successors, 87 scholars of the late first century and 251 scholars of early second century and all the narrators and copyist are trustworthy according to the standards of Hadith critics (Al-Azami, 1968, ppp.29). Some of his other works on Hadith literature are: *Dirasat fi'l-Hadith al-Nabawi wa Tarikhu Tadwinihi*, *Sahih Ibn Khuzaymah*, *Dirasat fi'l-Hadith al-Nabawi wa Tarikhu Tadwinihi*, *Sahih Ibn Khuzaymah*, *Manhaj al-Naqd 'Inda al-Muhaddithin Nisha'tihi wa Tarikhihi*, *Kutab al-Nabi*, *Al-Muhaddithun min al-Yamamah ila 250 Hijrah*. Among his edited works are: *Mu'atta Imam Malik*, *Al-'ilal li Ali ibn Abdullah al-Madani*, *Sunan Ibn Majah*. Dr. Azami critically reviewed the primary source of Prophetic biography namely 'Maghazi Rasulullahi li Urwah ibn Zubair' and got published in 1981. Among his English works on the subject of hadith are: *Studies in Early Hadith Literature*, *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature*. Dr. Azami has also the honor of editing the Manuscript of *Sahih Al-Bukhari* with additional footnotes by various scholars which was prepared in 725A.H (1324 CE) and discovered from Istanbul in 1977C.E. In 1980, he received the prestigious King Faisal Award for his gigantic works in the field of Hadith.

The Muslim view that the origins of Islamic legal code are rooted in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, consensus and analogy was also challenged about a hundred years ago by orientalist like Snouck Hurgronje and Ignaz Goldzihet. In the 20th century publication of 'An Introduction to Islamic Law' and 'Origins of

Muhammadan Jurisprudence' by Joseph Schacht created doubts about the validity of the classical accounts of Islamic law and his thesis that 'law as such fell outside the sphere of religion', 'during the third centuries A.H and it became the habit of scholars to project their own statement into the mouth of Prophet' and 'the system of Isnad (chain of transmitters) used for the authentication of hadith documents, has no historical value.' Schacht argues that the picture painted by Muslim scholars of the origins of Islamic law, 'concealed rather than revealed truth; and I trust that the sketch by which I have tried to replace it comes nearer to reality'. Dr. Azami in "On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence (1987)" provides a scholarly critique of the classic Western works on the origins of Islamic law. It refutes Schacht's entire thesis with a detailed analysis of early historical texts. He argues 'if it is the case, not only the early history of Islam but its literary history as a whole would be demolished, and the honesty and integrity of almost all Muslim scholars of the early centuries would be called into serious question'. He cites the case of Ahmad ibn Hanbal and his clash with the dogma and the creeds of Mu'tazilites. He asked the caliph to bring forward a single hadith of Prophet that supports the official view. But the caliph with all his power and army of learned scholars was unable to produce one. The fact that it was impossible to fabricate a hadith on the authority of Prophet that could go unnoticed by the scholars speaks for itself'. He further mentions 'Schacht has apparently failed to consult the relevant material; he of-

ten misunderstood the texts he quotes; the example he uses frequently contradict the point he is attempting to make; on occasions he quotes out of context; and most importantly he applies unscientific methodology for his research, thus drawing conclusions that are untenable when the evidences of the text as a whole is weighed.'

Conclusion: In sum, Dr Azami debunks the three major notions in particular – The Quran's claim to revelation is vacuous, Ahadith literature is forgery of later Muslim scholars, and the Muslim belief that the origins of Islamic legal code are rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah is deniable – and the other baseless allegations in general. Zacharia al-Khatib argues that "Azami's work is unique in its presentation, style, and holistic approach. He speaks the language of an academic, and is able to present traditional content in that fashion." He speaks eloquently to a wide spectrum of readers with different backgrounds and interests. Perhaps, he is the only Madrasa scholar who speaks in the language of a modern academic as is able to present traditional content in a fashion relevant in our times. His discussion on the evolution of Qur'an, Hadith and Jurisprudence is essential to understand the orientalists' intellectual dishonesty in, to use Edward Said's evocative phrase, 'covering Islam'. So it is the need of the hour to revisit the scholarship of Dr. Azami and after having duly analyzed his thought and approach to the subject, highlight his contribution to the Qur'an, Hadith and Jurisprudence that would be more beneficial to the students of Islamic Literature.

How a Muslim leader protected thousands of Christians and saved them from being slain

By Qais Bajaifer

In 1860, a great Muslim leader, hailing from Algeria, played a prominent role that earned him global recognition and respect: He saved, according to some historical accounts, around 10,000 Christians from being killed by a group of local instigators in Syria during the sedition at the time.



