

Peaceful Religious Coexistence

Restoring the glory of Saudi's old mosques

THE MWL JOURNAL

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**“By Which is Better” is the
most-watched program in Ramadan**



Letter From the Editor

“By Which is Better”

A media activity can only be useful when it reaches people and achieves the desired effect. This fact is manifested in the following Quranic verse, “And We have [repeatedly] conveyed to them the Qur’an that they might be reminded.” (Surat Al-Qassas, Verse: 51).

Experience shows that when corporate media activities within an Islamic organization are properly planned, they can reach a broader audience and make a positive impact. Indeed, the grass-roots Islamic organizations, in particular, have proven that they can bring an additional value when their media and public relations plans are revolved around direct communication with the public. This is done in form of dialogues, seminars, lectures, conferences, and hands-on interaction with grass-roots entities and Muslim minorities wherever they are.

It is a daily continuous interaction with all people in places of worship, academic institutes and Islamic centers. It is also an ongoing dialogue with scholars, intellectuals and persons who seek knowledge. That is why the media messages of such Islamic organizations can elicit important responses.

Perhaps focusing on small media is the most appropriate thing to do when designing media plans for major organizations, as experience has shown.

Therefore, if we look, for example, at an organization as large as the United Nations, we will see, given that it is one of the important global organizations, the UN does not run comprehensive radio, TV or newspaper outlets except in certain circumstances, i.e. peacekeeping efforts, where it might run a small radio station.

The main media activities within such organizations consist of newsletters, books and publications, as well as periodicals, pamphlets and newsletters. Even in the few exceptional cases in

which organizations owned commercial or mass media outlets, they could only achieve a limited reach and influence.

The most effective method that organizations adopt for running their media activities is to forge a network of smart partnerships with the media, engage in collaborations with media professionals, and coordinate communications with the countries they serve through local and regional media in national languages.

The launch of e-platforms on social media has proved to be effective in reaching broader segments of society.

These ideas have been manifested in an impressive TV program called “By Which is Better”, broadcast on MBC Channel. The guest of the program is Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League and the Chairman of International Organization for Muslim Scholars. The program, presented by Abdulwahab Al-Shihri, reflects the strong MWL cultural and intellectual approach.

The program also highlights the intellectual approach of MWL and its leadership - an approach that is rooted in the Islamic civilization and has a positive openness to the whole world. It addresses the growing concerns of the Muslim society and presents jurisprudential and scholarly solutions to such concerns.

The program has been lauded by many for highlighting an authentic and renewed religious discourse and has been hailed as a unique program in terms of explaining the principles of Islam in simple words without using any complicated terms.

The scholarly content of the program is important because, according to many commentators, it does not only analyze and dissect an issue, but it also offers a comprehensive viewpoint based on moderate values.



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"By Which is Better" is the most-watched program in Ramadan



How COVID-19 has changed lifestyles around the world

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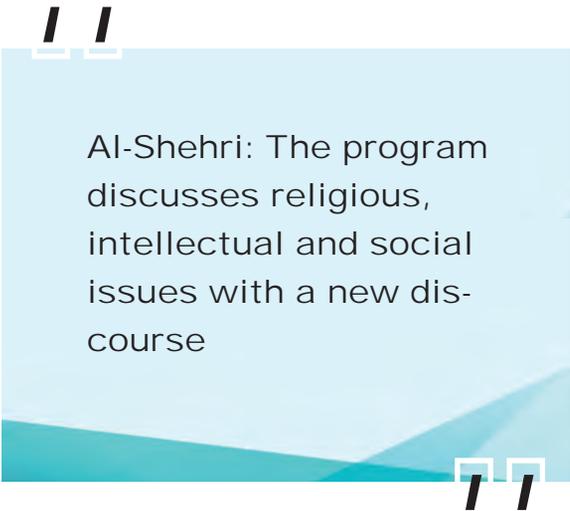


The program adopts an open Islamic discourse

**“By Which is Better” is the most-watched
program in Ramadan**

Makkah - MWL

The “By Which is Better” program, which is currently broadcast on MBC TV channel, has topped the list of the most viewed religious programs in the Arab world. What distinguishes the program the most is the deep and solid discourse it adopts for addressing all issues clearly and transparently in a modern form and content, not a conventional one.



Al-Shehri: The program discusses religious, intellectual and social issues with a new discourse

The presenter of the program, Abdulwahab Al-Shehri, said the program hosts, in all episodes throughout the holy month of Ramadan, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League, Chairman of the International Organization of Muslim Scholars, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa. Many of the issues are discussed openly and candidly, especially the ones that some religious programs usually do not discuss.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa talked about his personal experiences and the situations he has encountered while traveling around the world, aiming to engage the Muslim community in the debate and create a more realistic dialogue, similar to the one Muslims engage in on a daily basis. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa focuses on portraying the true image of moderate Islam and revealing the shining aspects of Islamic civilization, explained Al-Shehri.

Religious, intellectual and social issues are explored with a deep and open modern discourse.

The program delves transparently into numerous issues known to be controversial in the Islamic World and highlights the phenomena, practices and events taking place in the world, let alone it puts forth creative opinions and solutions for such issues.

The issues are addressed from multiple perspectives to avoid the negative aspects associated with the traditional way of tackling such issues.

The program steers clear of all types of generalizations and presents an opinion freely, leaving to the viewer the choice to accept and get convinced by the opinion. It does not under any pretext attempt to influence the viewer's opinion.

The program adopts a pioneering vision characterized by its scholarly and intellectual depth and supported by rich experiences and observations that are presented objectively and openly. There is a great emphasis on the role of the human commonalities in maintaining peace and harmony in today's world.

The program aims to revive and uphold Islamic values calling for moderation and mercy for others, wishing them all goodness, treating them kindly and realizing the purpose behind the diversity of the universe and the different creation.

One of the most prominent issues discussed by the program was the



The program introduces a moderate discourse that exposes extremism and sectarianism seeking to fuel **conflict and fight**



Sunni-Shiite conflict, as the program's guest, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa, explained the reality of this conflict, stressing that it is a struggle between Sunni and Shiite extremists and sectarian groups, and not between the moderate Sunnis and Shiites who represent the majority. This moderate discourse, seeking to expose extremism and sectarianism, has been widely commended by the leaders of the Islamic World, from all sects and denominations,

The program seeks to uphold the Islamic values that call for moderation and mercy for all and understand the nature of diversity and difference.

especially Shiite leaders who emphasized that the Islamic World desperately needs such moderate voices that stand against the voices supporting clashes.

An important episode was devoted to exposing the corruption of political Islam practices and the ethics of Islamist groups, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. The episode focused on how the Brotherhood violates the Islamic belief and conduct and goes against its own slogans in order to achieve its goals. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said the members of the group only pledge allegiance to the supreme guide and have many times engaged in a very imprudent and insulating behavior; besides, they use the utilitarian pragmatism at its worst forms.

The program discussed, for the first time, the issue of prohibiting attacks

on places of worship, stating that Islam respects other places of worship, orders Muslims to protect them and considers any attack on such places a criminal act regardless of the reason.

The program also raised the issue of who is the leading Islamic authority on all matters related to religion. The scholars and thinkers of the Muslim World League, its bodies, academies and world councils agree that Saudi Arabia is the spiritual authority for Muslims because it has the honor of serving the Two Holy Mosques.

The program devoted two full episodes to correct misconceptions surrounding women's issues and respond to those who accuse the Shari'ah of abusing women. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa promoted the concept of empowering women in the Shari'ah and granting them all their rights and giving them the freedom to exercise their national role and great influence as a scientist, thinker, expert and professional.

The program devoted an important episode to exposing the secrets of political Islam and its groups



Muslim World League donates medical supplies to Kashmir

Islamabad - MWL

The Muslim World League (MWL) handed over a batch of medical supplies and materials to Pakistan to help combat the spread of coronavirus in the Kashmir region. The supplies were delivered through the regional office of the Muslim World League in the Paki-

stani capital, Islamabad, in the presence of the Prime Minister of the Kashmir Regional Government, Rajah Farooq Haider Khan, and the Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki.

The regional director of the Muslim World League in Pakistan, Saad bin Masoud Al-Harthy, said

the project was initiated by the Mulsim World League as an urgent response to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The medical supplies consisted of thermal scanners, facial masks, protective masks, sterilizers, sanitizers, test kits, goggles and isolation gowns.

Implemented under the supervision of the Muslim World League, the project is one the different initiatives undertaken by the MWL to serve Islamic and non-Islamic countries in various relief, health, educational, and development fields.

Prime Minister of the Kashmir Regional Government Rajah Farooq commended the efforts of the Muslim World League, describing the MWL as one of the best relief organizations operating in Pakistan, which is known for its dedicational and professional work.

The Muslim World League works directly with governments of countries to coordinate the implementation of its humanitarian programs and ensure that all its programs are in compliance with the laws applicable in each and every country where such initiatives are carried out.



Muslim World League distributes food baskets in Afghanistan

Kabul - MWL

The Muslim World League (MWL) has implemented an assistance program in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, giving away food baskets to families in need.

The program was launched at the Ministry of Immigrants and Dis-

placed Persons in the Afghan capital, Kabul, in the presence of Minister of Immigrants and Displaced Persons Sayyid Hosban Alamy Balkhi, the Special Adviser to the President for Migrants, Displaced Persons Miftah Al-Din Babiker Khail, and Special Adviser to the Ministry of Migrants and Displaced Persons for Social



Affairs Hayatullah Sabawin.

The Regional Director of the Muslim World League in Pakistan and Afghanistan said 4,000 food baskets will be distributed to the impoverished across Afghanistan during the first phase of the assistance program, under the direct guidance and supervision of the Muslim World League.

This program is one of many implemented by the Muslim World League in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

His Excellency the Minister of Immigrants and Displaced Persons thanked the Muslim World League

for this generous initiative aiming to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for always standing by the Afghan people.

The Muslim World League works directly with governments of countries to coordinate the implementation of its humanitarian programs and ensure that all its programs are in compliance with the laws applicable in each and every country where such initiatives are carried out.





MWL sends medical aid to Pakistan to fight coronavirus

Islamabad - MWL

The Muslim World League (MWL) has delivered a planeload of medical supplies as well as health and protection equipment to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to help it fight the growing pandemic of coronavirus.

The delivery took place through the MWL Islamabad-based regional office in

the presence of Mr. Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki, the Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Pakistan, the Minister of Religious Affairs of Pakistan Dr. Nurul Haqqadri and the Director General of the Pakistan National Program to Combat Coronavirus Dr. Raja Amjad Mahmood.

His Excellency Dr. Nurul Haqqadri expressed Pakistan's great appreciation for

this initiative, stressing the pivotal role that the Muslim World League continues to play and the help it provides for the sake of serving the entire humanity all over the world.

Mr. Al-Maliki said the MWL has always been at the forefront of humanitarian aid provided to the needy and this initiative is only part of many that stem from solid principles of benevolence, goodness and concern for humanity's interest and care for its affairs.

Dr. Mahmood thanked the Muslim World League and those responsible for their speedy interaction with such international developments and their keenness to spread health awareness in order to combat the global outbreak of coronavirus.

Saad Masso'od Al-Harhi, the Regional Director of the MWL office in Pakistan, said the shipment of medical aid included thermal scanners, masks, sanitizers, test equipment, and protective kits. A wide-scale awareness campaign was launched in parallel on TV channels and in newspapers as well as social media sites to educate the public about how to prevent COVID19 infection.

Al-Harhi said these activities were undertaken under the direct guidance of the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, who is keen to closely follow up humanitarian work in all MWL global offices and supervise the delivery of aid and ensure its arrival to the needy.





