

THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE

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Al-Issa receives "World Peace among Religions Award"



Letter From the Editor

World Peace among Religions Award

The National Council on US-Arab Relations has conferred the World Peace among Religions Award on the Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL) Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa for his international arduous efforts aimed to promote peace among followers of religions.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa has carried out numerous assignments in combating the ideology of extremism and promoting the values of moderation and tolerance through an enlightened Islamic discourse and within cultural communication initiatives together with putting practical programs related to values of tolerance and coexistence into action, especially in the countries of religious pluralism. These programs are flexible and capable of absorbing everyone in accordance with the values and principles of Islamic law. These principles and values reconciled hearts and underscored the nature of diversification and difference along with preserving the human rights to live in peace guaranteeing the requirements of human beings' dignity and the legitimate freedom.

Since his assumption of the MWL's secretariat, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa has been keen to spread the true moderate values of Islam, achieving many successes in the Islamic and international worlds through his ceaseless tours around the world. He has been keen on confronting the ideas of civilizational conflict, discrimination and provocation, and upholding the values of justice, dialogue and understanding. He has stressed the importance of Muslim minorities' respect to

the laws and regulations of their countries and that they should demand their religious specificities according to the constitution and the law and not to practice any form of violence or hatred.

Any observer to the numerous activities of the Muslim World League realizes that it exerts strenuous efforts to disseminate the culture of peace and revive the values of dialogue and cultural communication, together with giving more space for constructive discussions and dialogue among jurists, scholars and intellectuals. The Muslim World League shoulders a big responsibility towards the world, and seeks to demonstrate the universal message of Islam along with explaining its supreme principles and tolerant teachings aimed at achieving peace and security in the human society. In addition, the Muslim World League has taken measures to carry out the objectives of peace through two important themes: the intellectual and cultural awareness, and the focus of fieldwork.

The Muslim World League held thirty conferences, meetings, discussions and forums in the year up to November 2017, ranging from intellectual to cultural activities. These events were supervised and attended by the MWL Secretary General, around the key themes of peace, moderation and the confrontation of violence and extremism.

This important award represents a global gesture to the key role of the Muslim World League whose charter stresses the spirit of peace, tolerance and moderation.



The Muslim World League *Journal*

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No 7

Rajab 1440/ April 2019

Vol.47

CON



Washington Institute and National Council
on US-Arab Relations hosts Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa



Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa receives World Peace
among Religions Award

TENTS



Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa holds meetings with number of US senators



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Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa during a meeting with members of the Washington Institute in Washington, DC.

Washington Institute and National Council on US-Arab Relations hosts Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa

WASHINGTON - MWL

Washington Institute and National Council on US-Arab Relations in Washington hosted the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa in the presence of the leaders of the Institute, the Council and a raft of American political, religious and intellectual figures.



A number of members of the Institute during the meeting with Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa.

Executive Director of the Institute Mr. Robert Satloff welcomed the Secretary General and expressed the happiness of all officials of the Institute for this open meeting. The head of the National Council on US-Arab Relations Mr. John Duke welcomed the guest.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa delivered a speech explaining the fundamentals of the moderate religious discourse and concepts of moderation, noting that the Muslim World League's initiatives and programs inside and outside the Islamic world have been highly praised and are based on three goals.

First, the clarification of the essence of Islam. This includes spreading and raising the awareness of the correct concepts of Islam in the Islamic world, especially religious texts, historical facts and Islamic terminology as terrorists seek to distort these matters and principles in a way that serves

their extremist agenda. The correct concepts of Islam should be clarified to non-Muslims through dialogues and intellectual discussions as unilateral information caused diversion for those who have not had a correct approach in the sources of information and that Islamophobia as an example was the result of that wrong methodology.

The MWL Secretary General said certain groups of followers of religions committed some mistakes and these groups shoulder the direct responsibility for these mistakes. For instance, Christianity cannot be responsible for some mistakes committed by some Christians, specifically those who launched the Crusades, which are rejected by a number of Muslim jurists and historians who invented another term for these military wars and replaced it with "Franks". Muslim scholars and jurists believe that Christianity is a



Dr. Al-Issa meets with the National Council for US-Arab Relations in Washington

divine religion that cannot be responsible for errors committed by some of its followers. There are many similar examples in Islam. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that all his wars aimed at defending Islam and confronting injustices and oppressions and were not launched for the aim of forcing others to embrace Islam.

