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**MWL offers prizes worth SR1M of
“Fiqh Academy” and “Makkah Charter”**

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**The Muslim World League Convenes
The 44th Session of the Rabita's Supreme Council**

Tuesday 12 Jumada-I 1441 corresponding to January-7, 2020



Letter From the Editor

MWL Supreme Council: new session and new prospect

The 44th session of the Muslim World League's Supreme Council marked the issuance of important decisions on contemporary Islamic issues and launched two annual prizes of Islamic Fiqh (jurisprudence) and Makkah Charter. The meetings of the council held in the Great Mosque of Makkah have received considerable attention, whereas dignitaries and high-ranking personalities from 82 countries worldwide representing their peoples and communities were invited to attend this event.

On this occasion, the council released a statement in which it supports what was issued by the historic summit meeting of Islamic unity held by the Muslim World League in Makkah in Rabi Al-thani 1440 H. The participants from the Islamic nation called for abiding by the meanings of unity together with warning against division and its risks. The statement clearly highlighted the council's keenness to enhance the role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation representing the umbrella of the Muslim countries, stressing that these countries are looking forward to more cohesion and cooperation in this critical period. The council also extended gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its key Islamic and international role in the service of Islam and Muslims. It thanked Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and his Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman who developed many initiatives promoting peace and harmony efforts around the world.

The council strongly condemned the attempts to divide Muslims and work against

the major authorities together with denouncing the Turkish intervention in Libya. Regarding contemporary Islamic issues, the council renewed its firm stance towards the pivotal issues of Muslims, most notably the Palestinian Cause and Al-Aqsa Mosque. Moreover, the council put spotlight on issues of Muslims, especially those who suffer from discrimination and persecution in Myanmar and Turkestan.

At the end of the session, the council declared the launching of prizes of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy and Makkah Charter. This declaration received the support of the members of the council. It is noteworthy that Secretary-General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa made clear that the one who conceived the idea of Makkah Charter is Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman who supported all phases of the Charter until it was released by Muftis and scholars of the Islamic nation.

In the name of all the members of the Council, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa extended gratitude to His Highness the Crown Prince for his arduous efforts with regard to issuing Makkah Charter, expressing the wide and enlightened prospects of Islam that calls for dialogue and civilized communication in the face of evil thoughts, extremist ideas, hatred and civilized clash. At the end of event, the council praised granting King Faisal Prize for Service to Islam this year. In addition, the session saw an increased number of the members of the Fiqh Academy, to accommodate the high-ranking scholars of the Islamic Ummah.



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Secretary-General
H.E. Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa

Supervisor General
Media Affairs Dept.
Abdulwahab Mohammed Alshahri

Chief Editor
Dr. Osman Abu Zeid

Editor
Mohammad Zakir Hossain

Layout and Graphic Designer
Khaled Awad Al-Muazzin

The Muslim World League Journal
P.O. Box: 537
Makkah, Saudi Arabia
Tel: 00966 (012) 5600919
E-mail:
mwljournal@themwl.org
www.themwl.org

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MWL offers prizes worth SR1M of “Fiqh Academy” and “Makkah Charter”

Makkah - MWL

The Supreme Council of the Muslim World League reiterated its support for the resolutions made in the historic summit meeting of the Islamic unity held by the Muslim World League in Makkah in 1440 AH.



Muslim scholars from around the world attended the meeting to discuss the Charter of Makkah

This declaration was made during the Supreme Council's 44th session, held in the Great Mosque of Makkah, in which high-ranking figures, scholars and dignitaries from 82 countries participated.

The council reiterated the call of the Islamic nation for abiding by the principles and values of the Shari'ah including the meanings of brotherhood, unity together with warning against the risks of division that had led to dividing the Islamic World.

The meeting, considered the most important and influential in the Islamic World, called for promoting the key role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that brings together all Islamic countries and exerts arduous efforts to bridge the gaps among countries of the Islamic world. The meeting also stressed that the Muslim Nation is looking forward to more cohesion and cooperation in this sensitive juncture.

In addition, the council condemned

the interference of some countries in the internal affairs of some Arab countries or the occupation of any part of their lands under any flimsy pretexts, condemning the Turkish intervention in Libya. The council stressed that raising awareness of Muslims of their civilized role is an important demand, commending the sincere efforts exerted by the Islamic countries concerned with the unity of the Islamic rank.

The council extended gratitude to the sincere and strenuous efforts of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and His Royal Highness Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, pertaining to the joint Islamic action initiatives and supporting efforts of peace and harmony around the world. During the meeting, prizes worth one million Saudi riyals were declared for the International Islamic Fiqh Academy affiliated to the Muslim World League and the Makkah Charter.



The Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the Prominent members of the Supreme Council

At the beginning of the meeting, the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, head of the Council of Senior Religious Scholars, President of Academic Research and Ifta, and Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Muslim World League, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al Asheikh, delivered a speech. He underscored the Kingdom's key role that has defended and sought to unify the Islamic nation and cared for all Muslims for decades. He also highlighted the arduous efforts exerted by the Supreme Council on directing events and programs of the Muslim World League and extended gratitude and appreciation to the Kingdom that has further supported and promoted these sin-

cere efforts.

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa said, "While being in the Great Mosque of Makkah, we commend the great Islamic and humanitarian efforts of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the sincere efforts exerted by Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman. The most notable of all these efforts are serving the Two Holy Mosques, the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah together with defending the Islamic issues".

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa added, "The Kingdom carried out many humanitarian actions around the world and sought to



HE Dr. Al-Issa receives the guests

unify the moderate Islamic discourse and launched world platforms to fight the extremist thought. All this has curbed the Islamophobia discourse”. He said Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman is the owner of the idea of the Makkah Charter and the staunch supporter and follower of all its phases. This charter, he said, expresses the moderate principles and values of Islam that call for civilizational dialogue and communication in face of the ideas of extremism, hatred and civilized clash.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said Islam invites all to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching and arguing with them in ways that are best and most gracious.

He commended the meeting for announcing a prize of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy, founded 44 years ago. This ancient academy issued great juristic opinions that tackled most Fiqh problematic issues in modern times. He made clear that the Fiqh Academy touched on the general issues of contemporary jurisprudence and clarified ambiguity and confusion in many jurisprudential cases.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said, “Fiqh Academy will declare an annual prize for those who offer great services to the Islamic Fiqh (jurisprudence) and deal with the latest Islamic developments”. He explained that the prize will be awarded to individuals and institutions, at a value of SR 50,000,



A part of the meeting of the Supreme Council

with a certificate and a medal having the logo of the Muslim World League and the Academy.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa noted that there will be an award in the name of the “Makkah Charter” that will be given to individuals and institutions for influential activities and deep scientific studies. The prize is at a value of SR 50,000, with a certificate and a medal having the logo of the Muslim World League and the Makkah Charter. He announced an increase in the members of the Fiqh Academy to accommodate senior scholars of the Islamic nation, taking into consideration their distinguished scientific personalities without their official job descriptions.

Chairman of the Fatwa Council of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah

Binbayyah, delivered a speech in which he spoke highly of the Muslim World League’s initiatives aimed at tackling and dealing with all Islamic issues, whereas the Muslim World League exerts efforts to promote peace and harmony among communities.

The Grand Mufti of Egypt and member of the Supreme Council of the Muslim World League, Shawky Allam, thanked in his speech the Muslim World League for its arduous and sincere efforts in serving Islamic issues and fighting extremist ideologies.

Egypt’s Minister of Endowments and a member of the Supreme Council of the Muslim World League said that Muslims are in a dire need to work on strengthening their relationship with their Creator



Ulama, and member of the Supreme Council of the Muslim World League touched on problems and issues of Muslims through this platform that works to discuss and solve issues that face Muslims.

Yemen's Minister of Endowments and member of the Council, Ahmad ZebinAttiah, delivered a speech in which he praised the Kingdom's efforts in the service of Islam and Muslims, stressing that the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation and Muslim World League are the Islamic world's foremost authority and the core reference for all Muslims.

Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hafiz Al-Nahawi, Chairman of the Forum of African Scholars, affirmed that the Kingdom is leading the Islamic world in all aspects. It is also a leading country in the sphere of spreading the values of moderation and tolerance under the leadership of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman.

(Allah) and rejecting extremism.

Dr. Ahmed Abbadi, the Secretary General of the Muhammadiyah League of Moroccan



A group picture of the meeting

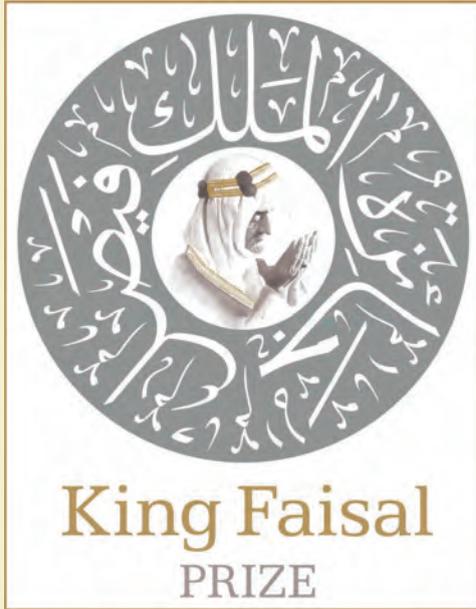


Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa values selection of Makkah Charter for King Faisal Prize

Makkah - MWL

Secretary-General of the Muslim World League (MWL) Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa has, on behalf of Muftis and scholars of the Makkah Document, expressed his deep praise after the Makkah Charter has been awarded the King

Faisal Prize for service of Islam this year. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa thanked the 1,200 muftis and scholars who approved this charter at a historic conference last Ramadan in Makkah, and who represented 27 doctrines and sects from 139 countries under the umbrella of the Muslim World League.



The MWL Secretary General extended gratitude to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud for his gracious patronage of the conference of this document and his speech at the opening session. He also thanked His Royal Highness Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown

Prince, Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense for his arduous efforts to support this Charter. The Crown Prince is the one who conceived the idea of the Makkah Charter that was issued by Muftis and scholars of the entire Islamic World.

The Islamic discourse, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said, is characterized by authenticity and contemporary. Makkah Charter has proven that the religious discourse takes into consideration the current conditions of the Islamic Nation. He pointed out that a general secretariat of the Charter had been formed to undertake all its executive affairs, stressing that the MWL that represents all Arab and Islamic nations is considered an extension of the message of Islam revealed more than 1400 years ago. The MWL Charter was formed about sixty years ago as a form of an institutional framework in accordance with its modern governance under the auspices of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is considered the key pioneer and guardian of the Islamic action all over the Islamic world.



MWL launches training programs to raise awareness of religious discourse

Makkah– MWL

The Muslim World League (MWL) has launched training programs to raise awareness of the religious discourse, characterized by its originality and authenticity. The programs come in line with the efforts to activate the Makkah Charter, described as an important road map for contemporary religious discourse by a raft of high-ranking scholars and intellectuals. The Muslim well-informed scholars should play an im-

portant role to promote the enlightened religious discourse.

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, made clear that such training programs focus on a raft of topics that are included in the terms of Makkah Charter.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa stressed that Makkah Charter, arising from its international conference organized by the Muslim World League under the auspices of Custodian of



The Council witnessed a very important meeting

the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud last Ramadan, was the idea of Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Muhammad bin Salman. More than 1,200 muftis and scholars attended this conference from 27 schools representing all Islamic schools and sects in an unprecedented Islamic gathering. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said the Crown Prince is the one who came up with the idea of the Charter and supported this great historical Islamic project until it saw the light of day.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa pointed out that the Muslim World League General Secretariat looks forward to the contributions of scholars and intellectuals from the Islamic nation to raise awareness of the paramount importance of this charter together with highlighting its meanings and substance. This led to launching two awards of

Makkah Charter and International Islamic Fiqh Academy. The Supreme Council of the Muslim World League declared this after holding the extraordinary meeting in the Great Mosque of Makkah in 1441 AH in the presence of high-ranking scholars and Islamic dignitaries representing members of the Council together with senior Islamic figures invited to the launching ceremony of the two awards.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa noted that the MWL paid more attention to renewing the religious discourse that portrays the true image of Islam, whereas it calls for the right path with wisdom and gentle exhortation. He also said that the religious discourse should go beyond the repeated themes of forums and conferences in the past years and should be translated into a concrete practical reality that takes into account the conditions of each environment in which Muslims live.