This leader opened his house as a shelter for Christians and even ordered his Muslim followers to do whatever necessary to provide full protection to Christians, even if that meant fighting other Muslims who wanted the Christians killed.

His brave actions drew widespread admiration and political leaders across the world, including those of France and the United States of America, held him in high esteem because of his heroic acts. He was a leader who went above and beyond the call of duty and was ready to sacrifice his own life to show the real meaning of Islam. This great leader was Emir Abdel Kader Al-Jazairiy, and he was living in Syria under Ottoman rule when the sectarian sedition of 1860 started.

The causes of the sedition are not the subject of this article, though they remain a subject of debate among political researchers. Emir Abdel Kader rose to the occasion and stood up against the attackers to rescue Christians, among whom were consuls, dignitaries, monks and nuns.

Emir Abdel Kader was a chivalrous leader and an exceptional personality in modern Islamic history, and he believed in religious and human dignity. In fact, he was a remarkable individual that probably not many Muslims know about, nor about his act of kindness towards the Christians.

When the instigators arrived at his

door with knives in their hands, demanding that he give them the Christians and asking why he was protecting them when he had killed many Christians back in Algeria during the French invasion, he came out and delivered a speech. He told the crowds at his door that the Christians he killed back then attacked his country, but the Christians inside his house had done nothing and were completely innocent.

When the crowds did not heed his words and refused to leave Christians alone, he donned the garb of warriors, mounted his horse and drew his sword, crying out at crowds who were trying to force their way into his house, “You pitiful creatures! Is this the way you honor the Prophet? May God punish you! Shame on you, shame! The day will come when you will pay for this... I will not hand over a single Christian! They are my brothers! Get out of here or I will set my guards on you. We will fight for a just cause, just as the one we fought for before!” He defended the Christians and did not allow anyone to lay their hands on them.

Global recognition

Shortly after the end of the sedition, word reached France about Emir Abdel Kader’s role in rescuing the Christians. A French newspaper wrote: “The emir Abd el-Kader has immortalized himself with the courageous protection he has given the Syrian Christians. One of the



most beautiful pages of the history of the 19th century will be devoted to him.” Another newspaper wrote: “When the carnage was at its worst, the emir appeared in the streets, as if sent by God.”

Word also traveled across the Atlantic. The New York Times published its own editorial: “For Abd-El-Kader this is indeed a chapter of glory, and of the truest glory, too... (he) became the most intrepid guardian of Christian lives and Christian honor in the days of his political downfall... (he risked) limb and life to rescue his ancient foes, his conquerors and the conquerors of his race and his religion from outrage and from death.”

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States of America, sent him a pair of Colt pistols. The French bestowed on him the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor. In the United States, a small city in Clayton County, Iowa, was dubbed “Elkader” after him. He received the Grand Cross of the Redeemer from Greece and the Order of Pius IX from the Vatican. Great Britain sent him a gold-inlaid shotgun.

His role in resisting French occupation

After the French invaded Algeria in 1830, Emir Abdel Kader led a struggle against the French colonial invasion. He was a

very young man at the time but showed signs of leadership and intrepidity. He established an army and set up his own state in the Western part of Algeria, which later stretched as far as the borders of Morocco.

He was a just leader, even towards his enemy. He brought a priest for French prisoners and would set prisoners free when food supplies ran out. He entrusted female prisoners to the care of his mother to make sure they would be treated justly and kindly. One of Emir Abdel Kader's advisors was a Jewish merchant who acted as his ambassador to the French.

Although he gave the French army a hard time, he surrendered bravely to the French on a promise that he would be exiled to an Arab country. However, the French betrayed him and imprisoned him in France for years before being exiled to Turkey and then later, in 1855, to Syria.

Tolerance in Islam

Emir Abdel Kader represented Islam's moderation and tolerance in its best forms. From an early age, when he was a boy, his mother, an educated woman, exposed him to literature, Islamic jurisprudence and philosophy, and made sure he memorized and understood the Noble Qur'an. He was thereby raised on the principles of tolerance in Islam, hence his embodiment of the real meaning of tolerance.

By definition, tolerance in Islam does not mean that one should compromise the pivotal principles of Islam. Rather, it refers to the fact that all human beings, regardless of their color, ethnicity or appearance, should have the right to live in complete peace and respect for one another. No one should impose their views and values on the other. This fact is evidenced clearly in Surat Al-

Baqarah, Verse: 2, "There is no compulsion in religion...". Islam stresses the importance of tolerance on all levels – culturally, behaviorally and socially, and bears zero tolerance for injustice, oppression or the violation of other people's rights.