Second, building bridges and promoting dialogue between cultures and religions. "We said that only 10% is sufficient to bring about peace and harmony in today's world." The Muslim World League is currently developing a major project in the countries of religious and ethnic minorities for promoting positive national integration and contributing to bridging the gaps. It is currently exerting arduous efforts to spread and raise awareness of all people to understand the law of Allah concerning diversity, differences and multi-

plicity for the aim of achieving peace, security, justice, development, equality, freedom and tolerance.

The third one is relief, welfare and development in places of need. This is available to all without any discrimination for religious or ethnic reasons. Governments, not individuals and institutions, no matter how confident they are, should carry out these relief programs.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa answered questions posed by the attendees about different important issues and topics while the attendees praised the transparency and clarity of the MWL Secretary General who clarified many ambiguous issues including the differentiation between radical jurisprudence and intellectual extremism, concept of Jihad in Islam and the definition of nation, caliphate and the term Kufr (disbelief) in Islam.



Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa fully answered all questions posed by attendees. The discussions that took place were considered as an important intellectual document and were recommended to be published and made available to the general public. He also made clear that Islam is based on monotheism and respects faiths of others and cares for the rights and dignity of followers of other religions together with effectively promoting values of humanity. Islam, he stressed, supports principles of humanity among all people because all people are brothers and sisters in humanity.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa explained that Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance, and is not at all associated with terrorism, which is alien to its values. Islam also calls for co-existence with others and this is the law of Allah in diversity and difference. A beneficial

Islamic doctrine is the Qur'anic injunction that "there shall be no compulsion in matters of religion."

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa wondered, "Does extremism in all its forms ignore these Islamic texts? If extremist groups know these Islamic texts, why do they not apply them? What is their position on these Islamic texts?" He elaborated in his answer to make matters and facts clearer. He also answered a question about the difference between Al-Qaeda and Daesh and said that both stem from one ideological source. Regarding reasons of this phenomenon, he stressed, "As we have noted before, there is no extremist or terrorist religion but all religions have extremist and terrorist followers. This took place throughout history. As you know, enlightenment was obliterated in Europe for several centuries because of religious extremism and charg-



Number of attendance of Board members

es of heresy against innocent scholars who lived during a period of time that went down as a harsh chapter in the human history.”

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said open-minded Islamic scholars and jurists use “Franks” instead of Crusades. It is a new term because all Muslim scholars and jurists know well that Christianity is a divine religion and some of its followers committed historical mistakes not the religion itself. These military campaigns destroyed Christian Orthodox villages and therefore not everyone who raised the banner of the Lord was right. Pope John Paul II issued a courageous apology for historical errors of the Catholic Church. Current Pope Francis was asked one time about a terrorist attack carried out by those who were said to be Muslims, he pointed out

that Islam is not a terrorist religion even if some of its followers have committed acts of terrorism; besides, some Catholics committed acts of terrorism as well. Consequently, it is wrong to hold any religion responsible for the acts of terrorism. He also said that there are some reasons for the terrorist phenomenon including the global presence of deviation in general, religious enthusiasm accompanied by weak scientific, intellectual and political awareness and the weakness of crucial confrontation of this phenomenon, especially not to enter into details of the ideology of extremism and then respond to them. The most important tool for fighting terrorism is the immunization by the family, the school and the influential platforms in general; every member of the public should



contribute to teaching young people how to think properly.

His Excellency said, “Another reason is the desire of some of the lost young people to search for an exciting entity by finding a major issue that they run into its dangers for the sake of the religion concerning what they claim and fancy. They find their religious entities in these thoughts and actions to fill the other with them through that illusion, and whenever there is a vacant immunization and confrontation, the gap gets deeper. This exists in some countries of religious minorities, where there are feelings of deprivation, exclusion and racist practices against them, and some of them suffer from weak enlightening immunization. We said that Islamophobia served the terrorist extremism, which evidenced by the fact that it is one of the most promoters of this phenomenon’s social and political aspects. Yes, the terrorist extremism promoted that phenomenon which served it a lot.”

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa then explained ways to correcting this in detail.

On the historical, spiritual and cultural relationship between the East and the West, which is still raised as tainted with caution, uncertainty and mistrust, despite the material cooperation and cognitive exchange, he said, “The religious and cultural gap has not been oftentimes addressed in the right way. The result is that the East has not properly understood the West and vice versa. In one of the lectures, I said that there are five core points regarding this issue.”