Renowned scholars hail Islamic Fiqh and Makkah Charter prizes

By Qais Bajaifer

The two prizes launched recently by the Supreme Council of the Muslim World League in Makkah have come at a critical juncture of the Islamic history with one main objective in mind: highlighting the key values of moderation, tolerance and coexistence based on the Shari'ah. Both prizes have received the admiration and praise of prominent scholars who unanimously agreed that the prizes come in line with the Kingdom's continuous and sincere efforts to unify Muslims and enhance Islamic solidarity, and above all dispel the misconceptions promulgated about Islam.

The Islamic Fiqh (Jurisprudence) Prize and the Makkah Charter Prize - both worth one million Saudi riyals - have been launched to prove that the Shari'ah message is suitable for contemporary times and all times and also to reflect the enormous responsibility the Muslim World League shoulders towards Muslims all over the world. Moreover, they underscore the efforts it continues to exert to portray the real image of Islam to the entire world.



Islamic Fiqh Prize

The Islamic Fiqh Prize will be awarded to anyone who has rendered valuable and exceptional services to the Islamic Fiqh and shown how the Shari'ah is capable of handling all emerging matters and challenges in all times and how it deals with a Fiqh issue from an enlightening perspective while taking the conditions and circumstances of the current times into consideration.

One is considered qualified to win the prize if they show how the Shari'ah accommodates all evolving matters and challenges based on its core values of wisdom, mercy, tolerance and moderation. The work submitted for this prize should be written using a contemporary language and most importantly should bring out the identity of Islamic Fiqh. The work should highlight the difference between understanding a text and applying it in reality.

Furthermore, the prize will shed light on prominent Fiqh scholars who can highlight through their works the renewed meaning of the Islamic discourse and how it can address issues of present times and find contemporary solutions to today's problems. The work should elucidate how the Shari'ah handles the problems and calamities Muslims around the world face while proving at the same

time the supremacy of the Islamic Fiqh over human-made laws. It should dispel misconceptions and suspicions raised because of Islamophobia.

The prize, which will be awarded to individuals and institutions, is comprised of a check of SR500,000, a certificate and a medal bearing the logo of the Muslim World League and the Islamic Fiqh Academy.

Makkah Charter Prize

The Makkah Charter Prize will be offered to individuals and institutions that have promoted the Makkah Charter globally or conducted an influential study or research on it. The work should emphasize and demonstrate the values promoted by the Makkah Charter including coexistence among the followers of different religions and cultures while at the same time enhance the foundations of coexistence among members of civilian society with all its ethnic components.

The work should highlight the principles of the Makkah Charter, the most important of which is that religious and cultural diversity in human societies does not justify conflict and clashes but it should act as a catalyst for a positive civilizational partnership and active communication. More clearly, diversity



Sheikh Abdullah Binbayyah is arriving the meeting

should be understood as a bridge for dialogue and understanding for the benefit of all humankind.

The prize is worth SR500,000 and the winner will receive a certificate, and a medal with the logo of the MWL and the Makkah Charter.

Scholars commend the prizes

Prominent scholars in the Islamic World have commended both prizes. The Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Sheikh Abdulaziz Al Asheikh said both prizes come in line with the Kingdom's sincere efforts to



unify the Islamic nation and promote the values of coexistence, tolerance and peace. Al-Ashikh, who is also the head of the Council of Senior Religious Scholars and the President of Academic Research and Ifta, thanked the Supreme Council of the Muslim World League for the role it has played in launching both prizes.

The MWL Secretary General said the prizes will definitely enhance the efforts exerted by the Kingdom towards promoting moderate Islamic discourse around the world to eradicate all forms of extremism and terrorism. He noted that the prizes will help also curb the proliferation of Islamophobia, especially in Europe and emphasize the values of Islam calling for civilizational dialogue and communication. He noted that the prizes will also clarify ambiguity and confusion in many of the jurisprudential issues.

Sheikh Abdullah Binbayyah, Chairman of the Fatwa Council of the United Arab Emirates, said the prizes will spur scholars on to focus on contemporary Islamic issues while the Grand Mufti of Egypt Sheikh Shawky Allam, described the prizes as effective instruments for fighting extremist ideologies.

In his opinion, Dr. Ahmed Abbadi, the Secretary General of the Muhammadiyah League of Moroccan Ulama, said the prizes will act as a platform tackling and handling contemporary issues that touch upon the life of Muslims around the world.

Ahmad Attiyah, Minister of Endowments, Yemen and Sheikh Muhammad Al-Nahawi, Chairman of the Forum of African Scholars, agreed that the prizes will promote the values of moderation and tolerance in the whole world and accentuate the great values of Islamic Fiqh.



The MWL is well equipped to deliver the core values of Islam

Mohammad Zakir Hossain

PROF. DR. WAKAR UDDIN, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF “ARAKAN ROHINGYA UNION” and Rohingya American, is a Professor at the Pennsylvania State University, a Supreme Council Member of the Muslim World League. He is actively seeking a political solution to the problems faced by the Rohingya ethnic minority in Burma and advocating for the protection of Rohingya and peaceful coexistence among fellow ethnic minorities in Burma. He was recently in Makkah to attend the 44th Session of the Supreme Council of the Muslim World League (MWL), which was held under the auspices of the MWL. Muhammad Zakir Hossain, Editor of the MWL Journal, spoke to him on the sidelines of the conference on a range of issues concerning Islam and Muslims in the world as well as the Ummah. Following are the excerpts of the interview:



Q. How productive and effective did you find the very important meeting organized by MWL?

A. The meeting organized by MWL was very productive. His Excellency Secretary General delivered a powerful speech that is very compelling and relevant to the current affairs in the Ummah. Honorable speakers also made a strong case on how the Ummah can make more collective efforts to address issues faced by Muslims across the globe. It is crucial that The MWL sustains such meetings in response to the newly emerging situ-

ations affecting Muslims in various parts of the world.

Q. The conference passed some important resolutions on issues related to Muslim unity and peace. How do you see their practical implementations?

A. The resolutions passed at the meeting were landmark for the Muslim Ummah. The meeting and the resolutions came at a very critical juncture when greater unity within the Ummah is becoming a top priority. The practical implementation of the resolution will require a series of steps



MWL's dynamic engagement with various national and international civic societies, will pave the way for reaching out to grassroots communities that are blind-sided by negative stereotyping of Islam and Muslims by media and extremist groups

through short-term and long-term strategic planning. Our communities/nations in the Ummah should formulate the strategy based on what brings us together, rather than what separates us. That is clearly the common denominator in the Ummah based on the teaching by our Prophet (peace be upon him). That is the place where all of us unequivocally agree and follow the principles and values that we are taught in our faith. An important initiative I envision is that the MWL can further assert its role through the designation of ambassadors of peace for specific regional issues affecting the Ummah due to the newly emerging trend in the international political climate.

Q. What do you think are the main causes for the state of instability and disunity facing the Ummah today?

A. I believe that the perceived instability and disunity is not as wide as it is portrayed by certain media and hostile sectors that are against Islamic values. Nonetheless, there

exist some instability and disunity in certain regions. My view is that there are elements behind such instability, manipulated through geopolitical maneuvering. Apparently, the motive behind creating the turbulence in the Ummah is a distraction tactic. Of course, the problems have been directed towards our communities/nations and they became the spectators. I believe that we have the think-thanks in the Ummah that can effectively play central roles in finding solutions in narrowing the gaps within the Ummah.

Q. What are the other issues facing the Muslim Ummah?

A. Other issues facing the Muslim Ummah are Muslim minority issues, the development of some third world Muslim countries, and Dawah for young generations. Issues faced by Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries such as Myanmar, India, China, and several other countries are of tremendous magnitude. For example, genocide faced by Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar – the crisis has caused a domino effect in other countries with the refugee crisis and human-trafficking issues. Also, there are certain Muslim countries that are least developed due to a lack of infrastructure. Prosperous Muslim countries should increase aid to these countries. Alhamdulillah, Muslim communities in the West continue to flourish and there are new generations advancing educationally and professionally. Most of the young generations have been able to sustain their culture and religion through practice; yet we have tremendous needs for assisting those that are lagging behind. There are various tools available to provide Islamic education to young generations in countries where access is limited. Our communities should take advantage of the online Islamic education available today. May Allah bless the scholars from Pakistan and other countries that have



MWL Journal Editor interviewing Dr. Wakar Uddin during the Meeting of the Supreme Council

made a significant impact on Islamic education through online teaching.

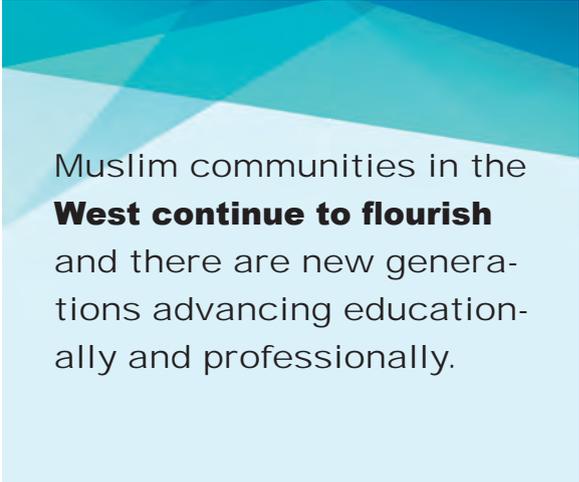
Q- How do you think the Muslim Ummah can be united?

A-The Muslim community worldwide is culturally diverse, and that tends to cause distinct and indistinct clusters within the Muslim Ummah into groups orienting towards its own community or nationality. The Ummah can be united through continuous efforts by all of us by narrowing the gaps and building strong bridges culturally, socially, politically, geographically, as well as through other attributes that will inspire us to adhere to a common vision for the unity in the Ummah. We all have to place our Islamic faith first as the common denominator, leaving the cultur-

al, social, political, ethnic, and geographical attributes as the secondary.

Q- The MWL initiative on the religious and civilizational dialogue has received great attention in the West. How could the global culture of dialogue among civilizations be built up and improved?

A-The basic ingredient for building a global culture of dialogue among civilizations is mutual respect, understanding, tolerance, and accurate insights to the values of the other side. Extremism in any society can be a major hindrance in bringing civilizations together; therefore, the MWL may use its rigorous outreach programs and dialogue to serve as the catalyst in increasingly building the bridge of mutual understanding



Muslim communities in the **West continue to flourish** and there are new generations advancing educationally and professionally.

and peaceful coexistence. MWL's dynamic engagement with various national and international civic societies, religious institutions, government ministries, and even head of states will pave the way for reaching out to grassroots communities that are blindsided by negative stereotyping of Islam and Muslims by media and extremist groups. One good example of this will be tri-lateral engagement through the formation of a faith-based informal or formal alliance (Has the Vatican ever been an ally to Muslims? I think this answer should be reviewed by the MWL journal staff) with the Vatican. Building bridges between Christian groups and the Muslim Ummah through MWL's outreach dialogue efforts. Bringing Islam closer to Christian communities through MWL's outreach dialogue efforts.

Q- Critics of political Islam consider Shari'ah law as a threat to their society. How can we change this stereotyped image of Islam and its vital institutions?

A- Shari'ah law is not a threat to any society, but it has been manipulated by certain extremist media groups and Islamophobic political adventurists for their personal gains.

Aggressive media coverage by all of us as an Ummah and educating the West through various media establishments and social media outlets can deliver the positive message about our great Islamic jurisprudence, which is no threat to any society in the West or the East. The basic message to the skeptics should be that there is no such thing called Shari'ah law because Shari'ah itself means law in Arabic, and it is a law, a set of rules for the governance of the people of the Islamic faith. It is a guide, a path that helps a Muslim find resolutions with regards to property, marriage, charity, family, social norms, and others. Shari'ah is a set of religious principles that form a part of the Islamic way of life. The skeptics should be educated that the Islamic jurisprudence is based on the core value of Islam, which is most modest and moderate.

Q- Islamophobia is a growing concern for several governments. It is a major issue today on a global level. How can we tackle this phenomenon?

A-It can be tackled at least in two ways. First, we, the Islamic society in Muslim and non-Muslim countries, should set the example of what Islam actually is. Many people do not know Islam well and they come in contact with Islam through us. If we can adhere to our core Islamic values and effectively expose them to the non-Muslim communities, particularly in the West, the perception can change. Second, the Muslim Ummah should have a unified strategy to aggressively counter the negative stereotyping of Muslims in the West and some countries in East. Any rift developing within our Muslim Ummah or between countries or regions provides a boost to the Islamophobic media and elements.