MWL condemns terrorist attacks in Nigeria and Chad

Makkah – MWL

The Muslim World League (MWL) has strongly condemned the attack on a group of soldiers on Boma Island in the Republic of Chad, killing and wounding scores of people.

The MWL has also vehemently denounced the attack on the Nigerian army northeast the country leaving dozens dead and wounded.

In a statement, Sheikh Dr. Mu-

hammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, MWL Secretary General and Chairman of the Board of the Muslim Scholars Organization, pointed out that these terrorist acts will not undermine the war on terrorism, rather, it will intensify it. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa stressed the importance of continued coordination of efforts to fight this menace, especially intellectually, and uproot its evil with the support of military confrontation, which has weakened terrorism.



He said that terrorism was based on deviant ideology that emerges every now and then, noting that such ideology can only be defeated completely by unmasking its deviant ideas and dispelling the misconceptions it spreads. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said the misconceptions of this ideology are founded on sheer suspicions and systematic deviant thoughts that have penetrated the minds of some of the targeted people.

The MWL's statement commended the great role played by the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, which consists of 41 Islamic countries; all are active members of its important coalition

as well as other supportive countries. The statement praised the Coalition's four themes: military, intellectual and media confrontation and targeting of terrorist funds through effective legislation and strict measures, thanks to interstate mutual coordination.

Highlighting the important efforts made by the international coalition against Daesh, the statement said terrorism has suffered immensely as a result of counter-terrorism efforts which have strangled it and that terrorism tries from time to time to prove its presence and carry out such desperate criminal acts.



Global consensus from muftis and Islamic organizations on Kingdom's decision to suspend visits and Umrah temporarily

(Part-2)

MWL Journal Desk Report

Makkah - All Islamic centers all over the world, world figures and a large number of scholars and muftis in Islamic and Western countries have supported the statement issued by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the temporary suspension of the entry of foreigners for pilgrimage and tourism purposes. They have fully endorsed the measures taken by the Kingdom, describing the decision of suspension as a Shari'ah requirement, an urgent necessity and a wise measure that is based on the five imperatives in Islam, most notably the preservation of people's life.

**Sheikh Fadi bin Ahmed Al-Jaafrawi
President of the Arab**

Islamic Center of Paraguay

We back the decision taken by the Saudi government to suspend Umrah and visiting with the aim of preserving lives of citizens, residents and visitors. This decision comes to assure everyone that the Kingdom does its best to preserve the health and safety of the foreign visitors and pilgrims coming to visit the Two Holy Mosques. This decision is based on the Islamic principle: “Warding off evil takes precedence over bringing benefits.”

**Sheikh Muhammad Amir Faizur Rahman
Grand Mufti and Chairman of the New Zealand Council of Scholars - New Zealand**

We declare that the New Zealand Council of Scholars fully supports all preventive measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to protect pilgrims and visitors from the Coronavirus. The Council believes that these procedures are a religious duty based upon the Islamic Shari’ah.

**Dr. Thani Abdul Hamid Alaho
President of the Charitable Organization for Islamic Cooperation, Republic of Benin**

We back the decision taken by the Saudi government to suspend Umrah and visiting with the aim of preserving lives of citizens and visitors. This decision comes to assure everyone that the Kingdom exerts strenuous efforts to protect the health and safety of the foreign visitors and pilgrims coming to visit the Two Holy Mosques against this deadly virus.

**Sheikh Khalfan Khamis Ismail
President of the Council of Scholars - Kenya**

Council of Scholars in Kenya declares its full support to the Saudi decision temporarily suspending Umrah and visiting of the Masjid al-Nabawi and Makkah’s Grand Mosque. The decision also falls under the principles and teachings of Islam and Prophet Muhammad’s Sunnah.

**Sheikh Idris Muhammad
President of the Malawi Muslim Society - Malawi**

The Muslim Association of Malawi expresses its full support for the strict measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend the issuing of Umrah and visiting visas to address the spread of the Coronavirus. Physicians have been unable to reach a vaccine to treat this deadly virus. This decision is based on the Islamic principle: “Warding off evil takes precedence over bringing benefits.”

**Sheikh Sharif Al-Taheri
Director of the Shafie Organization for Development, Education and Charitable Activities - Chad**

We commend the wise decision taken by the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on preventive measures to reduce the spread of the Corona epidemic that has become a problem for many countries in the world. The decision to suspend Umrah and visiting visas was taken with the aim of preserving people’s lives including national and foreign pilgrims.

**President of the Islamic Cultural Association
Gandia Monotheism Center - Spain**

We declare our full support for the temporary precautionary measures taken by the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on suspending the entry to perform Umrah rituals and visit the Prophet's Mosque. This is aimed at protecting pilgrims and visitors intending to visit the Holy Sites in the Kingdom.

Hafiz Maqsood Ahmed
President of the Ahl al-Hadith Central Society in Islamabad - Pakistan

We support the decision taken by the Saudi government to temporarily suspend Umrah and visiting visas with the aim of preserving lives of citizens and visitors. This decision comes to assure everyone that the Kingdom exerts strenuous efforts to protect the health and safety of the national and foreign visitors and pilgrims coming to visit the Two Holy Mosques against this deadly virus.

Dr. Ayman Naim Al-tramese
President of the Islamic Society of Bolivia

We support the firm decision and the necessary measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to contain the outbreak of the Coronavirus. This decision includes suspending Umrah and visiting visas to all Holy Sites in the Kingdom. It is also based on the Islamic principle: "Warding off evil takes precedence over bringing benefits."

Ali Muhammad Aboutab
Vice-President of Ahl Al-Hadith Central Association
Member of the Council of Scholars and Sheikhs at the Ministry of Religious Affairs - Pakistan

We support the decision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend entry to the Kingdom to perform Umrah and visit Prophet Muhammad's Mosque in Madinah

due to the spread of the Corona virus worldwide. These measures are aimed at preserving the lives of pilgrims, visitors, citizens, and residents. This decision is based on the Islamic principle: "Warding off evil takes precedence over bringing benefits."

Sheikh Fadlur Rahman
Khalil Mawlana Fadali

Head of the Ansar al-Umma Group and Secretary-General of the Movement for the Defense of the Two Holy Mosques - Pakistan

We declare our full support for the decision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend entry to its lands for the purposes of Umrah and visiting based on the health authorities recommendations to apply the highest precautionary standards to prevent Corona virus from reaching the world. We value the key role played by the Kingdom's government to care for visitors of the sacred places.

Dr. Ishaq Issa Youssef
Chairman of the Board of the Renaissance Youth Organization - Chad

We back the temporary precautionary measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to suspend entry to it for the purpose of Umrah and visiting the Prophet's Mosque until further notice. This decision indicates that the Kingdom is keen on preserving the safety of pilgrims and visitors.

Al-Seddiq Abdullah Kajandi
Legal representative of the Burundi Islamic Society and Grand Mufti of Muslims - Burundi

The Burundi Islamic Society announces its full support for the decision of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs on tak-

ing tough measures to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus among Muslims wishing to perform Umrah or visiting the Holy Sites. We consider these measures as an urgent necessity, permissible and legitimate action, whereas Islam calls for preventing harm so that people can live in comfort and wellness.

Sheikh Abdul Wahid Muhajir
Head of Ahl al-Sunna Association,
South Africa

We support the wise decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend entry to Umrah and visiting. This decision is based on Prophet Muhammad Hadith: “If you hear that it (plague) has broken out in a land, do not go to it; but if it breaks out in a land where you are present, do not go out escaping from it.”

Dr. Hisham Musky
Member of the Muslim Union in Italy

We back the decision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend entry to the Kingdom to perform Umrah and visiting due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus worldwide. These measures are aimed at preserving the lives of pilgrims, visitors, citizens, and residents. This decision is based on the Islamic principle: “Warding off evil takes precedence over bringing benefits.”

Sheikh Ali Ahmed Manan
President of the Islamic Center - Uruguay

We appreciate and support the pre-emptive precautionary measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend entry to it to perform Umrah and visiting the Prophet’s Mosque. This deci-

sion is aimed at preventing the outbreak of “Coronavirus” among citizens, pilgrims and residents. We wish the best for all.

Imam Imbae Inyang
Minister of Religio us Affairs, former
member of the Senegalese Parliament -
Senegal

We declare our full support for the precautionary measures taken by the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to deal with the outbreak of the global epidemic “Coronavirus”. This decision is aimed at preventing the outbreak of “Coronavirus” among Muslims and containing it.

Sheikh Muhammad Habib Lee
President of the Islamic Forum for
Development and Education - Senegal

We back all measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily freeze the issuing of visas for pilgrims and visitors to the Prophet’s Mosque. This decision is aimed at preventing the outbreak of “Coronavirus” among national and foreign pilgrims and visitors. These measures are also based on Islamic principles that care for the interests of Muslims.

Professor Mohamed Al-Nazif Youssef
Chairman of the Board of Directors of
the Academy of Health Sciences,
Minister, Secretary-General, and the former
vice-president of the Republic - Chad

We back the statement issued by the Saudi Foreign Ministry to temporarily suspend entry to the Kingdom for the purposes of Umrah and visiting the Prophet’s Mosque because of the global outbreak of the Corona epidemic. These measures are aimed at

containing this virus that has hit some major countries and resulted in high death rates.

**Sheikh Asift Muhammad Ali
President of the Islamic Union -
Republic of Benin**

Benin's Islamic Union backs the decision issued by the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend entry to it for the purposes of Umrah and visiting the Prophet's Mosque. This decision is based upon Shari'ah texts from the Qur'an and Sunnah.

**Mohammed Abu Orabi
Head of the Islamic Cultural
Charitable Center**

Asuncion - Paraguay

We declare our full support for the decision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the temporary precautionary measures related to suspending the entry to the Kingdom for the purposes of Umrah and visiting Prophet's Mosque. These measures are aimed at containing this disease and preserving the safety of pilgrims and visitors.

**Sheikh Abu Bakr bin Al-Zubair bin Ali
Mufti of the United Republic of Tanzania,
Chairman of the Supreme Council
for Islamic Affairs - Tanzania**

We commend and appreciate the wise decisions and sound measures taken by the country of monotheism (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) with the aim of containing this deadly disease known as "Covid 19" and preserving safety of pilgrims and visitors of Prophet Muhammad's Mosque.

**Mohammed Sharif Al-Halali
President of the Spanish Islamic Federation,
Firdous - Spain**

We fully support the temporary precautionary measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to suspend entry to it to perform Umrah and visit the Prophet's Mosque for the purpose of containing the spread of Coronavirus. These measures are dictated by Shari'ah necessity and international standards which seek to protect the safety of pilgrims and visitors of the Holy Sites.

**Dr. Muhammad al-Qasim al-Rahidi -
Academic Director
Executive Director, Abdul Baqi Syed
Ahmed Othman,
The Latin American Institute of Islamic
Studies - Brazil**

We support the temporary precautionary measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to suspend entry to it to perform Umrah rituals and visit the Prophet's Mosque with the aim of containing any possible spread of coronavirus. These measures are dictated by legal necessity and aimed at preserving the lives of pilgrims and visitors of the Holy Sites.

**Dr. Yahya Juan Sokelio
Director of the Ecuadorian Islamic Center - Ecuador**

The Muslim community in Ecuador supports and appreciates the decision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to suspend entry to its lands for the purposes of Umrah and visiting the Holy Sites. This comes within the framework of the Kingdom's efforts to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus among visitors in the Holy Sites.