“First, we believe in God’s way of difference and diversity, which does not mean clash, conflict and hatred, but on the contrary. Such belief produces awareness and not just an abstract perception.”

Second, understanding does not necessar-

ily mean conviction, and the Qur’an speaks about that in the verse, “To you your religion, and to me my religion”.

Third, cooperation is important in the area of religious and humanitarian commonalities, of which 10% is enough to establish harmony and peace in the world.

Fourth, humanity has had throughout its long history religious, civilizational and ethnic conflicts, and has not benefited from that, rather, it just suffered for a long time and everyone lost, and even the first victor is ultimately a loser.

Fifth, historical errors are borne by those who committed them only and not others. In Islam, no one is perfect but Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He never aggressed anyone; he only defended his message against attack, injustice and oppression; he never forced anyone to embrace Islam. His biography is an open book for everyone to read and ascertain of this fact. The Prophet (peace be upon him) only sought the satisfaction of God Almighty, while material and expansionist goals were common among humans, except for a few of them, and often religious banners were raised for those goals throughout the conflicts of the human history. “God is disassociated from our material and expansionist goals. States and cities have been violated through forged religious banners.”

One of the audience said it was reported that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “I have ordered to fight people to force them to embrace Islam”, and this is a forcible imposition of Islam. His Excellency replied: “This rather means the confrontation of injustice, aggression and persecution which faced Muslims and questioned every criminal in that regard; he did not exempt him from punishment unless that criminal declared joining the group that he persecuted





Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa during a meeting at the Washington Institute in Washington, DC

or paid it compensation, and this is practiced in old and recent international norms.”

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa took this opportunity to discuss misconceptions and applications of the so-called “jizyah” in Islam, which is sometimes translated as “tribute”, while many others believe that it should be translated simply as “tax”.

To provide some context: Zakat “alms” are payable only by Muslims and not those of other faiths. This fact is manifested in the Qur’anic verse, “There is no compulsion in religion” along with other verses ordering Muslims to fight only the aggressors and warning Muslims not to fight others unless they start the fight.

This is because Islam was met by severe oppression of the pagans while it coexisted

with the People of the Scripture in Madinah and did not raise the sword on them to force them to embrace it. Some of them and not all of them led a political action that had nothing to do with the aspect of religion, a matter which prompted the Muslims to take political actions that did not differ from what was agreed upon in that time by Muslims or non-Muslims. Islam is not the only religion that took such measures, which are now known as the international norms.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa added, “I would like to point out that texts explain themselves and that the deeds of the Prophet, peace be upon him, interpret the texts as well. We should understand the text through other texts and the deeds of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as the Islamic law taken in total and not in



Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa during the meeting in Washington.

parts, and this is in all laws, that we find this in the interpretation of constitutional and legal texts. With the danger of leniency with Daesh, Al-Qaeda remains the most dangerous and is currently in the situation of a virus waiting for the vulnerability of immunity to reactivate again. Complete defeat of violent terrorist extremism can be achieved only by dismantling the ideas on which it has based its fragile entity, which is dangerous to young people, as is the case with the whole ideology it was built on. These thoughts are dangerous because they target young people who lack awareness. As for non-violent extremism, while it seems peaceful, it represents the raw materials of violent extremism and terrorism.”

Asked about the advice for Muslim

women who won seats in the US Congress, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said, “Like all members, they should do their national duty and live up to the expectations of the American people who placed their trust in them.”

Concerning the conference organized by the Muslim World League in Makkah, on the perils of labeling and exclusion, the MWL Secretary General said the conference’s most important and prominent recommendations, confirmed the pride of attendees of more than 1,200 muftis and scholars representing 28 Islamic sects and groups who expressed their appreciation for the great role played by Saudi Arabia from its holy lands in leading the Islamic world spiritually and scientifically as the center of its weight, reference and symbolic representation.



Secretary-General meets US Senator Ted Cruz

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa holds meetings with number of US senators

H.E Excellency Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL) Abdulkarim Al-Issa met with US Senator Ted Cruz



Sheikh Al-Issa meets with Senator Joseph Lieberman

in New York and discussed with him a number of topics of mutual concern.