Q- What could possibly be the best global mechanism to create a congenial

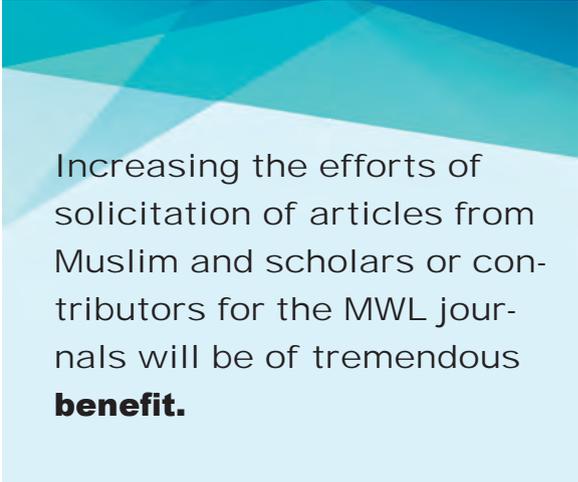


Dr. Wakar Uddin during the meeting

atmosphere that can facilitate civilizational interactions and bring about peace and security in the world? What role the MWL can play in this regard?

A- I believe that the best global mechanism to create a congenial atmosphere that can facilitate bringing about peace and security is fundamentally through a meaningful interfaith and intercultural engagement that can educate the core values of each civilization to the other. The notion of superiority and higher values of one civilization over the other that exists in various parts of the world must be abolished. The growing nationalism and religious intolerance in some countries in the West and the East should be confronted through education and outreach by moderate

leadership in all civilizations. The MWL is well equipped to deliver the core values of Islam through its global outreach programs aiming at Islamophobic establishments in the United States, Europe, China, India, Myanmar, and other countries. The current outreach programs of the MWL can further extend its conferences (a seminar is similar to a symposium), symposiums, scholarly lectures to universities and religious institutions worldwide. Greater efforts should be made to market the success of the outreach activities through the broadcast, print, and electronic media. Such programs should also aim at our own Islamic communities to promote moderation and to educate those who hold extremist views.



Increasing the efforts of solicitation of articles from Muslim and scholars or contributors for the MWL journals will be of tremendous **benefit.**

Q- What is your opinion regarding the situation of Muslim minorities all over the world?

A- Situation of Muslim minorities varies with countries in regions. Despite some negative rhetoric by certain political leaders in the West, there is no serious negative impact on Muslim communities in the West. Isolated incidences infrequently emerge. However, the situation of Muslim minorities in the East such as China, India, and Myanmar is a major concern. All forms of violations against Muslim minorities in those countries are evidently widespread and deeply institutionalized. The violations clearly appear to be based on religious intolerance, rather than mere cultural or communal disharmony. The isolated and shallow negative environment in the West may be moderated through rigorous outreach and engagement. On the contrary, tremendous challenges exist in the countries in the East as these violations are institutionalized through government policies and legislations.

Q- How do you find our content published in the MWL Journal and its website? How do you suggest us to improve them?

A- Overall, the contents in the MWL Journal and website are very good. Nonetheless, there is always room for improvement. Aggressively delivering the message of the core values of Islam such as peace, tolerance, kindness to all humankind, generosity, openness, etc., is central to shaping the views of other societies on Islam. Increasing the efforts of solicitation of articles from Muslim and scholars or contributors for the MWL journals will be of tremendous benefit. The media division of MWL should maintain stronger ties with world's major broadcast and print news media outlets. For example, the relentless travels globally by MWL Secretary General and meetings with religious dignitaries and world leaders should be more widely advertised.

Q- Will you say something about the situation of Islam and Muslims in the United States of America?

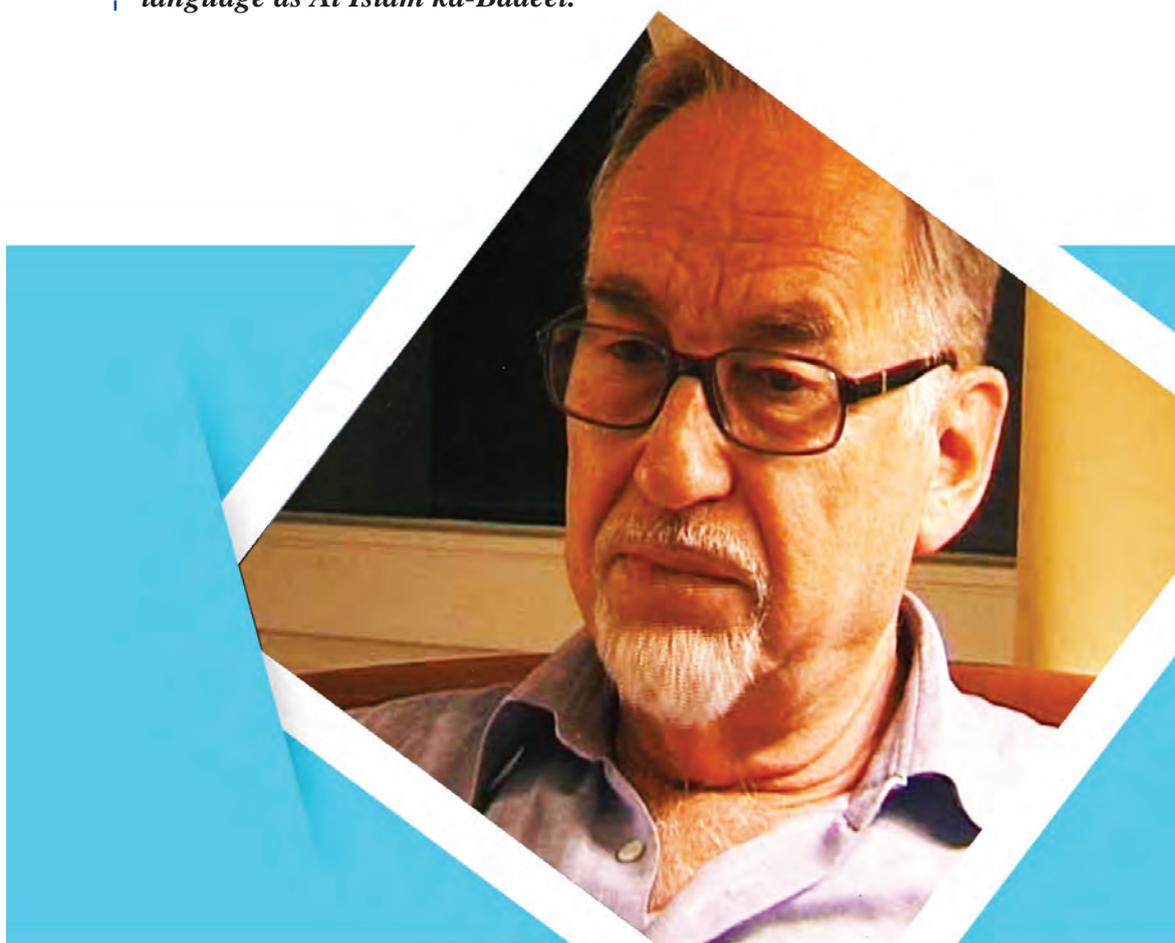
A-The situation of Islam and Muslims in the United States remains overall favorable, despite some infrequent and isolated negative development. Muslims and the people of all other faith in the United States fully enjoy the freedom of religion, and the government has established policies on freedom of religion as well as anti-discrimination and hate-crime laws. In response to some negative rhetoric in certain political circles in the country in recent years, there is a growing trend of a major shift in the views of renowned media establishments on Islam and Muslims that is creating a more positive environment. There is still a major gap in urban and rural societies of the United States in their views of Islam; however, the gap is likely to narrow in favor of Islam when the political environment begins to change – and it will, Insha Allah. The United States remains one of the countries where the core values of Islam can thrive.

MURAD HOFMANN

(1931 – 2020): An Obituary

By Ahmed Kamaleldin M. H. Izzeddin

Born into a Catholic family on July 6, 1931 in Germany, Dr. Murad Wilfred Hofmann reverted to Islam. Upon his decease on January 13, 2020, following a long struggle with illness, he left behind a legacy of informed works on Islam and his personal experience of it, with his “Islam as an Alternative” being among the most influential. It was initially written in German but was translated into the Arabic language as Al Islam ka-Badeel.



Murad Hofmann went to Union College in Schenectady, New York, in 1950, and later he studied German law at Munich University, graduating in 1957 with a doctorate in jurisprudence. He also obtained a master's degree in American law at Harvard Law School, in 1960. His work experience included serving with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) at Brussels, Belgium, between 1983 and 1987 as Director for Information. He had by then already embraced Islam in 1980 and performed Umrah (the lesser pilgrimage to Makkah) in 1982. Later, in 1992, he would perform full pilgrimage, or Hajj. Ironically, he assumed such a rather prominent office at NATO despite the vicious antagonism which he faced on the German media following his exercise of free choice relating to his spiritual conviction, but he experienced no problems exercising his career duties.

Dr. Hofmann also served as diplomat for his country, focusing on nuclear defence issues, posted as attaché in 1961 then ambassador in 1987 in Algeria up to 1990. From then until 1994 he served as German Ambassador to Morocco. He resigned his foreign service voluntarily in 1995 and took residence in Istanbul with his Turkish wife, Neeuz Bulben. He published his book, *Diary of a German Muslim*, in German language in 1985. This was also translated into Arabic by the Cairo-based Al-Ahram Centre for Translation and Publishing.

Four years after his reversion to Islam Dr Hofmann received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, which was awarded to him by German President Dr. Carl Carstens.

His seminal work, *Islam as an Alternative*, was addressed to "Westerners who seek to understand Islam on a personal level". This is most interesting, as it touches deep into the current debate on the role of Islam in



society, and whether it should be restricted, as in the case of Christianity for example, within the domain of private life, or it may also extend to guide the collective public behaviour within the arena of governance and political discourse. However, the approach taken by Dr Hofmann was confined to the function of introducing the message initially, leaving the comprehensive role of Islamic guidance intact. To Dr Hofmann, Islam should be relevant in all places and for all times. His work, *Islam 2000*, goes into detail to describe where the Muslim World is at the threshold of the current times, i.e. some two decades ago, and the conditions necessary for the faith to establish its full and sustainable relevance.

Dr Hofmann's reversion to Islam was predicated by several events and experiences. His service as a diplomatic attaché from 1961 and over a decade and a half later as Ambassador to Algeria exposed him to the vicious liberation struggle by Algerians against the French colonial rule, a struggle which had already started some years back in the early 1950s. He carefully monitored



the collective and individual behavior by this Muslim people.

Dr. Hofmann wrote, “I witnessed the patience and resilience of the Algerian people in the face of extreme suffering, their overwhelming discipline during Ramadan, their confidence of victory, as well as their humanity amidst misery”. Dr Hofmann related such vehemence by the Algerians in the face of cruelty and suppression to their religion, which attracted him to the study of their holy book, the Quran, which “I have never stopped reading it, to this very day”. One particular incident, however, remained carved in his memory and, among other things, significantly affected his spiritual course in life:

“I realized their humanity in its most sincere form, when my wife had an abortion under the influence of the current events,” says Dr Murad Hofmann of an experience that dug into the morals of the Algerian people. “She started bleeding at midnight, and the ambulance could not come to us before 6 o’clock, am; because of the curfew,

and because of the slogan “murder without warning” raised then. After a long delay, we were on our way to the doctor’s office, and my wife thought, in the meantime, that she would lose consciousness, so, in anticipation of the emergency, she started telling me that her blood type was negative O RH, and the Algerian driver heard her talk, offering to donate [...] some of his blood that is of the same blood type. Here is a Muslim who donates his blood, in the midst of war, to save a foreigner from his religion.”

Dr Hofmann recorded in a 12-page manuscript what he considered unquestionably true from a philosophical viewpoint, and then he presented this to Muhammad Ahmed Rassoul, a Muslim Imam of Cologne, for his review. Imam Rassoul’s remark having read the manuscript was that if Dr Hofmann believed in what he had written, then he was a Muslim! A few days later, on 25 September 1980, Dr. Hofmann declared, ‘I bear witness that there is no divinity besides Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is Allah’s messenger’.