**Dr. Saeed Al-Robi Al-Bali
President of the Supreme Islamic
Council of the State of Valencia - Spain**

We declare our full support for the temporary precautionary measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to suspend entry to it to perform Umrah rituals and visiting the Prophet's Mosque with the aim of containing any possible spread of Coronavirus and preserving pilgrims' lives. These measures are dictated by the Shari'ah necessity and international standards in this regard

Muhammad Amjad Razek
Vice-President of Ansar Al-Sunna
Al-Muhammadiyah Association - Sri Lanka

We fully support the statement issued by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs to temporarily suspend the issuing of Umrah and visiting visas in order to prevent the possible spread of Coronavirus. No doubt that this decision demonstrates the keenness of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to preserve people's lives based upon Islamic principles and international instructions in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

Mohamed Hussein Mohamed
Head of the Islamic Center of Sri Lanka,
the former Ambassador of Sri Lanka to
the Kingdom

We praise the decision issued by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the temporary suspension of entry to it for the purpose of Umrah and visiting in order to protect all national and foreign pilgrims against Coronavirus. This decision indicates the Kingdom's keenness to protect citizens, expatriates and visitors on Saudi lands and contain this deadly virus.

Dr. Mouloud Dodic
Grand Mufti of Serbia - Head of the Islamic
Chieftdom - Serbia

We fully back the temporary precautionary

measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to suspend entry to it to perform Umrah rituals and visiting the Prophet's Mosque with the aim of containing any possible spread of coronavirus. These measures are dictated by Shari'ah necessity and aimed at preserving the lives of pilgrims and visitors of the Holy Sites.

Sheikh Saeed Azzam
Chairman of the Swedish Ifta Council -
Sweden

Sheikh Hassan Musa
Vice-Chairman of the Swedish Ifta
Council - Sweden

We appreciate the decision issued by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the temporary suspension of entry to it for the purpose of Umrah and visiting in order to protect all national and foreign pilgrims against Corona virus. This decision indicates the Kingdom's keenness to protect citizens, foreigners and visitors on Saudi lands and contain this deadly virus.

Ahmed Hameed
Secretary-General of the Coordinating
Council of Islamic Institutions and
Associations - Austria

We express our support for the decisions taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to protect Muslims against the disease currently spreading in the world known as the Coronavirus. The decision is in the interest of all Muslims and aims at preserving pilgrims and visitors from any possible infection.

Engineer Muneeb Al-Rawi
Chairman of the Board of the
Islamic Endowment Society in Bruno,
Czech Republic

The Islamic Endowment Association in the

Czech Republic of Bruno supports the decision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend the entry of Muslims to its land to perform Umrah and visit the Prophet's Mosque. This decision is aimed at preventing the outbreak of Coronavirus among pilgrims and visitors, a matter which threatens their personal safety in general and safety of the citizens and residents of the Kingdom in particular.

Dr. Hossam bin Ali Al-Jabri
Director of the Imam Al-Bukhari
Association in Berlin - Germany

We fully support the decision issued by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs pertaining to the temporary suspension of entry to it for the purpose of Umrah and visiting in order to protect all national and foreign pilgrims against Coronavirus. This decision indicates the Kingdom's keenness to protect citizens, foreigners and visitors in Saudi lands and contain this deadly virus.

Dr. Uzair Ahmed Al Qasimi
Secretary-General of the Association of
Indian Scholars

The measures taken by the Kingdom to temporarily suspend Hajj and visiting of Holy Sites in order to contain any possible outbreak of Coronavirus are correct and sound. This decision comes within the framework of the teachings of Islamic Shari'ah.

Mohamed Mahmoud Mahmoud Saleh
President of the Islamic Cultural Council of Imams and Mosques in Canary Islands - Spain

The preventive measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend entry to it from the countries in

which the Coronavirus has spread to prevent infection are correct and wise. These measures are aimed at preserving people's lives. This represents one of the five necessities of the Islamic Shari'ah.

Mohammed Ghazali bin Omar Jokni
President of the National Council for
Fatwa and Scientific Research -
Guinea Conakry

The Council backs and confirms its full support for the statement issued by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the temporary suspension of entry to the Kingdom for the purpose of Umrah and visit. This decision is compatible with Prophet Muhammad's Hadith: "If you hear that it (plague) has broken out in a land, do not go to it; but if it breaks out in a land where you are present, do not go out escaping from it."

Dr. Nour Al-Haqq Qadri
Federal Minister for Religions and
Religious Tolerance - Pakistan

We support the precautionary measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whose announcement includes suspending entry visas to perform Umrah and visiting the Prophet's Mosque, in order to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus and protect Muslims. We pray to Allah to protect the country of the Two Holy Mosques and all Muslim countries from all evil.

Sheikh Sayyid Muhammad Abdul-Khabir Azad
Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council,
Chairman of the Council of Imams of
Mosques, and Chairman of the Council
for the Convergence of Religions for Security and Peace

We support the statement issued by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on taking the preventive step of suspending entry to visit Makkah and Medina, in the aftermath of the spread of Corona virus disease all over the world, in order to preserve human health in accordance with the Shari'ah. We ask Allah to protect Muslims and all humanity from all evils.

Ibrahim Shaabani
Executive Director of the Italian Institute of Humanities

We support the preventive measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and we value its responsibility for taking the decision to temporarily suspend Umrah and visiting, as part of efforts to combat the Coronavirus epidemic and take all preventive health measures. We hail its position, which serves the interests of the entire humanity.

Dr. Mohammed Hussein Al-Zoghbi
President of the Federation of Islamic Associations - Brazil

We hail the wise decision taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend visas for Umrah and visiting, based on its responsibilities to care for citizens, performers of Umrah, visitors and residents. This decision is recommended by Islamic texts. Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, said: "A diseased should not be brought with a healthy.", and "If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; but if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place." It goes in accordance with the purposes of Islamic Shari'ah to protect the human lives against destruction.

Hefzulaah Al-Qolaissy
Head of the Islamic Center, Estepona, Malaga, Spain

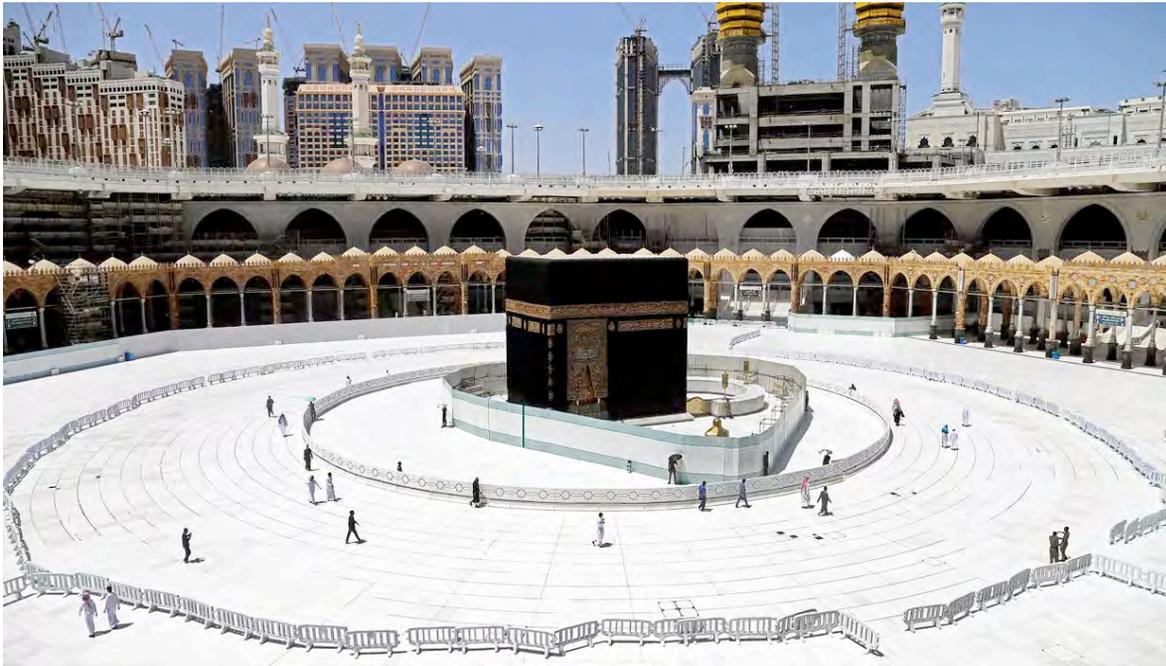
We commend the decision of the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to take preventive measures to curb the spread of this epidemic by temporarily suspending visas for Umrah and visiting the Prophet's Mosque to people coming from countries where the epidemic is spread, and in order to ensure that this virus does not spread among Umrah performers, citizens and residents.

Dr. Shaban Abdul Majeed Berry
Secretary General of the Islamic Supreme Council - Zambia

We support the decision taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend visas for Umrah and visiting the Prophet's Mosque due to the spread of the Corona virus in most countries of the world. It is identical to what is stated in the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Allah Almighty says: "and be not cast by your own hands to ruin", and the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; but if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place.", as prevention is better than cure.

Ata'ullah Shehab
Former Pakistani Prime Minister's Advisor, Member of the Senate - formerly Jaljat Baltistan Province

We support the decision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to temporarily suspend entry to it for visiting Makkah and Medinah due to the spread of the Coronavirus throughout the world.



If Saudi Arabia is forced to put the Hajj on hold, it will not be without precedent

By MOHAMMED AL-KINANI

Arab News

JEDDAH: Will the Hajj, which draws millions of Muslims annually to Islam's birthplace in Saudi Arabia, be suspended this year owing to the global coronavirus pandemic?

That question had been uppermost in the minds of millions of Muslims worldwide even before a Saudi official asked them to put on hold any plans to perform the obligatory pilgrimage, scheduled to begin in late July.

“We’ve asked our Muslim brothers around the world to wait” before making Hajj plans “until there’s clarity,” Dr. Muhammad Salih bin Taher Banten, minister of Hajj and Umrah, told state-run Al-Ekhbariya TV in comments on March 31 that quickly bounced around the world.

He added: “We’ve asked the world not to rush with regards to Hajj groups until the path of the epidemic becomes clear, keeping in mind the safety of pilgrims and public health as a priority.”

Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Health has taken the whole gamut of precautionary measures to control the spread of COVID-19 infection in Makkah and Madinah, yet a total of more than 480 active cases have been reported in the two holy cities so far.

Last month, the Kingdom suspended the Umrah pilgrimage until further notice, halted all international passenger flights indefinitely, and blocked the entry and exit to several cities, including Makkah and Madinah. There have been 25 deaths reported among more than 2,000 COVID-19 cases in Saudi Arabia.

Globally, more than 1,000,000 people have been infected and nearly 59,000 of them have died.

Against this backdrop, a decision to suspend the Hajj may seem at once inevitable and unprecedented.

In fact, the pilgrimage has experienced disruptions through the centuries due to circumstances beyond the control of Hajj authorities.

According to a report published by the King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah), the first time the Hajj was interrupted was in 930 AD when the Qarmatians, a syncretic branch of Sevener Ismaili Shiite Islam that revolted against the

Abbasid Caliphate, attacked pilgrims on the eighth day of Hajj.

The report says the Qarmatians, convinced that performing the Hajj was an act of idolatry, killed more than 30,000 pilgrims that year, desecrated Makkah’s Zamzam well with corpses, and ran off with the Black Stone of the Kaaba back to Hajr (Qatif nowadays), their capital on the Arabian Gulf at that time.

On account of the bloody assault, the Hajj was not performed for another 10 years, according to the Darah report.

The next disruption happened in 968 AD, says the report, citing Ibn Kathir’s book “Al-Bidaya wan-Nihayah.” It said a disease spread inside Makkah and claimed the lives of many pilgrims.

At the same time, camels used for transporting pilgrims to Makkah died owing to a scarcity of water.

“Many of those who managed to reach Makkah safely could not live long after Hajj for the same reason,” according to the Darah report.

Among those who came to Makkah to perform the Hajj in significant numbers were Egyptians.