Allah the Almighty loves justice and anyone who strives to embody and practice justice towards Muslims and others, even in matters related to religious belief. Surat Al-Mumtahanah, Verse 8, says, "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly." When Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was asked about the meaning of faith 'iman', he said, "Patience and tolerance."

Emir Abdel Kader understood that freedom of religion is an Allah-given right and that the dignity of all human beings should be respected, regardless of faith, race, gender, social status or origin.

His death

Emir Abdel Kader Al-Jazairiy died in Damascus in 1883 and was buried there. However, his body was recovered and reburied in Algiers in 1965. A few months after his death, the New York Times ran an obituary, which read, "Great men are not so abundant that we can afford to lose them without a word. If to be an ardent patriot, a soldier whose genius is unquestioned, whose honor is stainless; a statesman who could weld the wild tribes of Africa into a formidable enemy, a hero who could accept defeat and disaster without a murmur – if all these constitute a great man, Abd-El-Kader deserves to be ranked among the foremost of the few great men of the century."



Wudu with water is a Reminder of God's Uniqueness

Professor Mahmoud Dhaouadi

Most world religions consider water a cleaning liquid of the body and a purifying substance of the human soul. The Islamic faith has made ablution with water compul-

sory usually more than one time a day in order for Muslims to perform their prayers. A majority of Muslims often speak of the body's benefits from the use of water in the Wudu.

Muslim jurisprudents/theologians (fuqahaa) have extensively written on this subject and the correct and incorrect rules that make it valid or not. They also underlined the conditions that permit Muslims to resort to Tayammum (dry ablution using a purified sand or dust) to perform the prayers. The Qur'an explicitly speaks of both the Wudu and the Tayammum:

“O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles. And if you are in a state of janabah, then purify yourselves. But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it. Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you, but He intends to purify you and complete His favor upon you that you may be grateful.” (Surat Al-Maaidah, Verse 6).

It has been written a great deal about the advantages of Wudu and washing with water for the health of Muslims. Biologists have established through microscopic examinations the presence of big numbers of microbes at the surface of the human skin whose number rapidly increases. It is recommended that the best way to get rid of this is to constantly wash the skin. It is argued that rinsing the mouth as part of Wudu helps to greatly reduce the number of microbes in the mouth. As such, the rinsing ritual is a sort of a therapeutic means having an impact similar to disinfecting medical solutions to the problems of the mouth, teeth and gums. Furthermore, there are other positive marks from the Wudu for many of the body's organs. This begins at the outset of the Wudu itself by washing the hands, which involves the movement of the

arms and the shoulders. As to the washing of the face, it stimulates the blood circulation, which is beneficial to the face organ as well as to the neck. We believe the benefits of the various cited examples of the Wudu are adequate. But the strict mention of the physical health benefits of the Wudu does not fully describe the impact which the Wudu grants the spiritual dimension of humans. We try now to shed light on it.

Water is the source of all kinds of life

The word water is mentioned countless times in the Qur'an. We choose here only one verse in order to unveil the symbolic meanings and interpretations of the word water which go beyond the common prevailing meanings given to it. The Quranic verse we would like to focus on its hidden meaning is the following: “Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of Creation) before we clove them asunder? We made of water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” (Surat Al-Anbiyaa Verse 30). One could interpret the meaning of this verse in this way: the earth and the skies were at the beginning of Creation bounded together, then they were separated by a massive quantity of water of the oceans and seas that brought about the big event of the birth of the Universe which scientists call the Big Bang. The result of this extraordinary event may resemble what the geographers mention about the creation of the five continents. For instance, these geographers believe that the African continent was joined to the southern part of the American continent as shown particularly in the separation features between the southern parts of the two continents. As it is clear, the separation was done by the water of the Atlantic Ocean. The great importance of water

after the Big Bang is underlined by the emergence of the phenomenon of the continents on the surface of earth as seen in the current map of the world. Water liquid covers 3/4 of the earth's vast surface. As to the great need of all creatures and natural phenomena on the earth to water, there is hardly a need to talk about. Big cities are often located on the edge of the oceans, the seas, the lakes and the rivers or close to them. Likewise, all types of living things strongly depend on water: humans and trees are telling examples "We made from water every living thing." Then, this Quranic verse ends with a question: "Will they not then believe?" The interpretation of the meaning of the word 'believe' does not imply the general belief in the divine but a belief the one unique God. This interpretation is likely in order, given that water is a symbol of the one unique God as explained before.