I began to see Islam with its own eyes, as the unadulterated, pristine belief in the one and only, the true God, Who does not beget, and was not begotten, Whom nothing and nobody resembles. In place of the qualified deism of a tribal God and the constructions of a divine Trinity, the Qur'an showed me the most lucid, most straightforward, the most abstract – thus historically most advanced and least anthropomorphic concept of God. The Qur'an's ontological statements, as well as its ethical teachings, impressed me as profoundly plausible, 'as good as gold', so there was no room for even the slightest doubt about the authenticity of Muhammad's prophetic mission. People who understand human nature cannot fail to appreciate the infinite wisdom of the 'Dos and Don'ts' handed down from God to man in the form of the Qur'an.

As he was already devoted to art and beauty, Dr Hofmann was fascinated with Islamic art, especially in the Spanish cities of Granada, Cordoba, and Seville in south Spain and Andalusia. He wrote, "Its secret seems to lie in the intimate and universal presence of Islam as a religion in all of its artistic manifestations, calligraphy, space filling arabesque ornaments, carpet patterns, mosque and housing architecture, as well as urban planning. I am thinking of the brightness of the mosques which banishes any mysticism, of the democratic spirit of their architectural layout." "I am also thinking of the introspective quality of the Muslim palaces, their anticipation of paradise in gardens full of shade, fountains, and rivulet; of the intricate socially functional structure of old Islamic urban centres (madinahs), which fosters community spirits and transparency of the market, tempers heat and wind, and assures the integration of the mosque and adjacent welfare centre for the poor, schools and

hostels into the market and living quarters. What I experienced is so blissfully Islamic in so many places ... is the tangible effect which Islamic harmony, the Islamic way of life, and the Islamic treatment of space leave on both heart and mind."

Furthermore, Dr Hofmann was allured by the Islamic concept of basic freedom, or emancipation of man, especially for someone from a Judo-Christian background of notions such as the "original sin", and the need to get someone other than man to be tortured and crucified for mankind to be absolved of their burden of sin. He found relief in the Quranic verse, "... no bearer of burdens shall bear the burdens of another". To Dr Hofmann, embracing Islam was rather a path towards real liberty and emancipation of the soul. Islam provided a spiritual regime in which Jesus does not have to suffer or offer sacrifice. Hofmann realised the existence of God, through analysis of works by several philosophers, including Wittgenstein, Pascal, Swinburn, and Kant, then he thought about the medium whereby God would communicate guidance to His creatures. He then came to believe in revelation as such medium. The next step was to shop around for the most authentic revelation among the various narratives under different religions. The aforementioned verse of the Quran not only caused him relief, but also provided him with vision in relation to individual responsibility, and liberty from intercession by saints or the domination of man by the clergy. Prayers are to be said or offered directly to God the Almighty who can hear all individuals without any necessary mediation or intercession. Dr Murad Hofmann Wilfred Hofmann who, like all of us, came from God, is back unto Him. Inna Lillahi wa Innaa Ilayhi Raji'oon: Unto God we belong, and unto Him we shall return.

Global Climate Strikes: An Islamic Perspective

Jawzi Lardjane

Since the last week of September 2019, massive international protests on climate change have been taking place in more than 150 countries in response to the United Nations Climate Summit on September 23rd in New York City. The worldwide protests are the largest climate strikes in history. Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg inspired the strikes by taking off since a year ago time from her class every Friday to stage a protest outside the Swedish parliament; hence the name of the movement Friday for Futures.



Regardless of the climate change controversies, it is a reality that received different interpretations by deniers and believers, which caused much confusion to the public. There are many consequences of environmental degradation such as pollution, genetically-modified food effects, and global warming, which is just an aspect of climate change. Whether with or without the occurrence of climate change, humans are obligated to deal with the consequences of their anti-environmental activities sooner or later and take care of their environment and tackle the issues at any time and place.

To get someone persuaded about climate change, we have to point at the victims of environmental change: animals and plants. According to the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the United Nations released in May 2019, the entire biodiversity of the earth has suffered a catastrophic decline unprecedented in history; an estimated 82% of wild mammal biomass and 50% of plants have been lost. It is also estimated that half of the forests covering the earth had been lost between 1852 and 1947.

Islamic Worldview of the Environment

Allah said in the Holy Qur'an: It is He who has produced gardens, both trellised and untrellised, and date palms and field crops, all varying in taste, and the olive and the pomegranate, both similar and dissimilar. Eat their fruits when they bear fruit and give away what is due to them on the day of their harvest. And do not be wasteful. Indeed, Allah does not like those who commit excess. (Surat Al-An'am, Verse, 141)

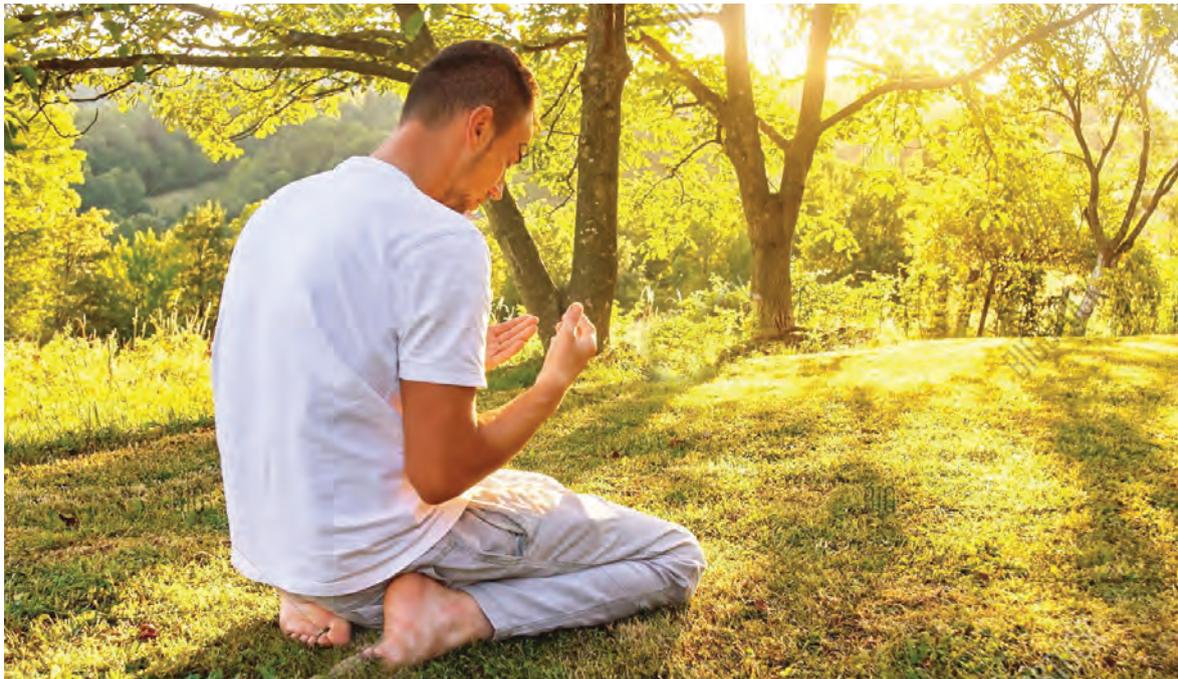
Earth is a Masjid (Mosque). When a Muslim treats the earth like a Masjid, it will be clean and peaceful like a Masjid. As passers-

by in this temporary life, our God-designated mission is to serve and protect the environment by following our natural disposition (fitrah) and by achieving stewardship on the earth. Humans are vicegerents of Allah on earth and are supposed to preserve the earth with which they have been entrusted. Catastrophes caused by modern man are the result of forgetting God; without the belief in God, men are like unconscious children hurting themselves and leading themselves astray.

The Islamic worldview on the environment was one of the principal causes of the rapid spread of Islam. Non-Muslims could notice the sincerity of Muslims in their relationship with the environment, and this made them wholeheartedly join the religion of Islam. Social justice was at its peak not only among those governed under Islam but also among animals and plants in Muslim lands. Islam has a strong position in every issue, and it is the first religion and constitution that declared the rights of the earth through the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah and introduced laws and regulations to serve and protect the environment.

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, declared Makkah and Madinah the first nature reserves in history. Their residents and visitors are explicitly forbidden to hunt, cut flora, and misbehave. Not only these two holiest cities but also all of the earth because Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: 'The earth is your mother.*' He also said: 'The entire earth is a Mosque', and He said: 'If anyone cuts a tree, Allah brings him headlong into Hell.'

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, encouraged Muslims to walk barefoot in their daily walks to nurture in them down-to-earth attitudes and simple living. He taught his followers the true meaning of the



environment and living in harmony with all creations. Omar bin Al-Khattab, one of the close companions of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “If a lost sheep under my care were to die on the banks of the Euphrates, I would expect Allah the Exalted to question me about it on the Day of Resurrection.” Another student and companion of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, Uday bin Hatim Al-Ta’i, may Allah be pleased with him, used to feed breadcrumbs to the ants next door and when asked why he was doing so, he answered those ants are our neighbors, and they have the rights of neighbors.

Environmental awareness is a crucial aspect of Islam that reflected in urban planning and architecture with styles designed to remind its residents of the gardens of heaven. Islam teaches us to live in harmony between the spiritual and physical aspects of life by reminding its followers to conduct a life of

supplications with green aspirations. Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, once said to Abu Huraira, may Allah be pleased with him: “Whoever says Subhan Allah il ‘azeem wa bi hamdihi (Glory and praise be to Allah, the Almighty), a palm tree will be planted for him in Paradise.’ He also said: ‘If the Day of Judgment comes to you, and you have a shoot in your hand, so plant it!’

Down-to-earth attitudes teach humans to decrease their material attachment and ambitions that ruin the environment. When people know this worldly life is insignificant like a wing of a fly, they will understand that the beautiful side of it is just a branch hiding the tree of the hereafter. Stewardship could be achieved by the combination of sincere faith and good deeds; hence, there should be harmony between the spiritual and physical aspects of life. Observing the peaceful balance between animals and their intuitive praise and glorification of Allah teaches humans the skill of meditation, which

in the modern language means understanding the language of nature and its objectives.

Environmentalism around the World

Global warming temperature rise comes from continued carbon dioxide releases predominantly from the developing world such as China and India as they need more energy to improve the standard of living of their people and to hasten the civilizational pace of their nations. One and two centuries ago, it was the developing West that used to release more carbon emission, and now it is the Asian continent, and probably in the future, South America and Africa could join the race. If sustainable and alternative energies are not massively implemented, there will be disastrous consequences on the earth unable to fulfill humanity's false needs.

The world economic order made the road of development for the non-developed countries deadlocked because of the impossibility to realize a balance based on the existing civilizational process and resource exploitation. The resources of the earth are not sufficient to satisfy all people on the planet and to make them all live the same lifestyle of the minority, which is controlling the world economy. Statistics reports show that this minority alone exhausts most of the resources of the earth, which will cause them to perish by the end of this century unless practical solutions are soon implemented. If resources are consumed moderately and equally, the earth could easily suffice twenty billion people for many centuries, but at the current consumption rates, it will not last more than a century to end all the natural resources.

Most of the political and economic problems in the world will be resolved if environmental and sustainable energy policies are implemented. A post-industrial age is on

the brink and men should stop using conventional and classical means in their protests for the environment. Some developing countries understood this and are saving and producing cleaner and less expensive energies. For example, Brazil has changed its economic policies since the 1970th oil crisis and implemented renewable energies that helped the country save 85 % of electricity thanks to sugarcane ethanol fuel (one of the most important and successful alternative fuel today), and ethanol fuel-based or "flex-fuel" consumed by cars counts 90 % of fuel used in Brazil despite that the country is oil-rich.

The roots of contemporary environmentalism date back to the early days of Islam when Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, founded the first nature reserves in history and issued legislations and teachings to preserve the environment and its components. In the course of history, Muslim scholars and rulers elaborated on these teachings and turned them into an accomplished field of ecology, such as Al-Sakhawi in his *Treatise on Animal Rights*. The efforts made by consecutive Muslim states are carefully examined by western researchers such as Yale University professor of history Alan Mikhail in his works *Under Osman's Tree*, and *Water on Sand: Environmental History of the Middle East and North Africa*.

The first contemporary work on Islamic ecology entitled "Islam and Ecology" was published in 1992 by Fazlun Khan, a retired British-Pakistani Air Force officer, who founded in 1994 the first Islamic environmental organization named 'Islamic Foundation for Ecology and the Environment'. Its activities focus on presenting the teachings of Islam on the environment, raising awareness among Muslims, producing and disseminating learning materials. Its founder has been



described for many years by fellow environmentalists as “the single most active environmentalist alive today”. In 2010 in the United States, a new wave of Islamic environmentalism was inspired by ‘Green Deen’ of Ibrahim Abdu-al-Matin, which received a foreword by Keith Ellison, the first Muslim member of the congress.