But in 1000 AD, they could not afford to undertake the journey because of the high cost of living in the country that year.

Some 29 years later, no pilgrims from the East or Egypt came for the Hajj. According to the Darah report, in 1030 only a few Iraqi pilgrims managed to reach Makkah to perform the Hajj.

Nine years later, Iraqi, Egyptian, Central Asian and north Arabian Muslims were unable to perform the Hajj.

Dr. Emad Taher, head of the history department at King Abdul Aziz University, said



the reason was political unrest and sectarian tensions.

Similarly, no one performed the Hajj in 1099 owing to fear and insecurity across the Muslim world as a result of wars.

Some five years before the Crusaders seized Jerusalem in 1099, lack of unity among Muslim rulers of the Arab region meant that no Muslims could manage to reach Makkah to perform the Hajj.

In 1168, Egyptians found themselves locked in confrontation with Kurdish Commander Asaduddin Shirkuh, who was hoping to extend the Zangid dynasty to Egypt. The situation naturally did not allow Egyptians to perform the Hajj.

The pilgrimage was again disrupted in the 13th century. The Darah report says no people from outside the Hijaz region could perform the Hajj between 1256 and 1260.

French leader Napoleon Bonaparte's military campaign in the Ottoman territories of Egypt and Syria from 1798 to 1801 made

the standard routes to Makkah unsafe for pilgrims.

More than two centuries on, a global pandemic has cast a huge shadow of uncertainty on the Islamic pilgrimage.

Hani Nasira, an Egyptian academic and writer, said if COVID-19 cases worldwide continue to increase, a decision to halt the Hajj should come as no surprise.

"If imposed, such a decision will be wise and in full compliance with the Islamic Shari'ah, which basically aims to protect and preserve peoples' lives," he told Arab News.

"In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says, 'and do not kill yourselves.' Also, the Prophet Muhammad warned his companions against epidemics.

"Abdulrahman bin Awf narrated that the Prophet Muhammad had said, 'if you hear of an outbreak of a plague in a land, do not enter it; but if that epidemic breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place.' This Hadith shows the significance



of avoiding plagues.”

Nasira noted that the COVID-19 outbreak has claimed thousands of lives across the world and shows no sign of abating.

“The whole world is suffering from the swift spread of the coronavirus, which has filled people everywhere with unprecedented dread,” he told Arab News.

“With scientists having little information about the virus, a cure isn’t likely to come out soon, so the continuation of the situation makes suspending the Hajj necessary to protect lives.”

Nasira drew attention to the fact that some Muslim countries, including Iran and Turkey, are among the biggest casualties of the pandemic.

“We don’t want to add fuel to the fire. It’s illogical, and Islam also never accepts or approves that. If I were a mufti, I wouldn’t hesitate to call for a suspension,” he said.

Ahmed Al-Ghamdi, a researcher of Islamic studies, pointed out that the Hajj is not a limited ritual in the sense that it can be carried out at least once in the lifetime of an adult Muslim.

“Performing the Hajj isn’t limited to a specific time. An adult Muslim can perform the Hajj whenever he or she likes once they’ve reached the age of discretion,” he told Arab News.

“Prophet Muhammad, for instance, didn’t perform the pilgrimage in the first year the Hajj became a duty. He made his Hajj a year later,” said Al-Ghamdi, who specializes in Hadith and Islamic sciences. Like Nasira, he maintains that Islamic Shari’ah strongly backs public interest and wellbeing.

“In case of dire necessity, such as because of the spread of the coronavirus disease, political reasons or security compulsions, the Hajj can be suspended and this doesn’t contradict Islamic teachings,” Al-Ghamdi said. “The Almighty has ordered us to not expose ourselves to danger.”

Moreover, Al-Ghamdi said, the Hajj is founded in reason and logic, so if health officials find that a contagious sickness can cause deaths, preserving people’s lives is more important than the pilgrimage itself. “Nothing is wrong with this line of reasoning in Islamic Shari’ah,” he added.



Peaceful Religious Coexistence

M. Minhaj Niloy

The concept of religious coexistence permits peoples of different religions to live together in peace and harmony. Coexistence also refers to respecting people's differences and resolving their conflicts peacefully, nonviolently. Peaceful religious coexistence is vital to constructing a multicultural society. Peaceful coexistence among various groups of people without discriminating races, colors, religions, languages, nationalities has considered a pre-condition of social safety and global amity.

Since the beginning of history, human beings have struggled for global peace while international communities have developed many principles and several international treaties to establish social peace. Examples of some notable international covenants include Magna Carta 1215, Covenant of the League of Nations 1919, the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War 1928 and the Charter of United Nations 1945 etc. Despite these conventions among different nations, the world has failed to achieve the desired goal to live in peace. In recent times, peaceful co-existence has become a major challenge for global peace and security in many countries. However, our focus is on peaceful religious coexistence in Islamic history.

Peaceful coexistence in Islamic history:

The term “Islam” originates from the Arabic origin “Salam” or “Silm”, it means peace and submission to the will of the Creator. Each Muslim is ordered to greet another Muslim uttering the words “Assalamu-Alaikum” (peace be upon you). The word “Peace” is mentioned in several verses of the Noble Qur’an. So, the essence of peace and harmony is rooted in the Islamic history.

According to Surat Al-Hujurat, verse 13, “O mankind, We created you all from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another.” This verse points out that there should not be any discrimination on the basis of race, sex or religion. It also identifies diversity as a sign of Allah and the beauty of His creation. Therefore, it should be respected. Identities are for recognition and not to show off and pride. So, there should be no conflict for distinct identities based on religious, tribal, and national grounds.

Islamic principles teach us to settle dis-

putes between people and nations with the object of establishing peace. Creating divisions and hatred based on spiritual, social, and cultural diversities is against Islamic guidelines.

It is mentioned in the Holy Quran, that Torah (Taurāt), Psalms (Zabūr) and the Gospel (Injīl) are sent by Allah. Muslims should rely on all the revealed books. Torah is revealed to Moses, Psalms to David, and Gospel to Jesus (may Allah send His blessings on them). So, Muslims should believe in all the revealed holy books. The messages of these holy books are not different from the Noble Qur’an. But the Noble Qur’an confirms and clarifies the messages delivered to earlier Prophets. It clears the misinterpretations of those messages made by the followers of the Prophets who delivered them. The Noble Qur’an affirms it is the same message, a same monotheistic religion which was accurately revealed before. But those people who received the messages prior to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) became doubtful and disconcerted about it. According to Surat Ash-Shuraa verse 13, “He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein. Difficult for those who associate others with Allah is that to which you invite them. Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him]”

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) did not preach any new religion, but came to confirm the example of Ibrahim’s religion of monotheism. Many Quranic verses and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) support the religious coexistence.



Surat Al-Baqarah verse 130 declares that “And who would be averse to the religion of Abraham except one who makes a fool of himself. And We had chosen him in this world, and indeed he, in the Hereafter, will be among the righteous”

Islam has structures for social behavior, communal responsibilities, and dispute settlements in order to establish peaceful coexistence. The Charter of Madinah is the greatest example of social coexistence in diverse beliefs. Some consider the charter as the first written constitution in the world. It was also implemented by the successive rulers of several Muslim territories in the history of the Islamic world. Different types of treaties were established in the Islamic history to ensure peaceful coexistence among the peoples of different tribes and the States. The four Ca-

liphs (632-661 A.D.), the Umayyads (661-750 A.D.), the Abbasids (750-1258 A.D.), the Fatimids in Egypt (969-1171 A.D.) and the Muslims in Spain (711-1492 A.D.) firmly followed the Prophet Muhammad’s policy. These sorts of activities established examples in Islamic history to nurture peaceful coexistence.

Islamic history evidently demonstrates that Muslims and non-Muslims lived together tranquilly, peacefully in Madinah. The first Islamic State is Madinah, the early history of Islam. Islamic teachings guarantee peace in every field of life. Many treaties were signed between Muslims and non-Muslims. In 622 A.D, the Charter of Madinah was declared by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to meet the needs of people of different beliefs. The main purpose was to build a multi-religious society while al-

lowing religious freedom for all. Before the charter, different groups with different faith had shown hostility towards one another for several decades. But after becoming parties to this pact, they lived together peacefully. It was practiced as a legal contract. Because of that contract Jewish, Christian and Muslim lived in peace side by side for more than 100 years. It is clearly transcribed in the Charter of Madinah that everyone is free to follow any faith or religion. People were also free to make any political or philosophical choice. They could form a community sharing the same views. People were allowed to exercise their own justice system. But if anyone committed any crime, he would not be protected by anyone. The parties to the contract had permission to co-operate with one another, provide support to each other. And it would remain under the protection of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). If any conflicts took place, then it would be brought to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The charter of Madinah was in force from 622 to 632 AD. This document helped to eradicate the tribal structures which had been based on blood and kinship. Then people belong from different cultural, ethnical and geographical backgrounds lived together and made social unity. Therefore, the Madinah Charter is a perfect model of religious coexistence in the world.

Non-Muslims places of worship:

Muslim religion protects the worship houses of Jews, Christians as well as other non-Muslims living in the Muslim state. It also guarantees their right to worship along with their faith. According to Surat Al-Haj verse 40 "...And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries,

churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned. And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might".

The Covenant with the Christians of Najran is an enlightened instance of tolerance. After a number of negotiations, the treaty of Najran was signed to confer on the non-Muslims both religious and administrative rights. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) granted full freedom to the Jews of Madinah and Christians of Najran to exercise their religious practices. Another example of coexistence is the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) covenant with the monks of the monastery of St. Catherine and all Christians. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was only conscious about the people's rights, but not by race or religion. In 631 CE, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) sent letters inviting different communities to his city. One group, the Christians of Najran, present-day Yemen, travelled 450 miles to meet the Prophet in Madinah. After their meeting, the Najran Christians needed to pray. They left Prophet's mosque and headed to the street to pray there. Then the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) told his Christian guests that they could pray in their way inside his mosque. The Najran Christians accepted the offer.

Forceful conversion:

Islam does not permit forceful conversion. No people were forced to change their respective religions. According to Surat Al-Baqarah verse 256 "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So, whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold



with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.” Surat Al-Kafiroon verse 6 states that ‘For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.’ Even Kitabia women are not forbidden to follow their own religion even if they married any Muslims. In the Islamic custom, Muslims assisted them to repair their churches or monasteries. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) always advised Muslims to do such things.

Neighborhood responsibilities:

A good neighborhood is vital for religious coexistence. It helps to live peacefully and strengthen society. Bad neighborhood leads to social anxiety and disunity. Islam confers importance to the neighbors’ right outside

religions or other differences. According to Surat An-Nisa verse 36 “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.”

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “The best friend in the Sight of Allah is he who is the well-wisher of his companions, and the best neighbor is one who behaves best towards his neighbors” (Al-Tirmidhi). In another hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him), said, “He is not a believer

whose stomach is filled while the neighbor to his side goes hungry.” Duties to neighbors include safety, giving gifts and food. And, looking after in case of sickness if needed and so on.

Responsibilities towards orphan and deprived:

Islam gives importance to the rights of orphans, disabled, poor and destitute without any discrimination. The orphans should be accorded with kind treatment and due affection. The Noble Qur’an says, “And let those [executors and guardians] fear [injustice] as if they [themselves] had left weak offspring behind and feared for them. So, let them fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice.” Surat An-Nisa verse 9. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Feed the hungry, visit the sick, and set free the captives” (Sahih al-Bukhari).

Islamic code of conduct with non-Muslims:

Islamic tradition contains a liberal Islamic code of conduct with non-Muslims. According to Surat Al-Haj verse 67, “For every religion We have appointed rites which they perform. So, [O Muhammad], let the disbelievers not contend with you over the matter but invite them to your Lord. Indeed, you are upon straight guidance.”