In the meeting, which came during Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa's visit to the United States of America, Senator Ted Cruz valued the Muslim World League's international efforts to raise awareness of the values of moderation and strong confrontation of the concepts of violent extremism and terrorism. He commended the MWL's programs aimed at promoting coexistence and harmony in countries of religious and ethnic diversity.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa received at his residence in New York Senator Joseph Lieberman, former chairman of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security, and discussed with him a number of issues and ways to defy and counter the concepts of violent extremism and terrorism, as well as means to promote the values of moderation and coexistence around the world and spread tolerance and dialogue among all civilizations.

The MWL Secretary General also received Congressman of the Democratic Party of California, Brad Sherman, and explored a



Dr. Al-Issa meets US Congressman Brad Sherman

number of topics of mutual concern with him.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa met also with the Executive Director of the Anti-Extremism Project, Ambassador Mark Wallace. During the

meeting, they both discussed means of confronting radicalization, violence and deviant and extremist thoughts and explored areas of mutual action and cooperation.



Dr. Al-Issa receives Ambassador Mark Wallace

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa receives World Peace among Religions Award



Washington - MWL

The National Council on US-Arab Relations (NCUSAR) has conferred the MWL Secretary General with the prestigious “World Peace among Religions Award”. Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa received the accolade for his extensive international interfaith work to promote peace amongst followers of different religions.

President of the Council Dr. John Duke Anthony handed the award to Sheikh Dr. Al-

Issa at a ceremony held in Washington on the sidelines of his visit to the United States of America.

Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa has embarked on a mission to combat the ideology of extremism and promote the values of moderation and tolerance within an enlightened Islamic discourse and cultural communication initiatives together with putting practical programs related to values of tolerance and coexistence into action, especially in the countries of religious pluralism. These programs are flexible and capable of absorbing every one similar to the values and principles of Islamic law that reconciled hearts and underscored the nature of diversification and difference along with preserving the human rights to live in peace guaranteeing the requirements of dignity and the legitimate freedom.

Since his assumption of the MWL’s secretariat, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa has been keen to spread the true moderate values of Islam, achieving many successes in the Islamic and international worlds through his ceaseless tours around the world. He has been keen on confronting the ideas of civilizational conflict, discrimination and provocation, and upholding the values of justice, dialogue and understanding. He has stressed the importance of Muslim minorities’ respect to the laws and regulations of their countries and that they should demand their religious specificities according to the constitution and the law and not to practice any form of violence or hatred

Muslim World League cited in US for its anti-extremism campaign



Washington - MWL

H.E the Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL), Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa held talks with several prominent US politicians, including counter-extremism campaigner and former UN ambassador, Mark D. Wallace, Democrat Senator Joseph Lieberman, Representative Brad Sherman and Republican Senator Ted Cruz.

The meetings, which took place during the MWL Secretary General's visit to the United States of America, highlighted the importance of confronting violent

extremism and terrorism, and promoting the values of moderation, tolerance and coexistence.

The US officials commended the MWL for its efforts toward spreading awareness of the values of moderation, and for its dedi-

cation to countering violent extremism and terrorism.

They also praised the many programs developed by the MWL aimed at promoting coexistence and harmony within religiously and ethnically diverse communities across the globe.



Al-Issa giving a lecture at the National Defense College

HE Sheik Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa giving a lecture to the officers of the National Defense College in the American Capital Washington DC followed by an open discussion.



Al-Issa meets US Ambassador for Religious Freedom



HE Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim met in Washington DC with HE Amb. Sam Brownback, United States Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. They reiterated the important role of spiritual leadership in promoting values of tolerance, as well as religious and ethnic harmony.



MWL's Islamic Unity Conference

By Mufti Muneebur Rahman

RECENTLY, I attended a Muslim World League (MWL) conference in Makkah, attended by delegates from all over the world.

People belonging to different schools of thought expressed their views on the problems facing the Muslim world and came to some important conclusions, the aim being to resolve differences among Muslims and unite them.

A declaration adopted by the conference contained 26 recommendations agreed upon unanimously. Among these one was that all Muslims should define themselves as Muslims. Sectarianism, it said, has existed for a long time, but the only way to coexist peacefully is to emphasize our commonalities and stand as one body under the roof of Islam.