On the states level, Morocco has become a leading country in the field of eco-Mosques, and it has been greening around 600 mosques yearly since 2016. Turkey ranks first in the Muslim World and fifth globally in forestation despite having high and diverse flora, and it is also considered worldwide one of the leading countries in sustainable energies. Between 2014 and 2017, Pakistan’s Khyber province finished planting more than a billion trees under the initiative of a Billion Tree Tsunami and vowed to plant 10 billion trees in a five years project ongoing between 2018 and 2023 called Plant for Pakistan project.

Faith and the Environment

Considering religion as a mere historical phase or generator might just be used as a

reverse argument against its very claimants because in all cases the disclaimer already states that religion has been a foundation stone for new cultures and civilizations; therefore, the world still needs a unique religion to launch a new civilization. Moreover, most environmentalists do not tackle environmentalism as a road for global welfare based on the principles of the universal neighborhood in Islam.

Islam has a rich intellectual and scientific tradition on the environment and ecology, starting from the Qur’an and Sunnah, to the contributions of Islamic civilization. These Islamic teachings have been translated into action during the daily life of Muslims during Islamic civilization. Islam is the only religion and civilization that has given impetus to the cause of the environment. One of the examples of scientific responsibility motivated by faith and God-fearing morals is the story of Ibn Al-Haythem, the father of modern optics, who went on hiding from authorities to avoid building a giant dam for a Fatimid ruler who intended to use it to control water and excise water monopoly over the neighboring countries.



Relations between the environment and man deteriorated during the same period that the mind-body problem emerged in secular academia. It is said that a healthy mind is in a healthy body, while the truth is that a healthy mind is in a healthy spirit or heart. Ancient civilizations had advanced forms of

knowledge they are remembered for, but they had disappeared because of an imbalance between mind and soul that, therefore, reflected in their unbalance with the environment.

Instead of arguing why environmentalism failed, we should search for the deep reasons that the majority of human beings



are unwilling to change, and are just passive watchers instead of being active stewards. Technological and scientific progress failed for decades to predict environmental issues that resulted from frivolous development; and therefore, failed to prepare and educate man to preserve the environment. Humanity is facing the most challenging environmental crisis in history, which it has caused with its own hands. Human immigration and movement are no longer solutions to avoid natural disasters. The genuine reasons for the environmental crisis are individualism and disbelief. The notion of God is dead has cut love of nature from us, and the spiritual cord between human beings and nature.

Nature and the environment play two essential roles in the life of a Muslim. One that is to realize servitude to God through true spirituality, and the other to use nature moderately to provide livelihood without excesses and wasting. True spirituality is not sitting down in a canoe in the middle of a lake or on a top of a mountain to feel tranquility; it has nothing to do with protecting nature because,

in this sense, many criminals had also been spiritual.

True spirituality teaches men to take responsibility as stewards on the earth while false spirituality teaches us to watch narcissistically at nature while thinking it is part of us, while in reality, we are part of it. Nature is like an ark taking us to the other world, and we should protect this ark that could sink if not taken care of. The fruit of true spirituality lies in knowing that the truth about this life is a cultivation for the hereafter, and acting responsibly out of commitment without the fear of laws and scientific speculations.

The role of faith is indispensable for the preservation of the environment. Einstein is thought to have said: science without religion is lame. One of the founders of modern environmentalist Ernst Friedrich Schumacher was born and raised a dedicated atheist, but later rejected materialism, atheism, and became a devout Christian. His works on environmentalism in the 1970th became cornerstones in the history of the movement, particularly in the fields of alternative economics and green

science. However, he did not live long to witness that Islamic economics and finance are environmentally friendly and compliant more than other legal and economic systems.

Preservation of the Environment in Islamic Law

Science and religion should reconcile the relationship between man and the environment before more disasters occur. Science needs a legal and spiritual framework with divine guidance and prophetic experience. Islam came with the best spiritual laws and legal guidelines to perpetually guide humanity to a positive change. Problems cannot be solved with the same thinking used when creating those problems. A real change shall happen when a cultural renaissance is based on genuine concepts: Monotheism or Tawhid, Ubudiyah or Servitude, Excellence or Ihsaan, Natural Predisposition or Fitrah, Moderation or Wasatiyya, Simple living or Zuhd, Preservation of the Faculties of Shari'ah, Justice or Adl, Responsibility or Amanah, and Stewardship.

In mid-2010, Charles Prince of Wales and heir apparent to the British throne delivered a speech at Oxford University on Islam and the environment in which he stressed that Islam is the best way for the environment, and called the world to pursue Islamic morals and models on the environment. He concluded his conference quoting a famous Arabian saying "the best of all Mosques is Nature herself." Moreover, a UN Environment Program report published recently said that the Islamic worldview represents a unique model for a transition to sustainable development.

Renewable and alternative energies, green technologies, as well as faithful scientism, are not just solutions for reducing climate change and restoring the environment. They are also a way to comprehensive development,

global balance, peace and prosperity, which are Shari'ah-compliant and have their place within the framework of Maqasid Al-Shari'ah (preservation of the five faculties of man in Shari'ah: intellect, faith, health, wealth, and family). To mention but a few examples of the role of Shari'ah in the preservation of human and environmental health, is its position on the prohibition of smoking in the 16th century before modern-day medical findings on smoking in the 1950s, and before anti-smoking regulations began to be implemented in the 1970s.

Due to the importance of environmental management, there is an urgent need for contemporary scholars and thinkers to incorporate the preservation of the environment as the sixth purpose of Islamic law. We live in an interconnected and hyperactive world, which needs to consider the conservation, legislation, and management of the environment as the sixth maqсад because, in the actual developing pace of humanity, one country's plans affect the others.

Islam, as its name implies, is a religion of peace and prosperity. It is a universal and historical experience that has always demonstrated its competencies in solving various global issues, including the environmental crisis. Islam is relevant for all times and places. It is also the only hope for humanity to restore environmental balance and peace. When a man is in peace with himself, he is in peace with the rest of the world. Thousands of references to nature and environment are found in the Qur'an, and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, who said that Arabia will return meadows and rivers as it was before.

*This hadith is evaluated by most scholars as a weak narration, but its meaning is relevant.



“Open Mosque Day” ... an initiative to integrate Muslims into German society

By Nizar Abdulbagi Ahmed

Open Mosque Day has become an annual event for Muslims in Germany to integrate into society, establish their loyalty to their country and connect their children to the countries in which they live. To ensure this, they have dedicated the day of unity between the two parts of Germany, corresponding to October 3rd annually for this event, to ensure that Islam is an integral part of this unity as well.



The main objectives of this event are to explain the principles of the Islamic religion, invite others to identify these principles, encourage cultural exchange among followers of different religions, correct stereotypes and ideas prevailing in the minds of some, respond to the accusations leveled by the followers of the extreme right, and to motivate Muslims to Integrate into German society.

Around 1,000 mosques across Germany are open to visitors of all religious and ethnic backgrounds. Religious and cultural seminars and lectures are held. There is a direct dialogue among all where many Muslim scholars answer questions and queries from the audience. They are keen to clarify the reality of the Islamic religion, which calls for dialogue and coexistence, and refuses to coerce others to follow, and does not recognize violence as a means of understanding, and supports the right of the offender to obey the religions he or she wants, and guarantee all of their civil and religious rights.

The events also feature recreational activities including the concept of art and culture in Islam, and the contribution of Muslims to the march of human civilization and sci-

The program aims to verify the reality of Islam and its rejection of violence

ence, in addition to highlighting the customs and traditions of Muslims, such as generosity and magnanimity, honesty and good neighborliness, and provide examples of the ancient civilization that characterized the Arab and Islamic countries and the unique monuments they boast. Some religious books and the translation of the Holy Qur'an into German are distributed free of charge as gifts to visitors.

Confronting Extremism

Imam and preacher of the mosque of the city of "Chemnitz", Sheikh Abdulsalam Atefi, told (Deutsche Welle Newspaper) that their mission as Islamic bodies and institutions is now doubled because of the far-right, pointing to the demonstrations in



Chemnitz, which were organized by the followers of the extreme right to protest against the existence of refugees. This raises fears that extreme right may challenge the rule of law, especially after the arrest of some extremists suspected of forming a terrorist organization under the name of the Chemnitz Revolution. This organization, according to the competent security authorities, planned to carry out attacks on the same date of the “Open Mosque Day” to consolidate the misconceptions that link Muslims with terrorism. He points out that they focus in their activities on the renunciation of racism and xenophobia to stress that mosque is a part of society and Muslims love this community and cling to meet violence with love. “The idea that anyone in the city of Chemnitz is welcome in our mosque is in itself a kind of rejection of racism, as we take care of the hospitality

and good reception”, he said.

Letters Against Racism

“This event is an important occasion to convey a message to the extreme right, which is trying to intimidate Muslim minorities and spread fears among their members, which we will not allow them to achieve. We will assure them that mosques continue to perform their functions in society with full force and that we are part of this society, and will not be scared of their actions or threats. We live in a state of law and stand with it. We also want to convey a voice of thanks to the majority in this society, who have taken positive attitudes, stood by us and communicated with us. It was their initiative where they invited us to go out with them in peaceful demonstrations against racism, and their voice was heard in rejecting all forms of hatred. We are in touch with



most of those who are keen to attend each year and participate in the Open Mosque Day and give us all forms of support. These wonderful people deserve our thanks”, At-efi said.

Wide-scale interaction

Many academics and community leaders admire the program of the Open Mosque Day and affirm that they benefit from it in identifying the Islamic religion from real and reliable sources, but they demand more steps so that the true image of Islam reach all segments of society. Professor Holger Nellin, a professor of comparative religions at the University of Bonn, says such initiatives are important for opening up interfaith dialogue, especially for those who do not know anything about Islam. However, it is not enough because a person who goes to a particular mosque may recognize only a certain aspect of Islam. Interfaith dialogue is important and the Open Mosque Day

Muslims open their mosques to everyone on the day of German unity

initiative is an important step in correcting concepts and combating racism, but it remains insufficient in Nellin’s opinion because some cannot abandon prejudices. Muslims should keep the doors of dialogue open with others and introduce themselves and their religion on every occasion in Germany through similar initiatives.

Collective efforts

Nabil Shabib, a German thinker of Syrian origin, stressed that the Open Mosque



Various programs to reflect
the universality of Islam and
its acceptance of the other

Day contributed to the positive integration of Muslims in the German society and that there is an unparalleled response from all segments of the German society. He said, “This merger was made on the basis of co-existence without melting, acquaintance with mutual respect, and gave a strong impetus to increased coordination between

Islamic organizations and unions, which moved the program from an initiative on behalf of one of the organizations to a joint initiative, which resonated and elicited a response from the leaders of mosques and chapels in all German cities, and became a model for cooperation in the Joint initiatives and activities, after many of them were moving in isolation, although perceptions and goals did not differ. The response from the public and the German media has also contributed to the search for more means to foster a spirit of integration”.

Culture of diversity

According to Deutsche Welle Newspaper, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Muslims, Abdul Samad Al-Yazidi, said that many Muslims in Germany are afraid that attacks on them and their mosques might increase. He stresses that the “Open



Mosque Day” has a great role in presenting the true image of Islam and affirming that it is not related to terrorism, and it criminalizes all kinds of aggression against the human soul, regardless of religion or gender. Yazidi stressed the importance of establishing a culture of diversity among children and school students, to ensure a new generation free of hatred. He calls on the responsible authorities not to tolerate the followers of the far-right who cling to attack Muslims and push them to leave the country, and claiming myths that Islam does not fit the European values. Yazidi concludes his statement that Muslims in Germany focus on retaining the gains they have made and that they take seriously the issue of integration into society and positive interaction with all public issues.

Appreciation and gratitude

Manfred Lucha, Minister of Social Affairs and Integration in Baden-Württemberg, praised the role played by mosques for decades in bringing together the concepts of humanity and religious values and its quest to confirm the conditions of integration into German society. He said in his speech to the Muslim community, “You have made great

Germans heavily attend mosques to learn more about Islam

efforts to rebuild Germany after the war, and these efforts cannot be underestimated at all. These are well known. There has always been interfaith cooperation and will remain so.”