According to Surat Al-Baqarah verse 143 “And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. And We did not make the qibla 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-A’raf verse 31 states that “O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.”

Islam eliminates all discrimination based on race, sex, color, religion, language, and nationality and allows full freedom to the religious practices of non-Muslims. The lives and properties of non-Muslims are also protected by Islamic traditions. They have complete liberty to keep and maintain their beliefs, custom, lifestyle, dress, tradition, and so on. Muslims are also encouraged to be helpful, charitable and sympathetic to non-Muslims. Even Islamic countries will grant economic assistance to non-Muslims poor. Certainly, these directions encourage peaceful coexistence among all religious groups, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, living in a society, country or even in the world.

It is noted in a hadith that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and some of his companions were sitting down near a street in Madinah. Then, “A funeral procession passed by the Holy Prophet and he stood up for it. People said to him: This is a funeral of a Jew. He said: Was it not a human life?” It is clear that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) respected person irrespective of religion.

From the above discussion, it is apparent that the Islamic tradition highly promotes the principles of peaceful coexistence. The Islamic ruling era around the world was a beautiful example of the peaceable coexistence of several religions and cultures. It teaches Muslims how to live together in this world with different groups in a happy and harmonious way.

How COVID-19 has changed lifestyles around the world

By Qais Bajaifer

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has undoubtedly disrupted the lifestyles and habits of millions of people from all walks of life and shattered thousands of lives. It has impacted global trade and led to complete suspension of religious gatherings in many parts around the world.



The frightening COVID-19 pandemic has also slowed the down the fast pace of life around the world and made people pause and take a break from the heave of the world, forcing them to ponder over and reflect on many things including family, life, death, health, hygiene, neighbors, friends and members of the society. One thing is sure: this pandemic has interrupted the daily routines of millions of people around the world and will create a change in how each and every individual sees their own life.

The Muslim World League Journal has conducted an on-line survey covering different segments of respondents from various parts of the globe in order to identify how the coronavirus affected their personal lives.

Yoshar Shareef, a Shari'ah professor at the Aristotle University, Greece, said the virus has brought the city where he lives to a standstill and turned the life of numerous families upside down, especially those who lost their loved ones to this pandemic. Darkness and sadness shrouds the homes of families grieving over their loved ones, some of whom contracted the disease while they were traveling overseas and transmitted it to their relatives after returning home without knowing it.

Mr. Barbara Ensulen from the Catholic Church of Krugersdrop Town, Johannesburg, South Africa, said physical religious gatherings have been banned in her town and that church services are being done via social media or other platforms.

Coronavirus, she said, has brought the town to a complete lockdown. While people are mostly following government health directives, there have been violations of curfews on some part of improv-



erished people who took to the street protesting the shortage of food supplies. Some decided to take matters into their hands and plundered supermarkets.

Hassan Habeebullah, a volunteer who hands out facemasks in the city where he lives, said the South African authorities have taken precautionary and preventive measures to curb the spread of the virus and have halted prayers in mosques, churches and temples since the lockdown. The government set certain hours where people can do grocery and go to pharmacies and medical clinics. He agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted people's lives. He is sad because there are pool people who can find nothing to eat and are facing great difficulty because of this



situation. He saw poor people violating the curfews and breaking into supermarkets, stealing food because they did not have money as many of them had stopped going to work and had not been paid.

Dr. Tony Luck, the leader of the Jewish Community in Johannesburg, South Africa, said the synagogues were shut down by the order of the government as a precautionary measure. The members of the Jewish community pray at their homes. In his opinion, most of the violations of curfews occurred because of hunger, which drove people to attack supermarkets and groceries and steal food.

In Malawi, the economic conditions were worse for people, especially those living in rural areas. Sheikh Abdulhakeem Issa, who lives in a small town, described the living conditions of many people, including Muslims, as harsh because there is

a severe shortage of basic needs. All worship places have closed their doors and no congregational prayer is allowed.

Another fact that complicates the situation for all Malawians, he noted, is the shortage of sufficient medical equipment and supplies.

“Unfortunately, many residents find it hard to adhere to the health directives due to the lack of food and daily necessities. People are hungry. Some did break the curfew and took to the streets protesting,” he said.

Dr. Yousef Noori, the director of the Tawfeeq Islamic Center, Coventry, UK, agreed that the COVID-19 disrupted lives, economies and health services and impacted all segments of societies around the world and the Muslim community in the UK is no different. The lifestyles and routines of Muslims living in the UK have changed. He says one has to look at

the brighter side of the pandemic. For one thing, it made people stay at home more often and made family get together more often, and this something that rarely happens during the year as people do not meet very often and do not talk very often or listen to each other's problems.

The crisis also made young men and women stay indoors. He said, "Nowadays, most Muslims hold Quranic sessions indoors and some family hold regular discussion and discuss certain issues. The positive thing is that the crisis increased a family solidarity. Muslim families perform congregation prayers at home and watch religious programs. The British people follow the rules by the letter and rarely one would violate the laws. People only get out for a very emergency situation."

Bilah Jilan, a feature article writer at Ethiopia-based Addis Standard Magazine, said the government took precautionary measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 across the country. Life has come to a complete halt. Educational institutions were closed while prayers at mosques and churches were shut down. Awareness campaigns were launched to educate the general public about the dangers of the disease. Food and medications are provided to the needy families with the help of the private and public sectors. He said there are fears that the medical institutions will not be able to handle and face the COVID-19 crisis.

Christina K., from Russia, said some of the local churches are still working; however, most of the people try their best to stay home. There are some violations here and there. She is sad because most of the people in her city seem to have no idea



how serious the COVID-19 spread is and tend to break the curfew. In her opinion, it is important to understand that each and every person is responsible for stopping this infection and this can only be done if everyone unites and supports one another. She hopes that something good comes out of this bad situation and that the pandemic make people around the world more united and tolerant. She said people should focus only on moral principles and treat one another as brother and sisters.

Adam J. Newman, from Colorado State, USA, said the religious institutions in his area have had to adapt to hold services, sermons, and gatherings in formats that complied with physical distancing. Generally, people are following the health guidelines, he noted. Some of his friends have had COVID-19 and have recovered or are recovering. He said there is not so much a curfew in his area as restrictions



on size of gatherings/avoiding contact outside of the primary living unit.

Dale P., from Monterey City, California, said prayers at churches stopped but the followers of his church are meeting on Zoom with family groups for prayer.

“There is a Sunday message from the head pastor that is streamed on the internet, and there are lots of social media applications being used to communicate. Our church has a lot of young pastors who are tech savvy,” he said.

He said people in his area are staying inside and only go to the grocery, besides everyone is wearing masks and maintaining distance. Sometimes he sees people taking walks or exercising, riding a bike or running but they also keep distance from other. He said he knows a man who is in ICU at the local hospital and have had one friend who almost died but has

since recovered and is out of the hospital in Colorado. His wife knows a woman in the mid-West whose husband just died. Her husband was a medical worker. He and his wife are lucky, he said, because they have not had personal interaction with any people whom they know have the virus.

He believes it is a hard decision for the government to know when to let people go back to work. In one sense, for every day people do not work, the greater their chance of losing their jobs, becoming destitute, etc. On the other hand, if you open the economy too soon, then the disease can take off into new areas.

John D., from Chicago, said in most places people are fined or given warnings when congregating with more than nine others, including religious gatherings. Generally, people are adhering to



home quarantine orders and social distancing and everyone leaves home for essential business like grocery. The company where he works asked all employees to work from home until further notice. He feels like his city has become a ghost town because downtowns and traffic ways are empty almost all the time.

Vinood B., from Tamil Nadu State, India, said all religious gatherings are prohibited and no one is allowed to go to the temples. He is glad that most people are adhering to the health instructions in his city and described violators as irresponsible people. He said there is no need to go out and subject yourself and your family members to unnecessary risks. One can use the different applications available to order food and anything they want.

M. Khemiri, a Muslim immigrant who lives in Quebec, Canada, said all places of worship are closed including churches,

temples and synagogues. People go out for a walk, grocery or to run an errand but everyone is keeping their distance. Although the Quebec government has not issued a curfew, social life in general has been disrupted because of the COVID-19. Most shops and malls are closed and streets are empty except for few people or cars.

Amal B., from Paris, said she can no longer go to the mosque in her local area because the authorities ordered that all places of worship should be closed. People in her locale do not go out unless there is something urgent or an emergency. However, sometimes people do not resist the nice weather and go out for a walk. As a mother, she is extremely scared for her children because the home quarantine is taking longer time than expected. She tries to keep her children busy so that they do not get bored of staying indoors all the time.

Worldwide celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr

M. Minhaj Niloy

Eid-ul-Fitr is a joyful festival for every Muslim in the world. The Arabic term Eid-ul-Fitr is known as the festival of breaking the fast. It is celebrated at the end of the Ramadan month after a full month fasting from dawn to sunset. Eid-ul-Fitr is the first festival among the two big festivals of Muslims. But the festive celebration may vary from region to another. The main thing is about cordiality and hospitality. Historically, it started for the first time in Madinah after the migration of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) from Makkah to Madinah. The Prophet told people to celebrate this joyful event according to the order of Allah.



Eid-ul-Fitr is marked in the Shawwal, the 10th month of the Islamic calendar. The first day of the new lunar month of Shawwal differs in different parts of the earth, depending on the sight of the new moon. Thus, the first day of Eid celebration also varies from one country to another. The event is celebrated during the first three days of Shawwal or for one, two, or three days. It is prohibited to fast on the first day. Eid-ul-Fitr begins at sunset on the night of the first sighting of the new moon. If the moon is not seen after the 29th day of the previous lunar month due to heavy clouds, then when the month ends, everyone starts celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr without waiting to see the crescent moon. In the Islamic calendar, the date of Eid-ul-Fitr remains the same, but in the Gregorian calendar, it changes. It falls nearly 11 days earlier each consecutive year in the Gregorian calendar, which is a solar system. The Gregorian date may differ between States depending on the local sight of the new moon. Nevertheless, the Eid days start with prayers. There is a special prayer for Eid. It is performed in congregation soon after dawn in mosques or a public square or in the open air. It is normally performed in an open area or rarely in mosques (when it rains outside, or other unavoidable circumstances take place). There is no Adhan or call for Eid prayer.

Traditionally, Muslims are encouraged to eat dates and sweet dishes before going to the Eid prayers. On the first day, people take a shower early in the morning, wear new clothes and use perfumes to prepare for prayer. Muslims praise Allah in a loud voice on the way to the mosque, saying, ‘Allahu Akbar (Allah is the greatest), Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, La ilaha illa l-Lah wal-Lahu akbar, Allahu akbar walil-Lahi l-hamd’. The prayer is followed by a short sermon, which



directs Muslims on how one should perform the rituals of Eid. Listening to the sermon is optional. Many people bring their prayer mats. There are two rakats (units of prayer) for Eid-ul-Fitr and 12 Takbirs (raising one’s hands to the shoulders or ears while saying Allahu akbar). The first rakat starts with seven takbirs and the second rakat starts with five takbirs just before kneeling down. Some people complete in six takbirs. In this case, each rakat has three takbirs. Muslims eagerly wait for this precious moment during fasting the holy month of Ramadan.