The conference also discussed the sensitive issue of fatwa (religious edict), and it was suggested that only an authentic and credible group of muftis should be allowed to issue fatwas. Unschooled individuals should keep their opinions to themselves instead of engendering chaos. Religious verdicts, the conference decided, should not be passed without consulting experts. The conference

strictly discouraged calling others *fasiq*. This I believe will prove helpful in removing hatred among different sects.

The conference decided that Muslims must help each other in times of distress regardless of economic disparities with a view to fostering the Islamic spirit of fraternity. I was glad that extremism was also brought under the microscope. One recommendation was for Muslims in non-Muslim countries to follow the laws of their lands instead of turning to extremism. The recommendation that I found most heartening was about the need for establishing research centers in every Muslim country, besides an MWL council in every state to guide the people on modern-day problems and protect them from those who may mislead them. The conference stressed upon the need for Islamic scholars to teach the youth to discard an outdated approach to modern problems and think critically.

Of course these are complex issues, but if we were to fight Islamophobia and forge unity, the implementation of these recommendations could play a vital role in guiding the Muslim world on the right path.





Dr. Muhammad Hasbi: Instability and disunity are harming the Ummah

Interview By: Mohammad Zakir Hossain

Dr. Muhammad Hasbi, President of “Muslim Missionary Society Singapore” where he is engaged in social activities. Mr. Hasbi was recently in Makkah to attend an international conference on “Unity in Islam,” which was held under the auspices of the Muslim World League (MWL). Muhammad Zakir Hossain, the MWL editor, spoke to him on the sidelines of the conference on a range of issues concerning Islam and Muslims in Singapore as well as the Ummah. Following are the excerpts of the interview:



Jamiyah
Singapore





Dr. Muhammad Hasbi with MWLJ editor Mohammad Zakir Hossain during the interview.

How productive and effective did you find the international conference on ‘Islamic unity’?

First, I must congratulate MWL Secretary General His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa for holding the conference, which was timely. The Muslim countries are currently facing a deficit of solidarity and cooperation.

In this background, it is quite an achievement to gather Muslim leaders and scholars, drawn from several parts of the world, in the vicinity of the holy land of Makkah to discuss the issue. The success of such a conference hinges on the determination of Muslim leaders and governments to implement the agreements and resolutions reached during the seminar. This is an initiative that needs more to be done in this regard.

How do you see the practical implementation of those resolutions?

The quest for Muslim unity and peaceful collaboration could be realized if Muslim leaders and other concerned groups within the Muslim Ummah are prepared to put aside the less pertinent, tangential matters and empty slogans; and focus their attention and resources on the real issues confronting the Muslim Ummah today. One of the resolutions, namely, the importance of coexistence among all communities – both among Muslim communities and sectarian groups and in Muslim, non-Muslim relations — should be brought into the public sphere, and practiced by all in our daily lives.

Instability and disunity are harming the Ummah. What could be the reasons for this growing phenomenon and how do you see these should be checked?

Yes, our Ummah is facing these problems both from within and outside. While external factors can be studied and taken



LEADERS SHOULD SET THE EXAMPLE AS MODELS OF GOOD CONDUCT AND A JUST LEADERSHIP

care of, the internal factors can be more disastrous; for example, the ills of seclusion and exclusion currently practiced in some parts of the Muslim world are disturbing and must be tackled head on. Not just this but there are several other issues that are facing the Ummah and which seeks attention.

Can you please elaborate on those other issues?

Some of them are as follows:

1. The image of Islam today stands tarnished; a faith of peace, love and moderation is being equated with violence, poverty and indignity. Both the external forces that are out to damage Islam and a minuscule extremist group within the community are responsible for this;
2. The economic resources, in possession of Muslim countries, have not been fully and strategically utilized;
3. Western media is doing much harm by linking Islam to so-called “Islamic terrorism”. This is accentuated by the vulnerability of Muslim youth to extremist ideas, especially through social media;
4. High illiteracy rates in many Muslim-majority countries;

5. The current weak democratic culture. The spirits of democracy, if properly understood and applied, is compatible with Islam, which emphasizes on shurah (consultations), justice and the concern for the downtrodden, poor and needy; and

6. Muslim countries have little influence on world affairs.

What are your suggestions for uniting the Muslim Ummah?

This is obligatory on part of the Muslims, as Allah has said in the Holy Qur’an, “And hold firmly to (the) rope (of) Allah all together and (do) not be divided.” Of course, it is easier said than done. Leaders should set the example as models of good conduct and a just leadership so that Muslim masses can see that they walk the talk and not just talk the talk.