He underscored the feasibility of such activities in confronting the followers of the extreme right, at the same time extremists living among refugees and carrying out some terrorist acts, stressing that such efforts remain the only way to support moderation and coexistence among the followers of different religions. Lucha stressed that Germany remains a homeland for all and its government deals with all citizens regardless of their religious affiliations and that the only criterion is the extent of compliance with the conditions of citizenship.



The cultural pulse of Tunisia

By Aftab Husain Kola

If we delve into Islamic history and look into the contributions made by Muslims, one place that would stand out strikingly is Kairouan (Qairawan) in North Africa, which is considered Islamic North Africa's first point of culture in terms of religion, science, academics, law and architecture.

A culturally fascinating city in the northwestern inland desert of Tunisia, a small North African country on the Arab world's western shores, Kairouan became a powerful trading hub and center of Islamic scholarship in the 9th century when Aghlabid emirs ruled the city and built many of its monuments. Kairouan still conjures up images of Arab folklore.



Considered the first capital of the Maghreb, Kairouan, according to Al-Idrisi, the celebrated Moroccan Arab Muslim geographer and cartographer, is the “mother of all cities, and is the capital of the land, the greatest city in the Arab West, being the most populated, prosperous and thriving one with the most perfect buildings...”

Little wonder then that Kairouan was, for more than four centuries, North Africa’s hub where ethnic groups such as the Berbers from the west met Arabs from the east to form a powerful bedrock of North African Arab culture that endures even today. Berbers now constitute the populations of Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania, northern Mali and a small part of western Egypt.

Situated 112 miles south of Tunis, the country’s present capital, Kairouan is known mainly for its old university, as a pioneer in developing hospitals, and its extremely splendid Great Mosque, with its antique columns

and imposing minarets, that dates from this period, and is a major cultural center.

In citing the city’s “universal value” as a World Heritage Site, UNESCO enumerated a total of 36 monuments in Kairouan, an “exceptional witness to the civilization of the first centuries of Islam in North Africa.”

Origin of nomenclature

The history of Kairouan is as fascinating as the city itself. Sidi Uqba bin Nafi, the nephew of Arab general Amr bin Al-‘As, who was deputed to take over the reign of Alexandria in 643 CE, 11 years after the death of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), chose the inland plain far away from the sea to keep the Byzantine navy at bay, and named the place Al Kairouan, which is an Arabized Persian word for ‘caravan’. Today it carries an English meaning as well, something close to ‘garrison camp’.

The Great Mosque

Uqba ibn Nafi, in the course of laying the foundation of the city, erected the mosque between 670 and 680 CE, which happened to be the first mosque in the Maghreb. Rebuilt several times and ostentatiously embellished over the course of time, the Great Mosque, locally known as Jami Uqba, is the pride of the people of Kairouan. The structure, with its graceful prayer hall with adorned 414 pillars supporting horseshoe arches, breathes the spirit of ancient Islam and makes for a striking photograph, thrilling the onlooker with the intricacy and artistry that many hands got together to create it. Its buttressed walled exterior has Aghlabid design. Its huge, marble-paved courtyard, surrounded by an arched colonnade and the courtyard designed for water catchment, and the paving slopes towards an intricately decorated central drainage hole that



delivers the collected rainwater into the 9th-century cisterns below are feast for the eyes. At the northwestern end of the courtyard a square three-tiered 32-meter-high minaret dominates the skyline.

Another famous mosque is the Mosque of the Three Doors, known as Ibn Khayrun Mosque, built in 866 AD. It has a decorated façade in Islamic art and includes the whole Kairouanese decorative repertoire of the Aghlabid period. Early Arab settlers have narrated that the site was previously occupied by both the Romans and the Byzantines, but later it fell into ruins. It can now safely be said that the reach of Islam and the cultural influences that followed exceeded those of any former civilization.

Golden era

A golden chapter dawned on the city in the 9th century. In 800 AD, Ibrahim bin Aghlab, an Algerian Arab, conquered the city and thereby half of North Africa. His Aghlabite dynasty laid out an extensive irrigation system that brought water from the mountains to encircle the city in a green belt of parks and gardens. By the mid-tenth century, Kairouan

became a thriving settlement with marketplaces, agriculture imported from surrounding towns, cisterns supplying water, and textile and ceramic manufacturing areas. It was a political capital, a pilgrimage city, and intellectual center, particularly for the Maliki school of Sunni Islam and the sciences.

Scientific accomplishments

Among the scientific contributions of Kairouan to the world was the most well-known doctor-pharmacist, Ibn al-Jazzar (known in Latin as Algizar), and Constantine, known as Constantine, the African, who is credited with introducing medical science in Europe through the universities of Salerno and Montpellier.” Of Ibn al-Jazzar’s 43 known works, 10 have been preserved, most notably his general therapeutic manual *Zad al-Mussafir wa-qut al-hadir* (Traveller’s Provision), translated into Latin by Constantinus Africanus as *Viaticum peregrinantis*, which was used in Europe through the 16th century. Abode of eminent scholars

Kairouan produced scores of distinguished scholars. Names like Abu Muhammad ‘Abd

Allah b. Abi Zayd ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Qayrawani (310-86/922-96), head of the Maliki school of Kairouan, Al-Abhari, Ibn abi Zayd al-Qayrawani are quite notable.

Hospital development

Like many inventions and discoveries, Muslims’ contribution to medicine is humungous. The hospital institution in its rise reflects the glory of Islamic civilization. The hospital was one of the great achievements of medieval Islamic society. As early as 830AD, Prince Ziyadat Allah I (817-838) built a hospital near the Great Mosque in Kairouan and was called the Ad-Dimnah hospital. Consequently other hospitals which were erected thereafter in Tunisia were likewise called ad-Dimnah instead of Bimaristan as they were called in the East, which is a Persian word meaning a hospital. Though ad-Dimnah in Kairouan was not built on grand scale but it served the then population adequately. It included halls with waiting rooms for visitors; spacious separate wards, a mosque for prayers and teaching, and a bath. The hospital had nurses from Sudan to look after the patients.

Walled old town

Kairouan’s medina (old town), protected by walls is a complex of narrow meandering streets and alleyways is the city’s heart. The Kairouan Rehabilitation Program has restored the place retaining all its traditional features and is now a place where the town-folks and visitors meet, shop, eat and roam around. The Barber’s Mosque Complex (also called the Zaouia of Sidi Sahab) is highly recommended. The complex includes a mausoleum, mosque, and madrassa (Islamic school of learning) and was built between 1629 and 1692. To the north of the medina, beyond the Avenue de la République, are the Aghlabid

Basins that supplied water for the Aghlabid palace.

The Sidi Amor Abada Museum is f a vast architectural complex crowned with seven ribbed cupolas in a style.

The museum of Raqqada

Outside south-west of Kairoun, about ten kilometers from the city center, is the museum of Raqqada. Here, a royal palace royal retreat built and later abandoned by the Aghlabids has been converted into a museum and a center specializing in research on the Islamic civilization in Tunisia. Ceramics, coins, precious glass, lead and bronze objects are featured in this museum. Al-Idrissi wrote that “the castles of Raqqada rose up, so high and well built, surrounded by so many gardens and orchards.”

Warp and weft

In Tunisia, carpets have their roots planted in Kairouan. Weaving deep-pile and short-*nap* carpet as an offering for the city’s mosques was tradition here in the past. The tradition continued making Kairouan the carpet capital of Tunisia. Kairouan’s carpets are more closer to Oriental carpets. The most classic have an overpowering crimson red, or alternatively the natural white and brown colors of sheep’s wool. In Kairouan, women do the weaving, chatting as their deft fingers ply the shuttle. They craft two types of carpet—pile and short-*nap*. The latter are subdivided into *mergoums*, which have a diamond pattern worked into a neutral ground, and *klims*, formed by alternate strips of natural-colored wools. Most sought after are the *zerhiyas*, which are pile rugs. Their traditional design of a central motif bordered by an arabesque pattern is largely responsible for the widespread appreciation of Kairouan carpets.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: IN THE LIGHT OF THE NOBLE QUR'AN

By Dr. Sumaiya Ahmed

Introduction:

Freedom of expression does not simply protect individual liberty from state interference. Rather, it protects the individual's freedom to communicate with others. The right of the individual is to participate in a deeply social activity that involves socially created languages and the use of community resources such as parks, streets, and broadcast stations.



Yet the structure of constitutional adjudication, reinforced by an individual rights culture, tends to suppress the social or relational character of freedom of expression and its distributive demands (concern about the individual's effective opportunity to communicate with others). Recognition of the social character of freedom of expression is critical to understanding both the value and potential harm of expression and to addressing questions about the freedom's scope and limits. Freedom of expression is valuable because of human agency and identity emerge in discourse.

According to the Nobel Qur'an:

In many places in the Nobel Qur'an, there are verses that can be interpreted as recognizing aspects of freedoms of religion and expression. Generally, the spirit of the Nobel Qur'an is not inconsistent with freedom of thought and expression. In the view of Muslims, the Qur'an is the revelation (wahy) where the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him,) of Islam was connected to Allah the Almighty. According to the Muslim belief, the Qur'an is the Book of guidance (Hidayah) from darkness to light and salvation. Such a Book, with its significant effect on the creation and development of one of the most significant human civilizations, would not block freedom of expression and fearless exchange of information and thoughts.

One of the most important verses relating to freedom of expression in the Qur'an:

There is no compulsion in religion. Distinct is the way of guidance now from error. He who turns away from the forces of evil and believes in Allah will surely hold fast to a handle that is strong and unbreakable, for Allah hears all and knows everything (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 256)

Another important verse:

The Most Merciful. Taught the Qur'an. Cre-

ated man. Taught him eloquence.(Surat Ar-Rahman, verse 1-4)

Fundamental Human rights:

Freedom of expression is an important and fundamental human right in Islam. Qur'an discusses it briefly. There are many verses of Qur'an, which describe freedom of expression, its importance, and principles. The basic principle of Qur'anic conversation is good talking. As Allah says in the Nobel Qur'an:

And (recall) when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, (enjoining upon them), "Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy. And speak to people good (words) and establish prayer and give Zakah." Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you were refusing. (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 83)

The important objectives of human rights to freedom of expression in the Qur'an; Allah gave the freedom expression to all human being.

Kinds of Freedom of Expression:

Freedom of Religion:

The Qur'an ensures the rights and freedoms of belief, thought, and worship of the members of all religions and forbids all sorts of behaviors restricting these rights and freedoms. Provided that the meaning of the concept of secularism, today manipulated to imply atheism, is to respect the freedoms of religion, belief and worship, it would be clear to anyone that this concept is a teaching prevalent in the Qur'an.

There are many relevant verses identified in the Qur'an that mandate the freedom of what to believe and worship. The first one, which clearly defines the concept of religious freedom, is in Surat al-Kafirun:

I do not worship what you worship. Nor are



you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion. (Surat al-Kafirun, verse 2-6)

The Qur'an excludes compulsion in choosing what to believe. If one accepts the truth, it is for his or her good, and if he or she sticks to error, it is to his or her detriment.

In Qur'an:

There is no compulsion in religion. Distinct is the way of guidance now from error. He who turns away from the forces of evil and believes in Allah, will surely hold fast to a handle that is strong and unbreakable, for Allah hears all and knows everything (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 256)

Allah also says:

There has come to you enlightenment from your Lord. So whoever will see does so for

[the benefit of] his soul, and whoever is blind (does harm) against it. And (say), "I am not a guardian over you. (Surat Al-An'am, verse 104)

Freedom of Thought:

There are innumerable verses in the Noble Qur'an in which the principle of freedom of thought has been expounded and the use of reason emphasized.

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason. (Surat

Al- Baqarah, verse 164)

Then do they not look at the camels - how they are created? And at the sky - how it is raised? And at the mountains - how they are erected? And at the earth - how it is spread out? (Surat Al-Ghashiyah, verse 17-20)

It is He who has sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book; in it are verses [that are] precise - they are the foundation of the Book - and others unspecific. As for those in whose hearts is deviation [from truth], they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation [suitable to them]. And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allah. But those firm in knowledge say, "We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord." And no one will be reminded except those of understanding (Surat Al-Imran, verse 7)

Freedom of speech:

Qur'an gives the freedom of speech to any person with some conditions and limitations. Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided (Surat Al-Nahl, Verse 125)

Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you? They were touched by poverty and hardship and were shaken until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said, "When is the help of Allah?" Unquestionably, the help of Allah is near. (Surat Al-Baqarah, Verse 2:214)

To unite humankind, Islam instructs us to only use speech to be truthful, do good to others, and be fair and respectful. It attempts to pre-empt frictions by prescribing rules of conduct that guarantee for all people not

only freedom of speech but also fairness, absolute justice and the right of disagreement. The Qur'an also encourages the people for freedom of speech to explore and search the Truth.

Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant. (Surat Al-Ahzab, verse 33:71)

Your Lord is most knowing of you. If He wills, He will have mercy upon you; or if He wills, He will punish you. And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], over them as a manager. (Surat Al-Isra, verse 54)

And [recall] when We took your covenant, [saying], "Do not shed each other's blood or evict one another from your homes." Then you acknowledged [this] while you were witnessing. (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 84)

If [instead] you show [some] good or conceal it or pardon an offense - indeed, Allah is ever Pardoning and Competent. (Surat An-Nisa, verse 149)

With Islam's guidance to purify our intentions, it promotes free speech when we intend to serve a good purpose, promote peace, bring people closer to Allah and unite humankind.

Freedom of Consultation:

Freedom of consultation is an important right of a person in an Islamic society. No doubt, through consulting with others many personal and social problems can be resolved. The combination of two thought patterns acts like the coming together of two wires of different charges, which give light to the environment. Since consultation has a significant effect in resolving problems, the Noble Qur'an orders the Prophet (peace be upon him) to consult with others in finding solutions:

So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad],



you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]. (Surat Al- Imran 159)

And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend. (Surat Ash- Shuraa, verse 38)

Thus, both wisdom and narrations combine to indicate the sensitive position and the significance of consultation. Muslims should make use of this great Islamic command, which is the very basis of prosperity and social improvement.

Limitation:

Islam is a religion of rights and duties; where Islam declares human rights freely and voluntarily then it also bounds this freedom for public welfare, Because Islam and the Muslim Ummah are justly balanced. According to the Noble Qur'an:

And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a wit-

ness over you. And We did not make the Qiblah which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger from who would turn back on his heels. And indeed, it is difficult except for those whom Allah has guided. And never would Allah have caused you to lose your faith. Indeed Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful.(Surat al-Baqarah, verse 143)

Some Form of limitation:

Do not be rude in Speech:

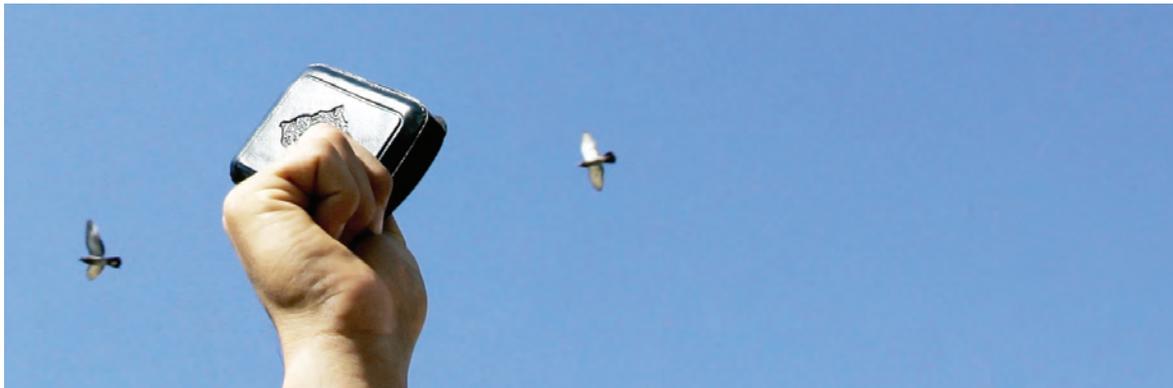
So by mercy from Allah, (O Muhammad), you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely (upon Him). (Surat Al-Imran, verse 159)

Restrain Anger:

Who spend (in the cause of Allah) during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people – and Allah loves the doers of good. (Surat Al-Imran, verse 134)

Be good to Others:

Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor,



the neighbor farther away, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful. (Surat An-Nisa, verse 36)

Do not be Arrogant:

(Allah) said, Descend from Paradise, for it is not for you to be arrogant therein. So get out; indeed, you are of the debased. (Surat Al-A'raf, verse 13)

Stand out firmly for Justice:

O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted. (Surat An-Nisa, verse 135)

Avoid Assumption

O you who have believed, avoid much (negative) assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. (Surat Al Hujurat, verse 12)

Stay away from Corruption

Eat and drink from the provision of Allah, and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption. (Surat Al- Baqarah, verse 60)

There is no compulsion in Religion:

There is no compulsion in religion. Distinct is the way of guidance now from error. He who turns away from the forces of evil and believes in Allah will surely hold fast to a handle that is strong and unbreakable, for Allah hears all and knows everything (Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 256)

Conclusion:

According to Islam, freedom of expression and information is a basic human right. Islam condemns spreading lies and false stories as well as passiveness and reluctance when the truth should be spoken and highlighted.

And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know (it) (Surat Al Baqarah, verse 42)

In this perspective, Qur'an appeals to society because Qur'an is closely related to the social issues of humankind and because Qur'an grants the freedom of expression due to human dignity and honor exploring truth. Qur'an considers the freedom of expression as a fundamental human right. This should also be kept in mind. Qur'an does not support the absolute freedom of expression but describes its limits and principles for social betterment. Therefore, we should adopt the Qur'anic principles of conversation for a peaceful and humble society.



Germany helps its Muslims integrate into society

Alwaleed Jaafer Elias

To help Muslims to coexist positively in society, support their full integration, and remove misunderstandings that some people have of Islam, the German government is moving to establish a non-governmental association, in Lower Saxony, for the education and training of imams and preachers.

The government is moving also to pass a law requiring learning German for those wishing to enter the country for the purpose of working as imams or preachers, as well as being familiar with a sufficient level of information on the nature and culture of German society, to the extent that they can perform their work as required.

The German Interior Ministry said in an official statement that the aim is “to strengthen the religious services provided by the clergy by learning German, and the draft law stipulates that these imams can only succeed in their work if they are fluent in speaking German, which facilitates the process of communication with the members of the community and their social environment. It added that the draft law has been submitted to the parliament for a vote before it is adopted. Under this new procedure, sufficient knowledge of information about Germany is a condition for religious scholars from outside the country to obtain residence.

The Bavarian Christian Social Party announced its support for the new draft law.”It is very clear that imams working in our country must speak German, because language is the key to coexistence, and the integration of clergy and Muslims into society can only be successful if they are fluent in language. We want to be familiar with the sermons and sermons delivered in the mosques”. party secretary-general Marcus Blume said in remarks quoted by the German Press Agency.

Blume said it was inconceivable that speeches would be delivered in a language other than German, when many listeners could not speak that language. The security authorities also want to be fully aware of what is being said in all places of worship so that they can determine whether they involve incitement or have unauthorized meanings. In addition, Berlin wants to achieve a positive integration of Muslims living on its territory.

Integrating Muslims

The Minister of the Interior, Horst Seehofer, affirmed that this initiative presented by his Ministry provides an important contribution to the successful integration. He pointed out that “it is indispensable to know some of the German information to make the integration successful, especially when the clerics serve as a reference for many immigrants.”

He added the fulfillment of this condition would help to fully integrate Muslims in society and enable competent authorities to provide adequate protection for Muslims and stimulate communication with them. Zihofier stressed that the decision can not be interpreted as negative discrimination against Muslims, or confirmation of accusations against them, stressing that his ministry is in full contact with most of the Islamic actors in society, and that there is a great deal of coordination and understanding between the two sides, to overcome emergency problems, and



provide the required support when necessary.

Muhammad Khorshid, an Islamic activist in Germany, welcomed the government move, describing the decision as “a real step that would help Muslims introduce themselves correctly to German society, at the same time, response to allegations made by many parties related to the extreme right”. Khorshid stressed that Muslims of Germany have always shown their desire to integrate into their society, and reject marginalization and isolation. Khorshid demand also that the decision be circulated to all

priests and rabbis, so that it is not seen as a veiled accusation against Muslims and discrimination against them.

He stressed that most of the imams and preachers are already familiar with the German language and serious in mastery, and the majority of members of the Muslim community in Germany are graduates who entered the country for the purpose of education and work, and not linked to terrorism.

Training and support for mosques

The German Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Central Council

of Muslims, has launched a project to train imams and preachers, including introducing community values and laws, linking them more to the community in which they live, and removing cultural barriers, in an attempt to reduce external influence that preachers who come from many countries and different cultural backgrounds may be exposed

Central Board Chairman Ayman-Mezik described the new approach as “a concrete step and a positive development, which should have been done for decades. He said many were content with complaining about the presence of foreign imams in Germany, who might commit irregularities and act inconsistent with the constitution, but did not initiate solutions and had no positive proposals to put an end to that. He added that authorities and all Germans will be able to identify the sermons delivered inside the mosques.

Because the German constitution prohibits the government from interfering in the religious affairs of society, it was agreed that the association would be independent and non-governmental, drawing on an earlier experience to train Jewish rabbis, under the name “Abraham Geiger Program” at the University of Potsdam. Although many academic institutes in the cities of Münster, Tübingen, Osnabrück, Giessen and Erlangen Nuremberg are currently teaching Islamic studies, students studying in these institutions will not be able to work as imams,

because these courses do not provide how to perform prayer and other practical tasks performed by the imam of the mosque, so a separate and practical education was therefore needed.

The Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture said the plan includes “the establishment of a registered association in cooperation with Islamic organizations and mosque communities interested in the program, and that Islamic studies experts will be part of the new association.”

The German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, has revealed government support for mosques, provided over the next three years, with about seven million euros. Support will go to about 50 mosques.

The ministry said that the pilot project, called “Mosques for Integration”, will be organized and supervised by the Federal Commission for Migration and Refugees, with the help of an advisory board comprising experts from Islamic organizations, scientific and civil society departments. She stressed that the project aims to support the programs of guidance and social work and measures to strengthen communication between mosques and the surrounding area. According to the ministry, it seeks to support community solidarity and help Muslims interact positively. The ministry added that it will continue to provide all kinds of support for the project, which intends to circulate in the coming period to a larger number of mosques.

Muslim heroes who prevented terrorist incidents in the West

Nizar Abdul Baqi

Numerous Western newspapers have reported that the participation of some Muslims in the hunt for the terrorist who stabbed a number of people at the London Bridge, December 2019, recalled the contribution of many Muslims to preventing massacres by confronting terrorists who were trying to cause the largest number of victims.



The newspaper reports noted that these heroic deeds were not limited to Britain only, but also in many European countries. The German newspaper Deutsche Welle said that these people clearly demonstrated their loyalty to their homelands, interest in their citizens, and thus presented a bright picture of their religion and stressed that there is no link between Islam and terrorism because Islam is a religion that calls for coexistence and peace.

An attacker carrying a knife and a false explosive vest had wounded several people. Many video clips taken by surveillance cameras on the scene showed a group of people grappling with the suspect on the ground before he was shot by the police. The videos showed that there were a number of Muslims carrying a large knife, which they took from the attacker's hands, to prevent him from causing further harm, and then surrounded the suspect, and helped police officers restrain him.

In an official statement, the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, praised the "astounding heroism" of those who wrestled with the suspect, saying, "I would like to thank those heroes who risked their safety for the sake of protecting others, and clearly say they are the best among us". British Prime Minister Boris Johnson praised the police and what he described as the "exceptional courage" of the public who participated in the incident. "They represent the best of our society and thank them on behalf of all of our country," Johnson said. "Those who helped to stop the suspect in his tracks are good citizens who have shown extraordinary courage," he added

Not a Muslim

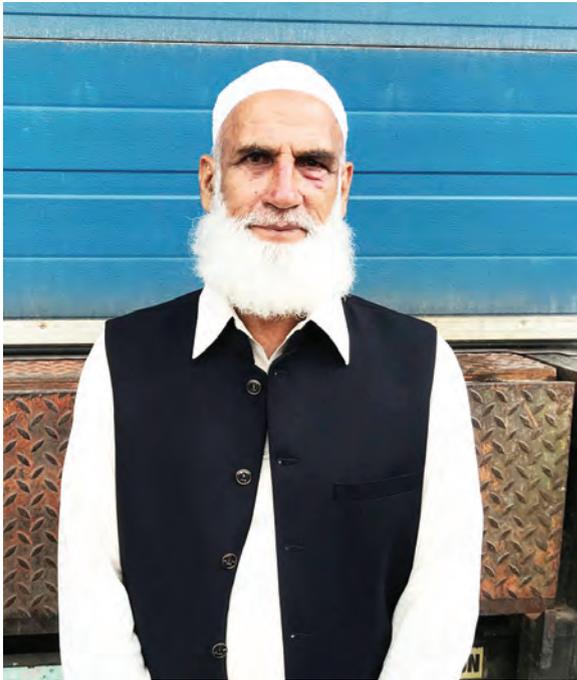
On December 6, 2015, one of the extremists



Naeem Rashid-Norwegian

attacked passers-by at the underground station in East London, after he repeated phrases alleging that his attack was in response to what was happening in Syria. A British Muslim confronted him in an attempt to stop his harmful attempt and shouted at him, "You are not a Muslim... you are a shame", denying that such an attack had anything to do with Islam. This sentence quickly spread on Twitter and a number of users of the site quoted Qur'anic verses rejecting terrorist actions and threatening militants who use Islam to justify their attacks on unarmed civilians and recruiting followers.