It is a time of celebration after fasting. Muslims arrange official receptions and make private visits to close relatives. Everyone greets each other, exchanges gifts, and wears new clothes. People hug each other on the streets as a part of the celebration. As a sign of friendship, men hug men and women hug fellow women. One of the most common greetings during Eid is “Eid Mubarak”, which means a blessed Eid. Greetings vary from one city to another. People also like



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA):

In Saudi Arabia, the Eid-ul-Fitr celebration may vary slightly culturally depending on the region. A very common tradition for every Saudi family is to meet at the house of the head of the family after the Eid prayer. People prepare special types of meals while kids will be lining up in front of every adult family member demanding their gift money or bags. The gift bags may include different sweets or toys. However, Saudi people decorate their homes and prepare mouthwatering meals for family and friends. Dates are very common snacks and are usually eaten at the pre-dawn meal before fasting because it is Sunnah for both Ramadan and Eid. Many people in KSA will bake kleja (a kind of biscuits made of rose-flavored that contains nuts and dates). Kleja is a traditional food in the Kingdom. People buy new clothes and shoes for the festival like the other Muslims in the world. Traditionally, Saudi men buy huge amounts of rice or other essentials and give them away to the needy and underprivileged. Even many shopkeepers show their big heartedness by providing free presents with each purchase. During the Eid, every night, there are massive fireworks shows in the major cities of Saudi Arabia.

to visit the graves of kin at this time. Many delicious big meals are usually served at the main event.

Besides the jubilant celebrations, there are some religious duties a Muslim should perform. A particular type of charity known as Zakat al-Fitr is given at the end of Ramadan. Usually, donation of Zakat al-Fitr can be given until the morning of Eid-ul-Fitr (before the dawn prayer). Most of the people give Zakat during Ramadan. Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam and is payable round the year. It is preferable to give this type of charity during Ramadan, so needy people can celebrate Eid with happiness.

One of the beauties of Eid is how the festival is celebrated globally. People can have their own ways of marking this holy festival. Some similarities can be found in celebration among people. But all the Muslims of the world do not celebrate it in the same way.

Indonesia:

In Indonesia, Eid-ul-Fitr is termed as 'Hari Raya Idul Fitri', meaning 'celebration day'. It is more commonly known as 'Lebaran' and considered a holiday in Indonesia. People come back to their hometown or city to celebrate the event with their families and friends. The celebration starts the night before with reciting the Takbir. Fireworks light up the skies to mark the festival, whereas people wear their traditional clothes on this day. They made a special Lebaran meal with



their family and friends and give money to children in colorful envelopes. Zakat alms for the poor is distributed in the mosques after prayer in the morning. It is common to visit the graves of relatives to ritually clean the grave on this day for every Indonesian Muslim. People maintain a special ritual known as *halal bi-halal*, during which they visit the elderly, relatives, and neighbors to show respect.

Malaysia:

Eid-ul-Fitr is known as Hari Raya in Malaysia and everyone wishes each other saying “Selamat Hari Raya”. People use Rows of Pelita (oil lamps) to brighten homes and the streets during the season. It is seen in Muar, Johor, Malaysia. Like other countries,

Malaysian parents or elders give token sums of money to children on this day, known as “Duit Raya”. Customarily, workers return to their hometowns from another city. It is known as ‘*balik kampung*’ or ‘homecoming’. People wear traditional clothes during the Eid festival.

Egypt:

In Egypt, Eid-ul-Fitr is a three-day festival and a public holiday for everyone. Egyptian people have diverse customs and conduct to spend the first day of Eid. However, all customs aim to gather with all family members and celebrations for Eid. Family gatherings take part in cooking and having all traditional foods. The first day begins with performing the prayer. It is customary for



children and young members to receive or enjoy Ediea, one of the most cheerful traditions. Elderly family members normally give money as a gift to the children. The next two days they often spent visiting parks, cinemas or even the beaches. Children visit amusement parks and gather around a storyteller, puppeteer or a magician in the neighborhood festivals. They ride decorated bikes nearby their neighborhood. Some Egyptians prefer to visit the graves of loved ones and place roses or flowers near them.

China:

More than 20 million people celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr in China and don their best clothes. City's downtown streets remain busy and many restaurants re-open during the daytime hours. Every Chinese family has its own

traditions and recipes to celebrate the event. They prepare each dish with special care. A very common food item 'You Xiang' is popular during Eid day and is given as a gift in many places and eaten in Eid feast. It is made of flour, water and yeast patties fried in oil. Chinese Muslims also decorate their homes.

Afghanistan:

In Afghanistan, one of the most popular celebrations during this time is the food fight known as 'Tokhm-Jangi'. They paint hard-boiled eggs and every person participates in it. A person should break his opponent's egg and keeps his intact. It is really funny to watch this type of game.

Greece:

In Greece, Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated mainly

in the Muslim minority areas where Muslims wear the best dress and enjoy a common meal after prayer. They offer sweets to family and visitors whereas women prepare sweets and other meals. Children kiss the hands of the elderly to show their respect. In return, the elderly give them gifts including candies and small amounts of money. Muslim minority schools declare a five-day holiday for the feast.

Russia:

Russia has a low Muslim population. Russian Muslims enjoy their traditional food in their houses after prayer. They exchange gifts with relatives. In Russia, ‘Manti’ is a very popular food for Eid and is filled with some kind of seasoned meat.

United Kingdom:

There is no public holiday for Eid-ul-Fitr in the United Kingdom. But for the celebration of the event, many schools, businesses and organizations allow taking a one-day break. Muslims wake up early and gather in the local mosque or outdoors for Eid prayer. They wear the finest dress and some people decorate their houses with lights and other adornments.

Bangladesh:

In Bangladesh, Eid-ul-Fitr is a three-day official government holiday. Educational institutions remain closed for longer than most public holidays. Bangladeshi people wait eagerly for seeing the sight of the crescent moon. Happiness starts spreading around the country when it is heard that the new moon is visible in the sky. The night before Eid is known as ‘Chand raat’. Younger to elder, everyone greeting each other saying Eid Mubarak. Girls like to apply ‘henna’



or ‘mehendi’ on their hands at Chand raat. On Eid day, everyone wears new dresses and happily performs the prayer in an open field called Eidgah. Before going to Eidgah in the morning, they eat Shemai (Sweet dessert) and dates. After the prayer, Muslims visit the graves of their loved ones as well as pray for them. People enjoy many tasty dishes such as polao, biriyani, khichuri, kofta, kabab, korma, rejala, including some other recipes of chicken, beef, and mutton. Some prepare different types of pithas (local snacks). Muslims visit their relatives, neighbors, and friends while children and younger people give salam to elderly people and greets them, saying Eid Mubarak. The elderly people give money to them in return, called Salami, Eidi or Bakshish of Eid. Many houses and streets are decorated with lights on this day.

Finally, any festival brings happiness to the masses. Carnivals are nothing but a representation of one’s appreciation, elation, and affection. Eid-ul-Fitr is one of the blissful days for Muslims. They cheerfully celebrate the Eid around the world.



Hindus in solidarity with Muslims to reject discrimination

Jeddah: Al-Walid Jafar Elias

Despite the sectarian violence in the Indian capital and many other cities in late February, in protest against the amendment of the Citizenship Law to allow the naturalization of non-Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan who entered India illegally. However, many followers of the Hindu religion showed their solidarity with Muslims

and protected them from attacks by right-wing extremists of the BJP, as they demonstrated with them in the streets and carried banners affirming that India is a democratic country that all its citizens should enjoy their constitutional rights, regardless of their ethnicity or religion. Many Islamic leaders also announced their refusal to resort to violence, whatever the reasons, and called on angry demonstrators to strive to take their rights by

law, noting that the Indian constitution prohibits any discrimination based on religion, and confirmed their intention to file an urgent law suit before the Supreme Constitutional Court to repeal the law.

Many active political, cultural and social leaders indicated that the state of prosperity and economic growth that India has witnessed during the past years, which led to increased rates of economic growth should not be lost due to racist issues, and that India has suffered greatly during the past decades from acts of religious violence, which must not be allowed to repeat under any circumstances.

Western media sites indicated that what is new in the cases of sectarian violence witnessed by India this time is the emergence of reasonable voices from all segments of society, who reject these events and call for restraint and not to resort to violence. The British BBC website said that many Hindus committed heroic acts during the violence that occurred in the Ashok Nagar region in the capital, Delhi, when they participated side by side with Muslims in confronting violence. A Hindu named Subhash Sharma said that he rejects all kinds of discrimination, and called for equality, stressing the need for work and production, rather than inciting chaos and violence. The site said Sharma ran to help after a Hindu crowd set fire in a mosque and took part in putting out the fire.

“There was a crowd of thousands of Hindus and there were only a few Muslims in the mosque. As soon as the fire caught fire, I opened the water pump in my house and ran there with a hose. Immediately, tens of Hindus joined me to stop such attacks. In a short time, we were able to put out the fire”.



The site added that an Indian Muslim from the same neighborhood, Murtada, said that he wanted to save his life and leave the area, but his Hindu neighbors asked him not to leave. They assured him of their protection, he said, “they assured us that they will not let anyone harm us. Over the past years we have been good neighbors and have had good relations”.

Russia Today site indicated that Muslims and Hindus also cooperated in confronting gangs that sought to exploit the events, and tried to storm and steal shops owned by Muslims, adding that two neighbors, one Hindu and the other Muslim, from the Vijay Garden area in the city of Nagpur, which is one among the areas hardest hit by the violence, mobilized a large number of neighbors to hunt down a gang that was burning cars and smashing windows in the vicinity. “One day after the



violence began, we closed the main road and people gathered from the neighborhood and sat outside. We created a "peace committee", composed of Hindus and Muslims, members of the committee moved from house to house to inform people not to believe the rumors, and keep children inside. Such positions are what give the population some hope that life will eventually return to normal. We do not want to lose our neighbors and brothers, just because the leaders of some political parties want to take positions that they see as helping them achieve gains during the elections", he said.

The site also quoted a Muslim citizen named Syed Ali as saying that the solidarity of

many Hindus with them was not surprising to them, sympathetic to the increased awareness of millions of Indians, he added, "In light of the technology revolution that the world is experiencing, and the increase in the proportion of education, the old methods that were followed by the political parties to inflame the situation and fabricate crises to win the votes of the voters are no longer useful. People have become more aware, and everyone is searching for peace and stability and does not want to be drawn behind the events of violence". Ali pointed out that this solidarity made them happier and emphasized that they live in their homeland, which they will never give up.

British struggle to prevent exploitation of children



Nizar Abdel Baqi Ahmed

A British mother who lost her son in a suicide bombing in 2017 seeks to prevent teenagers from being trapped in the net of extremists, who carry out terrorist acts in Western countries. Vignon Murray, whose son Martin Heitt, 29 years old was killed in a bombing that targeted the Manchester Arena, was trying to speak to high school

students across Britain, urging them to reject extremism, stay away from terrorism, and making it clear that terrorism is not related to a specific religion, and all divine religions call for moderation and coexistence. “I went through a terrible experience when I lost my son and I felt tremendous pain, so I strive to prevent others from going through the same experience. I want mothers to avoid that pain, and if I can prevent one



child from becoming extremist, that will be the day I know that Martin's death did not go in vain, as he did nothing but choose his lifestyle, but he was unfortunately killed by an extremist belonging to ISIS who blew himself up", she said.

Positive feelings

A year after the suicide terrorist attack, Murray began the task of stopping other young men from being drawn down the same path that the terrorist had followed. So far, she has visited dozens of schools across England, from Blackpool to Southampton, including the one where the terrorist himself studied. Murray explains how she came up with the idea, "the moment I crossed the

front gate of the school, this idea came to me, how did that young man get caught up to extremist terrorist ideas? I and him live in the same society and breathe the same air, so how can a person who has lived a normal life suddenly turns into a dangerous terrorist?"

Overcoming bitterness

When Murray visited any of the schools, she started her conversation by telling her story and the feelings that she felt after her son's death, and the harsh experience her family had gone through, and she concluded her speech by confirming that she forgave the terrorist who was the cause of the accident. Then she gave students the opportunity to

ask their questions. Most of the questions revolved around how she was able to forgive who caused the death of her son, and she replies to them saying that she is convinced that he was a victim of evil groups that deceived and recruited him, so she does not want the rest of the students to make the same mistake. Murray urges students to avoid the error of negative impressions and calls on them to place greater value on tolerance and coexistence.