Water is Witness of the One Creator

The strong dependency on water of all kinds of life on earth appears to signal the presence of the charter of the unity of all natural creatures and human-made products. All of these cannot live and survive without water. Natural material phenomena and true living beings like the diverse species of animals and the human races regardless of their ethnicity origins, their skin colors and their high, middle or short heights. The overwhelming strong need of all these species to water is an explicit symbol that speaks loudly to those who see, hear and reflect that water is the unifying cord which links and binds all these countless creatures. Indeed, water is the very symbolic witnessing representative of the speaking unity of all aspects of nature which ultimately signals the uniqueness of the Creator "Say: He is Allah the

One and Only God" (Surat Al-Ikhlās, Verse 1). This well-established solid truth is underlined both by logic and intellectual reasoning in this Qur'anic verse "If there were in the heavens and the earth other gods besides Allah there would have been confusion in both" (Surat Al-Anbiya, Verse 22) As such, it could be argued that if there were more than one god, each one of them could have made all kinds of life depend on something else than water. As already mentioned, the ending of the previous Quranic verse with the question mark stresses the great importance of believing in the one unique God Who must be deduced and inferred from the observable landscape of nature where all types of life heavily need water, this miracle liquid that injects the pulse of life in all its forms and features.

Wudu with water reminder of the One God

Modern social sciences may look at Wudu with water as a religious ritual performed by Muslims for the prayer; one of Islam's five pillars. As to some of these sciences interested in the study of the universe of human symbols, they see in this ritual a reminder symbol of a greater and nobler meaning than the mere act of washing with water for the sake of better and secure health. The Wudu should remind Muslims of the uniqueness of the One God because water stands as The source of all kinds of life on the planet earth. In this proposed interpretation, we capture the implicit symbolic dimension of Wudu with water manifested in reminding daily Muslims from the observable world of what the Islamic faith cherishes most "Say: He is Allah the One and Only God" (Surat Al-Ikhlās, Verse 1) As explained, water illustrates very strongly both the idea and reality of the unity

of all creatures on this earth where all of them need water for their very existence, survival, development and prosperity; whether it has to do with the true living beings or with nature's material phenomena.

Thus, one could claim that the echoing sound brought by touching water by hands during the Wudu, the sound of water murmuring in the valley, the sound of water falling from the fountains and from the falling rain are all praising expressions to Allah the unique Only God, the Creator of the unity of all types of life from the single blessing water liquid. Therefore, the lesson from doing Wudu with water represents a great fascinating symbol for a central pillar of Islam. This extreme noble value stresses the high importance having a well-balanced human personality sharing equally both spiritual and material dimensions. Our current interpretation of the ritual of Wudu in both its health and symbolic aspects supports Islam's calling charter for a state of harmony between the two poles of human nature (body and soul). The present crisis of civilization is witness of the lack or weak state of balance in the two dimensions of the human personality. Leading thought leaders in the West and East have spoken and written about the dilemma of modern civilization.

The rising interest in the symbolic human dimension

There has been in the last decade an increasing tendency in social and human sciences in favor of giving great importance to non-materialistic factors in the human personality in order to explain human behavior as well as the dynamics of human societies. Before several decades, psychologists have given big credit to external material factors to explain the behaviors of the individuals.

Behaviorism is a leading school in this regard. In opposition to this trend, the discipline of Cognitive Psychology has emerged in the last few decades, which focuses on the importance of what we cultural symbols/CS (language, thought, religion, cultural values and norms etc...) that make the human beings distinct from other species and able to dominate them and be their master. Cognitive psychology is not a leading discipline today only in the field of psychology. Its impact has spread to other social and human sciences like cognitive sociology. Underlying the hidden and noble symbolic dimensions of praising of the uniqueness of God during the Wudu resembles what cognitive psychology has unveiled in many of its kinds of research what is most fundamental in human nature.

Symbolism of washing the dead with water

In light of the previous insights drawn from washing with water in the Wudu ritual, it is relevant to conclude this article with some reflections on the washing with water the dead in Muslim culture. That is, is there a wisdom behind it? At least two potential wise ideas come to mind in this regard. On the one hand, washing the dead with water may be seen as a speaking symbol of the pressing need of water for humans not only in life, but also at death. On the other hand, washing the dead with water could be considered a praising reminder of the firm belief the uniqueness of Allah, which the dead must ultimately embrace it with them upon leaving this visible world to the other invisible world as a telling sign of piety. Implicitly, the dead would be saying quietly to oneself and to others: "I witness that water is our dear companion in life and death and our reminder of the uniqueness of Allah".

Somali women to launch national plan for peace-building



Mogadishu – UNA

A cross section of Somali women met recently in Mogadishu to kick start a process towards the development of a National Action Plan to strengthen their participation in peace-building and socio-economic progress in the stabilization and rebuilding efforts for Somalia.

Representing women in poli-

tics, civil society and security sectors from the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States, the participants at the three-day conference, organized by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), are set to focus on the action plan for women's political participation, women in mediation and women in the security sector.

Islamic art