The MWL initiative on the religious and civilizational dialogue has received great attention in the West. How better can we build up a global culture of dialogue among civilizations?

The MWL should sustain the inter-faith dialogue, holding it on a regular basis. It is our duty to call upon the humanity to



**“ISLAMOPHOBIA” MUST BE
COUNTERED WITH KNOWLEDGE,
EMPATHY AND RATIONAL EXPLA-
NATIONS**



adopt a cooperative and tolerant culture and also live in peace.

If this can be done, InshaAllah, we can then hope to bridge both the ideological and the development gaps among followers of all faiths and cultures. On top of that, such an approach to dealing with others will promote understanding; tolerate pluralism and diversity as essential components of human progress and advancement.

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

Muslims should create awareness that the Shari’ah law bases its objectives and concerns towards “maslahah ‘ammah” or public interest. We need the cooperation of all, both Muslims and peoples of other faiths since bigotry and jaundiced stereotypes of any community or faith will never help in fostering peace and goodwill with all humanity. The Western media’s distorted messages and writings about Islam and its adherents should be countered with rational, knowledge-

able writings about Islam, its teachings and principles. Issues of “Jihad”, “terrorism”, “Shari’ah” and similar terminologies must be explained rationally. “Islamophobia” must be countered with knowledge, empathy and rational explanations.

What could possibly be the best global mechanism to create a congenial atmosphere that can facilitate civilizational interactions and bring about peace and security in the world? What role the MWL can play in this regard?

We earnestly suggest and encourage MWL to carry on its efforts at organizing cultural and civilizational dialogue among leaders of different faiths. Organizing symposiums and conferences to create awareness of the universal values that Islam portends to humanity should be sustained. Dialogues, especially amongst youth, should be encouraged. Obviously, all these efforts take time, energy and resources, but Muslim international organizations such as the MWL, given its history and global reach, has a big part to play in this noble effort.



Governor of Makkah inaugurating the Unity conference

Unity in Ummah

Options before the Muslim leaders

By Muhammad Nasir Jawed

“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided.” (Surat Al-Imran, Verse 103)



Scholars from all over the world in the Unity Conference in Makkah

Unity – or disunity – in the Ummah has been at the center of a never-ending debate for quite some time. Interestingly, the issue is raging more from within than from the outside.

If coherence is integral to a community's progress, the said lack of the same in the community is pushing it back in areas of utmost importance – education, economy, culture and identity, leadership, sectarian harmony, media empowerment, etc. The rot that set in resulted in an all-round decline of the Ummah.

Imagine Muslims in the 21st Century: They have numbers to their huge favor – 1.7 billion-strong population; and at least 57 countries form a political group in the name of Islam, arguably largest after the United Nations. Besides, they are rich: Some of them hold key to world economy on account of possessing immense natural resources.

Yet, Muslims have been globally at a low ebb in terms of political respect, educational report card, knowledge campaign, economic management, military preparedness and media empowerment.

No wonder, the Muslim world is conspicuous by its nearly no representation in decision-making international bodies like the UN Security Council and the World Bank; no

Muslim university is in the global list of top 100; and the top media houses in the world do not include any one from the Muslim world. There is no Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the Ummah; no Harvard University so far; no NASA; no Silicon Valley; and no world-class think-tank.

Yet, Muslim countries are under spotlight for all the wrong reasons: they are drawn to crises like conflicts and political disorder in countries like Pakistan, Syria and Yemen on a daily basis. Sectarian division is taking a heavy toll on the Ummah and the sad role that our Islamic scholars, or Ulema, are playing today is pushing the Ummah hundreds of years back. All this, and more, shows weaknesses in the community.

This has all handed an opportunity to the critics, both within and outside, to question the idea of a coherent Ummah. It gives an impression that the Muslim community is disunited and regressive, a condemned culture, not ready to blend or bond with others. It is a fundamentalist and terrorizing culture and, hence, they do not, and should not, matter when it comes to forming world opinion, or formulating a general decision.

I am constrained here by the limited space to go in detail as how it roundly affects Islam



Final Session of the unity conference in Makkah

and the Muslims.