A defining moment

Murray is keen to assert that terrorism has no religion or homeland, and she cites the story of right-wing extremist Darren Osiren who ran over a group of Muslim worshipers after the end of Friday prayers at the Finsbury Park Mosque in London. Muslims, however, surrounded him with the imam of the mosque to protect him from the angry crowds until the police came and arrested him. “In the midst of all this chaos, confusion and terror, these men have decided to protect this man. They have decided what to do at that moment, and I have to decide, too. At that moment, I realized that terrorist thought can strike anyone. So I did, I called the BBC and announced live that I forgive the terrorist who killed my son”, she said.

Internet severity

Murray warns of danger of the spread of terrorist material on the Internet, noting that she discovered during her talk with the youngsters that many follow such materials, and says, “Among a group of 100 teenagers, there were between 60 to 80 students who raised their hands when I asked if they

saw terrorist material on the Internet. One of my daughters entered the Facebook site and watched a video in which a person was beheaded several years ago. Some terrorist movements targeting high school students through the Internet, and this is a pervasive phenomenon, and a big problem, that should find a solution. The proliferation of these random materials poses a great danger to our children’s future and our community’s security; here comes a big role to raise awareness among our children and protecting them from being affected by what they see”.

Community activities

Murray’s efforts do not only focus on combatting the involvement of youngsters in terrorist acts, but also organizing events inviting students to undertake charitable and community activities aimed at directing their energies in the right direction. As she continues to visit schools, she is also campaigning to increase security measures in places where public parties are organized, as well as participating part-time teaching for a master’s degree in counter-terrorism from Central Lancashire University. She asserts that her four children support her efforts and campaign, which has become part of the process by which the family overlooks its grief of losing the older son. However, she continues, despite her continuous efforts, feeling the pain of his loss, and still remembers him on a daily basis, concluding, “I certainly cannot bring my son back to life again, but I can do something to make sure that other mothers will not suffer this distress.”



Austrian MP: Banning the hijab is wrong and Muslim women are inspiring

Nizar Abdulbagi Ahmed

The Austrian parliamentarian, Marta Pisman, reiterated her call to reconsider the government's decision to prohibit women from wearing the headscarf and ban it in schools, noting that this was "arbitrary against women and a violation of their personal freedom to dress as desired". She called on parliamentarians to bind the government to their decision that refused to consent to the ban on wearing the headscarf, and the government did not respond to it.

Pisman said in a post on her Facebook page, "It is strange that we ignore all the capabilities of a Muslim woman and adhere to preventing her from wearing the headscarf she

wants. This behavior - in my view - is inconsistent with the values of European democracy, which we have to defend. Although the majority of the distinguished members of Parliament refused to accept the recommendation made by the government and affirmed the right of Muslim women to wear the hijab, the government ignored that decision and approved the law".

Pisman had stood up strongly last year against a decision obliging women not to wear the headscarf in schools and workplaces. During the parliament's discussion of the government's recommendation she wore the veil in front of the members during her speech, asking everyone, "Has something changed now? Did I become a person other than Marta

Bessmann, a member of the parliament and born in Austria?” She added that as a result of hate campaigns, veiled Muslim women are attacked and harassed in the streets, for nothing but wearing the veil.

Pisman noted that the veil is only part of the life of Muslim women, their culture, and their identity, but was portrayed as a symbol of anti-Muslim politics. “We can learn from Muslims the values of tolerance and solidarity. The veil is not a problem in society, but there are some parties that want to do media propaganda to win the votes of some voters at the expense of the issue of the headscarf, which must be rejected completely,” she added.

Attention to priorities

Pisman continued to say, “Unfortunately, we are busy with issues of dismissal that are not important in our lives, such as preventing young schoolgirls from wearing the hijab, and so we are alienating Muslim women and ignoring that among them are doctors, scholars, and workers, from whom we can learn many things. If we want this country to preserve its development and prosperity, we must mobilize all its capabilities, instead of antagonizing a vital part of it that could be useful in bringing about the required positive change.” Although Islam entered Austria a long time ago and Muslims in that country were a vital part of its society, and participated in its rise and development, which led the government in 1912 to officially recognize Islam, the propaganda practiced by some extreme right parties, especially “Freedom” and “The People” parties have led to emergence of anti-Muslim legislation, such as laws banning headscarves in schools and attempts to close mosques.

Harassment and antagonizing

Until recently, successive governments viewed the “Islamic Society in Austria” as a partner for the responsible authorities in

combating extremism and violence, and the relationship between the two sides was characterized by full coordination and cooperation. However, this image began to change as a result of the policy of right-wing parties that ruled the country during the past five years and enacted laws that seek to restrict Muslims, such as not granting new approvals for building mosques, calling for the demolition of minarets claiming that they were not in line with the European urban style, and attempts to close Islamic schools that teach Arabic and the principles of religion.

Responsibility for that tension rests with the People’s Party, led by Zebastian Curtis, who is the main driving force for the issuance of anti-Muslim legislation, in addition to the adoption of some security institutions for the anti-Muslim and the right’s agenda to criminalize Muslims.

Some security institutions had issued a report claiming that Muslims “use education, welfare services and the organization of cultural life to create a counter society, and that their aim is to prevent assimilation and integration into society.” This prompted the Islamic Society in Austria to say in an official statement that no government security agency in Austria has ever exposed to such issues before, and that it transcends its competence, as it no longer only discusses security threats in society, but it also sets a social agenda.

The Muslims of Austria intend to increase and activate their participation in the upcoming elections that will be organized after the collapse of the right-wing coalition, as a result of a corruption scandal involving the far-right Freedom Party deputy, Heinz Christian Strache, especially after the statements of the head of the People’s Party that he would seek to form another alliance with the far-right, If he wins the election.

Restoring the glory of Saudi's old mosques

By AFTAB HUSAIN KOLA

Though Islam originated with the beginning of this world, the concept of many of its religious practices began with the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The oneness of God was preached from day one with Adam exhorting the core beliefs. As far as prayers are concerned, though they were made obligatory during the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), it is believed that prayers were offered in some other form before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Salah or prayer is the second foundational pillar of Islam. The earlier prophets were also commanded by Allah to conduct prayer but not in the form that we pray today.





Prophet Ibrahim sought support in his duty: “My Lord, make me one who establishes prayer, and also my descendants.” (Surat Ibrahim, Verse:40). Allah spoke to Prophet Musa saying: “And establish prayer for My remembrance. (Surat Taha, Verse:14). Prophet Isa said of his Lord: “And He has enjoined upon me prayer and charity as long as I live. (Surat Maryam, Verse:31). Allah ordered Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): “Recite what was revealed to you of the Book and establish prayer. (Surat Al-Ankabut, Verse: 45).

As far as our Ummah is concerned, prayer was the first duty commanded by Allah and was made obligatory for Muslims in Makkah, three years prior to Hijrah (emigration to Madinah).

As Muslims commenced prayers, the need for mosques was felt. Slowly early Muslims erected simple, basic mosques in and around Makah and Madinah. And

in a matter of time, they were built as per the needs of the locality. The simplicity of early mosques gradually gave way to more creative interior and exterior decorations, even as the purpose remained the same.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from where Islam radiated, is home to thousands of ancient and modern mosques. As modern mosques came up, older mosques were either abandoned or became non-functional as they fell prey to the vagaries of nature or some due to neglect. Considering the importance and heritage value of these old mosques, the government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came up with a project titled ‘Muhammad bin Salman Project for Historical Mosques Renovation’ that covers 130 mosques in the Kingdom. Though a few prominent old mosques had been restored on an individual basis before this project was undertaken, the collective effort to restore the glory of Saudi’s old



mosques needs to be applauded.

‘Muhammad bin Salman Project for Historical Mosques Renovation’

The age of these historical mosques varies between 1432 and 60 years. The project took into account even the minutest details to remain true to the basic design of these mosques. Even as they were restored using new and high-quality materials, elements deemed necessary in today’s age such as prayer rooms for women, services facilities for people with disabilities and modern facilities such as air conditioning, lighting and acoustics were accommodated in these mosques in a manner that helped them not lose their historical identity.

The Crown Prince’s support for the restoration of historical mosques, which is the

largest in history in terms of the number of mosques being restored and the total cost involved, emanates from the great position mosques hold in the Islamic religion. These mosques are also one of the most important features of the urban architectural heritage, and the originality of their architectural character and their importance in highlighting the features of local architecture are also singular. The diversity in terms of design and the building materials used in line with the geographical and climatic conditions in various regions of the Kingdom are also unique.

The renovation works started with studies being conducted and the historical and architectural dimensions of each mosque being documented. The older the mosque,



the more technically and financially complicated its restoration. All challenges surrounding each mosque were reviewed, and care was taken to maintain the architectural style that distinguishes each region in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as regions differ in their preferences in constructing buildings; some of them depend on stones for constructing while some others opt for clay, even as people in certain regions prefer local wood.

The renovation process has taken care to preserve the architectural character of the mosques in terms of stucco decorations and heritage ceilings; care has also been taken to restore the courtyards that are the places where people of the village meet on select occasions, where they sometimes receive

important guests and sometimes gather for consultations regarding the need for social solidarity and conflict resolution.

The renovation process has also focused on restoring certain distinguished sections in old mosques such as the 'Khalwah', an underground pray area or a backend pray area at a certain height that protects the worshipers from the cold weather while performing prayers. Care was also taken to preserve reception sites attached to the mosques for guests who pass through the area, as well as ablution places and traditional wells and ponds in these mosques.

Completion of First Phase of the Project
The Muhammad bin Salman Project for Developing Historical Mosques completed its first phase, restoring 30 mosques in 10



Saudi regions at a cost of more than SR50 million (\$13 million). The implementation of renovation projects during the first phase was carried out by Saudi companies that are armed with expertise in heritage buildings with the importance of involving Saudi engineers to ensure the preservation of the authentic urban identity of each mosque since its foundation, under the Ministry of Culture in partnership with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Call and Guidance, the General Authority for Tourism and National Heritage and the Saudi

Some old mosques re-opened for prayers
 In some of these restored mosques, prayers have been resumed after being out of use for up to six decades. Jarir Al-Bajali and Suleiman mosques in Taif, as well as Al-Malad, Al-Atawilah, and Al-Dhafir mosques in Al-Baha, were reopened for prayers in the

month of January this year. Among the mosques, the Jarir Al-Bajali Mosque in Taif Governorate, was built under the patronage of Jarir bin Abdullah Al-Bajali, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Sheikh Abu Bakr Mosque in Ahsa Governorate, was established more than 300 years ago incorporating Al-Sarat architectural style which uses uniform stones and with a ceiling made of juniper timber and concrete. It served as a meeting place where people performed judiciary work, issued decrees, completed marriage contracts, and resolved disputes, in addition to holding lectures and sermons. Taif's Suleiman Mosque is a historic Saudi gem. We learn from the pages of history that when returning from visiting his uncles in Bani Saad, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

made his companions stand on the mosque site where he said the Prophet Suleiman had camped. The mosque was known as a portal of education but for reasons not known the mosque fell prey to neglect after it was abandoned.

Al Baha has also a fair share of historic mosques. Of the three restored ones, Al-Malad located in Al-Malad village, is a small mosque. The larger, Al-Atawilah Mosque, has a forts-like character and can accommodate up to 130 worshippers. Al-Dhafir Mosque was a hub for education and a popular meeting place for people from the town and surrounding villages. The laudable initiative of renovating old, historical mosques has been welcomed by

one and all.