The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, made a press statement saying, "Let me pay tribute to the person who confronted the terrorist and made this remarkable statement on the phrase you are not a Muslim. If the credit goes to the police officers who arrested the terrorist, it is the same to that Muslim who refused to link his religion and terrorism."



Muhammad Rafeeq-New Zealand

Great courage

Naeem Rashid, a Pakistani, did not hesitate to confront the terrorist Brenton Trent who opened fire on worshipers at Al Noor Mosque in the New Zealand city of Christ Church on Friday 15 March 2019 and threw himself on him to prevent killing more after he took the lives of 50 people. Videos showed how Rashid courageously confronted the murderer and tried to take his weapon, and when he realized his inability to do so, he threw himself on him, after he received a barrage of deadly bullets.

The British newspaper “Daily Mail” said that Rashid died shortly after the death of his son Talha, who was less than 21 years old, during the brutal attack.

“My brother was a brave man who died to save others. His death showed how he took

care of humanity,” Khurshid Alam, Rashid’s brother, said in press statements. The Pakistani Prime Minister, Imran Khan, also awarded him the Order of Courage and said that Rashid was martyred while trying to stop the gunman and provide protection to others.

Rapid Intervention

In August 2019, Muhammad Rafeeq, a Norwegian of Pakistani descent, became a hero who won praise and appreciation, after he showed great courage in confronting an armed man who wanted to commit a massacre against worshipers who were near an Oslo mosque during Eid Al-Adha. Rashid saw the terrorist, Philip Mansus, prior to the implementation of his attack. Quickly he decided to confront him. He threw the attacker on the ground and disarmed him with the help of people who were near the place, an intervention that prevented an impending catastrophe. He held him to the ground and took away his weapons with the help of people who were near the place, stopping a real disaster.

“I heard gunfire coming from outside. The terrorist fired at two people and without thinking I ran after him and put him on the ground. He tried to get rid of me by inserting his finger completely in my eyes, but I resisted all of this and clung to him to paralyze his movement before others came and helped me,” Rafik said.

The Norwegian police praised the work done by Rafik and his companions and said in a statement, “There is no doubt that the swift and decisive response from the people inside the mosque stopped the attacker. They have shown great courage.”

The Reverter to Islam

Tanago Sami Qasdullah, (Ahmad Sami Abdullah)

By: Munqidh Ben Mahmoud Assaqar, PhD

In the mid-twentieth century, and in one of the villages of southern Egypt, Tanago Sami Qasdullah saw the light. It has been predestined that this young man's life will never exceed more than thirty years on this earth. He has been assassinated treacherously. He has become -God willing- a martyr for the sake of his chosen religion.



Since the child's mind has started to blossom, he refused intuitively the stories he has heard echoing in the church. He has come in contact with ambiguous teachings similar to intractable puzzles. The matter has become so difficult to fathom for a young mind. These have been called "the secrets of the Church." In contrast, the adolescent Tanago saw in the religion of his Muslim peers the clarity of the faith and splendor of worship. No sooner his young head started to compare the Church rituals to the Muslims worship. He also compared the church mass to the recitation of the verses of the Qur'an.

Every day, Tanago and the village boys, Christians and Muslims used to take the trek to the next village where they frequent the intermediate school there. They spend the journey talking about religion and creed as much as their young minds allow them to understand. Tanago will keep silent, listening to their talk, recording notes in his mind and drawing conclusions.

Tanago has gotten rid of some of his (religious illiteracy); he has joined Sunday school. However, he has been shocked of what he has heard from the school supervisor telling them the story of the guests of Abraham (peace be upon him). He has already heard the story from his Muslim friends. Conversely, the supervisor was narrating it from the Bible point of view, in a manner strange to him. His heart has rejected the story outright. He has remembered the story in Genesis, that the guests of Abraham, peace and blessing of Allah be with him, were God himself and two of his angels. They have eaten, drank and rested at Abraham's.

Tanago's instinct denied, and his mind refused this assumption; he asked himself: Is this possible? Would Allah come down



from the lofty heavens to eat at Abraham's? Would Allah- the Exalted - embody Himself into the image of a weak human being? What's the matter with the school supervisor?! What is he babbling about? Is it possible that the Bible is saying this?

In contrast, Tanago noticed that the Bible speaks about the Messiah as a human being. He was a mere messenger sent by God no more. In his gospel, John tells about Jesus that he has informed the Jews about his humanity. In John (8/40), Jesus said: "But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth, which I have heard of God." In another chapter, he called to believe in his message: "Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him, and he sent me" (John7/28-29). Christ, the messenger man, according to the Holy Gospels, has never claimed divinity.

Following a fierce struggle between pure instinct and the teachings of the church, Tanago reached a compromise. He will distance himself of any matters his mind rejects. He will get rid of all polytheistic words that stained the liturgy and hymns he used to chant during mass. By coming to this con-



clusion, Tanago thought he would make peace with his mind. However, no sooner has this idea settled in his mind, that it was met with outright rejection. He rejected half-solutions. His conscience prodded him to re-think his decision. It encouraged him to do more study and apply more seriousness in the search for truth that Allah loves and accepts for His servants.

Throughout his studies of religions, the boy embarked on a mission to seek the truth. The boy recorded a number of observations on his faith comparing it to Islam. Among these, the difference between the congregational prayers the Muslims perform in their mosques, and that of the Christians in a church. Christians listen only to hymnals read in the Coptic language. Tanago doesn't understand the language. It was similar to a

person speaking in hieroglyphic or Sanskrit.

There are no men of religion in Islam. This is another advantage that made Tanago prefer Islam to Christianity. He despises the idea of a mediator between Allah and his servants. He asked himself: would Allah appoint these pastors sinners as His agents to forgive people's sins? Where are those of the morality and humility of Christ?

He felt disgusted and shocked at the scenes of the people of the church bowing to the monks and priests. These wouldn't be called except with the highest and fanciest titles. They have been called His Eminence the Prelate or His Holiness the Pope. According to many Biblical texts, however, the most common and well known title of the Christ (peace be upon him) among his disciples has been "teacher."

In 1968, Tanago Sami Qasdullah decided to embrace Islam secretly, and choose the name Ahmad Sami Abdullah. He wasn't yet fourteen years of age. He has been drawn to Islam through the accuracy of its followers in performing their faith. These have been restricted by time, space and manners. Hence, each act of worship has its proper time, the way it should be performed, and sometime the place where it should be performed. Such detailed accuracy covers all aspects of human life. Christianity, however, lacks such an order. Neither prayers nor fasting are regulated within the Church. Furthermore, its edicts have lost religious commitment. Here, Tanago was faced with an inescapable question: "If Mohammad (peace be upon him) was a liar the way they claim he is, then, from where has this illiterate man brought such detailed and accurate rulings, that those doubters themselves lack?!"

Tanago has been drawn to Islam's lofty principles and its great structure. To this he has said: "Islam has won me over because of its recognition of the oneness of the Almighty Creator. Allah will not be compared to anything else, and full praise is due only to Him. This pure monotheism has been characterized by its clarity and convenience. It's far away from complexity and ambiguity and no effort is needed to substantiate it. Islam is for the Lord of the worlds means: docile obedience and submission to Allah alone. It's the surrender of the mind, the heart the soul, the existence, the senses and feelings, the wealth and actions are to the Almighty Allah."

Accepting Islam has been a new starting point in the life of the young Ahmad Sami. He started reading the Qur'an during his high school and university years. He would stop

long at the verses speaking of the messiah (peace be upon), that mention his humanity and his devotion to Allah. "And behold! Allah will say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Did you say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah'?" He will say: "Glory to You! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, you would indeed have known it. You know what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Yours. For You know in full all that is hidden. "Never said I to them aught except what You did command me to say, to wit, 'worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord'; and I was a witness over them, whilst I had dwelt among them; when You did take me up You were the Watcher over them, and You are a witness to all things". Surat Al-Maida, verses 116/117.

Ahmad Sami has also studied different Christian denominations and reflected their responses to each other. He realized that when "you ask any of these sects: Where is the evidence? None of them will utter a word the way they always do." He has been surprised at the protesters who support their beliefs and sayings with testimonies of monks and fathers. However, they do not attribute the texts to God or Christ. Furthermore, the sayings of these priests shouldn't be used as evidence, but must be subjected to scrutiny.

Ahmad never spared any effort to hide his reversion to Islam in fear of his family's retribution. He kept his prayer and fasting secret from his brothers' preying eyes. Indeed, he used to accompany them to the church to dispel their doubts. Ahmad's certainty about his good choice increases with every passing day. He has abandoned Christianity and its churches that are filled with pictures, images and icons. People jostle each other to kneel and prostrate to them. They seek the



blessing of these stone and wooden idols, and fearing their curse. Watching this sight, Ahmad murmurs to himself: woes are unto you, are there any harm to be feared or gains to be had from these deaf statues or paper images? In Surat Al-Anbiya, verses 66 and 67, the Qur'an states the following: "(Abraham) said, 'Do ye then worship, besides Allah, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm?'" Fie upon you, and upon the things that ye worship besides Allah! Have ye no sense?"

With each passing day, Ahmad Sami's conviction about his religion grew stronger. He said, "The Qur'an has been the main factor in keeping steadfast on the faith. It organizes human life in such a unique way unlike any other in all the books and all other religions."

Ahmad received a Bachelor from the faculty of commerce, at Asyut University. Now, he longed to know more about the advantag-

es of Islamic law. He went back to school and received a degree from the faculty of law. He was fed up hiding his conversion to Islam; he wanted to announce it openly. However, he knew that such step will cost him his life. Listen to what he has once said, as if he was reading the unseen of his destiny: "I wish they'll get from me what they are after; the most they could achieve will be my assassination. It won't be a killing, but martyrdom for the sake of Allah. Only patient fighters will ever be granted such a wish. As much as I firmly believe in Allah, I know there is no power on earth that would shorten my predestined life one single moment."

In 1984, and in the Al-Azhar mosque, Ahmad declared his conversion to Islam. Later, in February 1986, he announced it to his family. He tried to escape his folks abroad. However, a treacherous hand was faster. Eight months later, while going to work to Souhage, his brother shot him dead.

We ask Allah to grant him abode in paradise. We implore Him to count him among the martyrs, like Yasser and Sumaya, who have died for the sake of their religion. We supplicate Allah to please them and others among the Muslim believers' martyrs. Allah granted the martyrs in his sake the highest ranks. The verses 169 and 170 –among many others- are clear testimonies to such an honor. "Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord. They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah: And with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), the (Martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve. They glory in the Grace and the bounty from Allah, and in the fact that Allah suffered not the reward of the Faithful to be lost (in the least)."

Heads of OIC News Agencies convene in Jeddah



Jeddah-UNA

The First Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly of the Union of OIC News Agencies (UNA) kicked off in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The meeting brought together heads and representatives of news agencies from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) states-members.

H. E. Saudi Arabia's Media Minister. Chairman of UNA Executive Council Turki Al-Shabanah opened the session with his keynote speech.

The participants of the extraordinary session will discuss the resignation and

nomination of director general of the UNA, administrative and financial situation of the Union, further cooperation of the news agencies with the Union. Besides, the participants will approve and discuss the Executive Council decisions and the final account for 2017-2018 budget and other issues related to the Union's activities.

The Union of OIC News Agencies is a specialized organ of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation publishing news in Arabic, English and French and focusing on the news related to the Islamic world and Islamic affairs. The headquarters of the UNA is located in Jeddah.

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