Global rules and agendas on any issue are formulated without the need being felt to consult Muslims; an opinion, even on a sensitive matter, is formed without taking into consideration the sentiments of the Muslims; and terms and terminologies are imposed that hurt Muslims. In most matters, they are done to irritate, or marginalize the community further to the corner.

Cry for Unity

In these increasingly tumultuous times, the Muslim World League (MWL) has risen to the occasion to raise the issue of stability and peace that the world in general so desperately needs. It has clearly given a clarion call to reset things within the community that are of utmost priorities.

The recent holding of an international conference on “Islamic Unity” in the holy city of

Makkah merits attention in this regard.

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman delivered some great words of wisdom meant for the nearly 1,300 religious scholars and intellectuals, participating in the conference.

The King’s speech – which was read out by Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, Governor of the Makkah Province – touched upon some of the major points, vital for the Ummah to stay united. By urging the Ummah to embrace differences, “as ordained by God,” the King has provided the key to resolving community’s internal strife and confusion.

And embracing differences could be achieved by “building bridges of dialogue, understanding and cooperation, towards reconciliation, harmony and hard work. We must look to the future with a promising prospect filled with a spirit of brotherhood and solidarity,” the King suggested.



The unity among scholars and preachers is the need of the hour. Because they can bring visions closer together, streamline the culture of disagreement, and work according to the moderation of Islam and its tolerance.

The King struck the responsive chord with the spirit of the seminar when he underpinned “moderation” and “tolerance” as the driving force of a civilization that covered about two thirds of the world surface.

Inculcating such Islamic values in the Muslim community, which seems desperate and despaired, is the need of the hour. I here cite a future line of action that includes some of the ideas vital for the unity project.

I. A unified approach

Backed by King Salman, the MWL has genuinely laid the framework for developing a unified approach and an action plan, if indeed the debate is to be taken to its logical conclusion.

I do not think the MWL, and the scholars who participated in the conference, are unaware of the enormity, complications and multiple facets of the project. It is not just a project, but a complete mission – a movement – and a huge effort on part of the organizers if we aim to achieve success in this regard. It needs a long-term planning on a sustained level.

Why I term it a herculean task, because it involves not a section of the Muslim community in one specific place, but it engulfs the entire Muslim Ummah. Rather, we need to go beyond the community level.

The MWL might need to form a separate team to embark on the work.

We indeed need a unified approach, because we are sadly divided into sects, sub-sects, different schools of thought, besides Muslims come from different nations having different cultural and social behavior and

hence local cultural agents have all contributed to making their own concept of Islam.

Yet, the MWL – guided by a broad approach of the government – has time and again risen to unite the Muslims on several occasions in the past. It has the ability and the wherewithal to do again in future.

II. Research project

Taking a cue from the King’s good advice, we first need to embark on a study project – an empirical research – to study the enormity of the project and the complications involved. This will serve as the foundation of the whole idea, which will help us understand and analyze the reasons for the state of angst and anger in the Ummah. This should not be limited to a one-time assignment, but remain a continuous work.

We will soon find details of not just the internal forces but external forces as well that have been negatively influencing and affecting the youth in the community and which has been going on for quite a long time.

Based on the sustained and detailed findings, important organizations – like the MWL – can draw strategies to be forwarded to several governments for action at their end. The sustained research efforts will also take into account the nature of educational system in the Muslim world – which is key to progress and development. The crying need of the hour is to integrate education both Islamic as well as so-called modern education.

The role of Islamic scholars and imams in the community must be studied as they are at the forefront in making or breaking the community.

And lastly, we must have a comprehensive media plan, which in these times has become a vital tool to an image-building process as also to develop an understanding between Islam and the other cultures.





Some Aspects of Islamic Penal Policy As Revealed by a Proper Definition of Zina

By Ahmed Kamal El-Din Izzeddin

Misconception is one major cause of mutual misunderstanding among different cultures and peoples. This would apply to the case of Islamic criminal law, the division of law which is dedicated to protect the society from delinquent acts of individuals seen as harmful to the society. In fact this description also applies to positive, non-Islamic criminal law, as far as it is directed towards preventing public wrongs against the society.

This article is limited to one crime under the rules of Islamic criminal law, namely, zina, which is used to denote both adultery and fornication, but only as a sample to be studied and analyzed to discern broader rules governing the whole area of criminality in Islam. A similar attempt has been made in this very forum but in connection to Islamic economics, where the rules governing interest on capital, and the rules relating to the levying of alms, are studied and used analytically to demonstrate some aspects of Islamic economics policy.