The action plan for the second phase renovation will soon start.

med Al-Muqbel Mosque (Buraidah, Qassim); Al-Barqaa Mosque (Asiah, Qassim); The Old Mosque (Oqlat Alsqoor, Qassim); Al-Atawlah Heritage Mosque (Atawlah, Baha); Al-Dhafeer Heritage Mosque (Baha); Al-Malad Heritage Village Mosque (Mald, Baha); Taboot Mosque (Farsan Island, Jazan); Al-Maghaydhah Mosque (Hail); Qafar Mosque (Hail); Al-Jalud Mosque (Sumaira, Hail); Al-Rahebeen Mosque (Sakaka, Jouf); Al-Haditha Mosque (Haditha, Jouf); Al-Issawiya Mosque (Issawiya, Jouf); and Abu Bakr Mosque (Thar, Najran).

Mosques renovated thus far

The mosques that were renovated during the project's first phase are:

Al-Dakhlah Mosque (Sudair, Riyadh); Al-Zarqa Mosque (Tharmada, Riyadh); Al-Twaim Mosque (Al-Twaim, Riyadh); Qasr Al-Sharia Mosque (Hayatham, Riyadh); Al-Mansaf Mosque (Zulfi, Riyadh); Sudirah Mosque (Shaqra, Riyadh); Al-Saderah Mosque (Taif, Makkah); Al-Bajali bin Malik Mosque (Taif, Makkah); Al-Habeish Mosque (Hofuf, Eastern Region); Abu Bakr Mosque (Hofuf, Eastern Region); Al-Saro Village Mosque (Al-Saro, Asir); Al-Nassab Mosque (Abha, Asir); Sadr Aed Mosque (Namas, Asir); Al-Akasah Mosque (Namas, Asir); Al-

Mudhafah Mosque (Balsamer, Asir); Al-Ajlan Mosque (Buraidah, Qassim); Mohammed Al-Muqbel Mosque (Buraidah, Qassim); Al-Barqaa Mosque (Asiah, Qassim); The Old Mosque (Oqlat Alsqoor, Qassim); Al-Atawlah Heritage Mosque (Atawlah, Baha); Al-Dhafeer Heritage Mosque (Baha); Al-Malad Heritage Village Mosque (Mald, Baha); Taboot Mosque (Farsan Island, Jazan); Al-Maghaydhah Mosque (Hail); Qafar Mosque (Hail); Al-Jalud Mosque (Sumaira, Hail); Al-Rahebeen Mosque (Sakaka, Jouf); Al-Haditha Mosque (Haditha, Jouf); Al-Issawiya Mosque (Issawiya, Jouf); and Abu Bakr Mosque (Thar, Najran).

Towards Understanding Meaning and Significance of Hadith in Islam

Mohammad Dawood Sofi

Hadith is derived from the root word h-d-th which means “to report”, “to happen”, or “to speak of”. It also means a statement, talk, story, conversation or a communication, either brief or elaborated. In the Qur’an, the word Hadith, in its various forms, appears at thirty-six places, where it broadly means “news,” “story”, or “speech”. Some of the examples are:

So leave Me, [o Muhammad], with [the matter of] whoever denies the Qur'an. We will progressively lead them [to punishment] from where they do not know (Surat Al-Qalam, Verse: 44).

Allah has sent down the best statement (Surat Az-Zumar, Verse: 23).

And has the story of Moses reached you? (Surat Taha, Verse: 9).

And when you see those who engage in [offensive] discourse concerning Our verses, then turn away from them until they enter into another conversion (Surat Al-Anam, Verse: 68).

Technically, the term has a specific meaning, referring to the statements, actions, or approvals and disapprovals (Taqrir), explicitly or implicitly, of the Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him). The term Taqrir generally implies that a believer did or said something in the presence of the Messenger (peace be upon him), which he (peace be upon him) noticed or observed but did not condemn. As a result, the believer received the tacit approval of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) in connection to a particular action.

From Hadith comes the term Sunnah, which literally means "a well trodden path", "a way of life", or "a habitual behaviour". The scholars of Hadith provide an inclusive definition of the term, saying that it covers "anything narrated from or about the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) either before or after he became the Messenger, of his statements, actions, confirmations, biography, and his physical character and attributes". At other places, Sunnah is defined as "the body of traditional social and legal custom[s] and practice[s] of the Islamic community". The word Sunnah together with its plural forms

appear sixteen times in the Qur'an, mostly referring to the established course of rule, mode of life, and line of conduct.

While an unremitting attack is made on Hadith, its significance and authoritativeness is becoming a matter of rigorous debate. Whether Hadith is integral to the Qur'an or not and whether following the Sunnah is indispensable or not, therefore, demands a careful observation. There are many voices emphasizing that there is no need to imitate the life of Muhammad (peace be upon him) even though he is the greatest of men. It seems to them that this imitation places a person in a particular framework and thereby robs his freedom. Highlighting the significance of Hadith in Islam, on the one hand, and responding to the objections, on the other, it is very important to present arguments, which are credible, stimulating, and simultaneously strong.

Therefore, to begin with, Hadith is integral to the Qur'an and following it is indispensable. It is not only inseparable from the Qur'an but also a key source to explain and interpret the message of the Qur'an. This statement is strongly justified on the basis of a series of well-established principles and rules of the Qur'an, some of which are highlighted throughout this article. The Qur'an generally presents the basic injunctions and broad principles and it is the fundamental duty of the Messenger (peace be upon him) to provide their finer details and in depth explanations. His duty to explain and enlarge that what is in the Qur'an is itself reflected in the Qur'an at many places. One resounding example is:

And We have sent down this Reminder upon you that you may explain to the people the teaching that has been sent down for

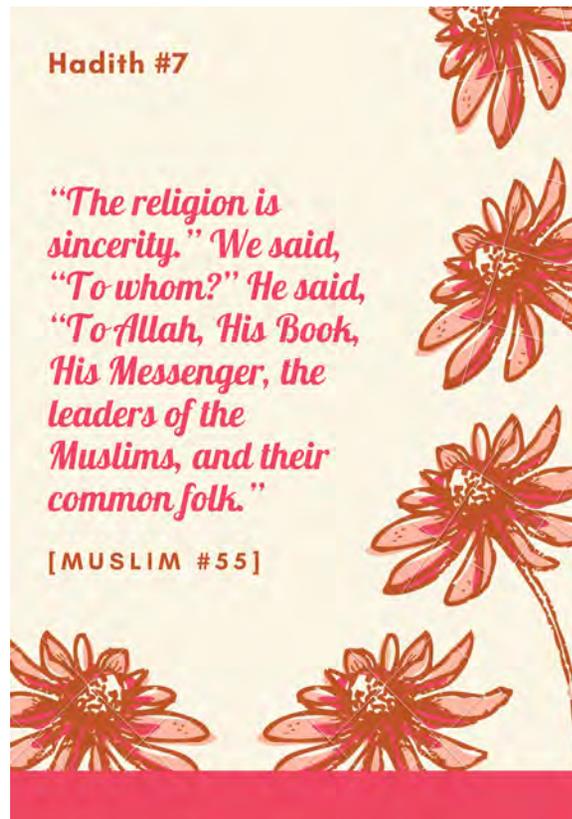
them, and that they make themselves reflect (Surat Al-Nahl, Verse: 44).

It clearly signifies that removing doubts, explaining the message, and answering the objections is the duty given to the Messenger of Allah, which he performed with absolute perfection. Hence, Hadith enlarges the Qur'anic legislation and embodies its teachings and message because it contains a whole array of religious, ethical, social, commercial, as well as personal matters from Praying, Fasting, paying Zakah, and making Hajj to eating and going through commercial deals. It also implies that without this significant body of literature most of the teachings of Islam will remain simply abstract imperatives and concepts. It would be rather impossible to receive guidance from the Qur'an only, for it deals simply with the broad principles of the Islam as already mentioned above. Therefore, all the matters, whether pertaining to personal or public life, are essentially explained by Muhammad (peace be upon him) through his statements and deeds. Simultaneously, his statements as well as deeds are fundamentally based on what is revealed in the Qur'an. The Qur'an presents it explicitly:

Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed (Surat An-Najm, Verses: 3-4).

Hence, in Islam Hadith forms a basic source of guidance after the Qur'an and in a way its nature and substance is almost similar to that of the Qur'an itself as is evident from the above ayat. In addition, the Qur'an orders the believers to obey the Messenger and strictly abide by his decision:

And whatever the Messenger has given you—take; and what he has forbidden you—



refrain from (Surat Al-Hashr, Verse:7).

Although, the ayat is revealed in a particular context dealing with the distribution of the properties of Banu Nadir or distribution of fai properties and goods yet its command is general, applicable and pertaining to all the matters. Therefore, in light of this ayat, believers are bound to obey Muhammad (peace be upon him) because his authority does not come from the community's acceptance rather expressed through the revelation or Divine will. Moreover, if the authority of the Qur'an is binding on all the believers, so is the authority of the Messenger. This is further highlighted at many other places in the Qur'an as:

Say, “Obey Allah, and the Messenger.”

But if they turn away, then indeed Allah does not like the disbelievers (Surat Al-Imran, Verse: 32).

And obey Allah and the Messenger so that you will find mercy (Surat Al-Imran, Verse:132).

And We did not send any messenger except to be obeyed by permission of Allah (Surat An-Nissa, Verse: 64).

In addition to explain the meaning of the Qur'an to the people, the Messenger is entrusted with the responsibility to resolve their disputes. The same is reflected in the Qur'an at several places:

But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission. (Surat An-Nissa, Verse:65).

O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. If you differ on something, refer the matter to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement. That is best and you will have an excellent end" (Surat An-Nissa, Verse:59).

In fact, these ayat bestowed upon the Messenger the legislative power and he is, therefore, acting as the lawgiver. Accordingly, those who do not believe what the Messenger of Allah has explained and conveyed to them, Allah in the Qur'an clarifies their position.

And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers - We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destina-

tion. (Surat An-Nissa, Verse:115).

It is equally important to mention that in the Qur'an the life and practices of the Messenger (peace be upon him) are declared as the best model that the believers should follow.

Verily in the Messenger of Allah, you have an excellent example/model to follow, for anyone whose hope is in Allah, and the Last Day, and who often remember Allah (Surat Al-Ahzab, Verse: 21).

Mustafa Azmi writes in his book *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature*, that the discussion leads to 'an inevitable conclusion that Muslim Society must follow the Prophet in every walk of life. Almighty Allah did not leave the question open to debate. He explicitly ordered total obedience to the Prophet' (p. 6).

In short, the argument present here, while using the Qur'an as the criteria, is to judge the eternal significance of Hadith. It stems from the text of the Qur'an, replete with examples (some of them mentioned in this article), that Hadith is the second in authority to the Qur'an, and is the second of the two fundamental doctrinal sources of Islam from which a wide variety of laws are derived. From forming a veritable ethos to functioning as a vital factor in strengthening the religious consciousness among the believers, Hadith continues to occupy its rightful place since the times of the Messenger (peace be upon him) until now. Therefore, it is not possible for a believer to neglect or abandon the Hadith because it is the only method that leads all the Muslims to the explicit ways in which the Messenger (peace be upon him) embodied and epitomized the fundamental principles and rules of the Qur'an.

Muslim World League

Corona immediate pandemic response plan



12 countries and international organizations

The first phase aims to support international organizations and most affected countries

Direct cash support to governments and organizations

Supporting health facilities

Providing intensive care beds, securing control and oxygen and artificial respiration equipment

In-kind assistance



Sanitary and preventive supplies



Facilities cleaning and disinfection campaigns



Urgent food baskets for the most vulnerable class of society



Awareness and instruction programs in several languages

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Najran - The Historical Palace of Emirate