Reproduction of Offspring as a Legitimate Interest

Starting from a broader arena, all criminal law rules in Islam, among other rules, are designed in such a way as to combat anti-societal acts or behavior. The ultimate aim is to protect certain interests of the society, called by Muslim jurists the 'five legitimate Shari'ah interests'. These are (1) the protection of personal life and well-being, (2) the protection of religion, (3) the protection of the intellect or brain, (4) the protection of offspring or human reproduction, and (5) the protection of property. As this article deals with one

specific crime, namely zina, it is only appropriate to say a few words on the specific legitimate interest which the ordaining of zina works to preserve, which is the protection of offspring.

Some refer to this interest as the protection of chastity. However, 'offspring' is more accurate, since it covers the maintenance of chastity and other smaller interests serving the main one which is human reproduction or offspring. Islam not only encourages reproduction, but it also inclines to provide a multifaceted environment for the nourishment of such interest. Chastity falls within such environmental requirements for human reproduction. But by no means is it absolute chastity. What is

required in Islam is refraining from extramarital sexual intercourse, but not from all such relation, as is the case with certain Christian traditions, especially in connection with priests. In Islam no natural human desire is completely forbidden. They are only guided and organized. Sexual intercourse is one such human desire which is governed by Islamic law and tradition. It is even encouraged within the marital domain. It has been reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him), told his companions that an act of sexual intercourse by a husband with his wife is akin to an act of charity, which is to be rewarded by God. The companions asked the Prophet: How come that one of us

THE AIM/GOALS OF EXECUTING HUDUD PUNISHMENTS IN ISLAM

○ There are 3 aims/goals of punishment:

DETERRENCE	REHABILITATION	RETRIBUTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific deterrence: to prevent those who are punished from committing additional crimes in the future. • General deterrence: to deter members of society from committing similar crimes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reform the offender and thus to reduce his propensity to commit crimes in the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Holy Qur'an refers to Retribution as punishment both in this world and in the Hereafter. • Punishing the wrongdoer in the same manner as he had committed the wrongful act.

satisfies his lust and gets, over and above, a reward for it? The Prophet Peace be upon him replied: “Assume that he did it in a forbidden manner, shouldn’t he be sinful? Likewise, doing it in a permissible manner entails reward”. The rationale behind such reward, which was possibly not comprehensible to the companions of the Prophet who asked for explanation in the aforesaid report, is part of the environmental requirements for the protection of reproduction. Satisfying one’s desires within marital wedlock would help minimize the need to do the same sinfully, i. e. outside the marital relationship. It also helps curtailing one’s gaze on other partners, not matrimonially related. Sexual harassment would also be guarded against, preemptively.

Towards a Proper Definition of Zina (Adultery or Fornication)

Traditionally, the crime of zina is introduced in a poor, almost abject manner, reducing it to its minimal components. One common example is that zina comprises “sexual intercourse between a man and a woman outside a valid marriage”. This definition directs the attention to the act of sexual intercourse, disconnected from other circumstantial instances which are crucial to the overall criminal policy in this connection. The above incomplete definition results from traditional categorization adopted in presenting the Islamic offences, by defining the substance of the offence separately from the requirements for proof. It is submitted that these evidential requirements form part and parcel of the offence ingredients which are usually used to define the substance of the crime, leaving the means of proving it to a separate, procedural or evidential category. Nothing is wrong with such separation except with regard to the message to be received by recipients who

are not abreast of Islamic criminal law or even Islam in general. Such un-Islamic recipient would conclude that Islam is solely concerned with prohibiting the act of sexual intercourse among consenting but unmarried parties, a practice which is widely permissible among adults in the Western and other non-Islamic countries. The degree of alienation and difference between the Islamic and non-Islamic regimes appears therefore in its extreme.



Now let us introduce a different definition of zina offence, by using the same traditional wording but completing them with the inclusion of the evidential requirements within the text of the substantial definition. The combined ‘substantial and evidential’ definition will provide us with the following version:

“Zina is sexual intercourse between a man and a woman outside a valid marriage, conducted in such circumstances as to enable an audience of four male adults to observe the details of the core act sufficiently enough for each one of them to qualify as an eye witness, who would be willing to testify before the court”.

Under the above definition no act of sexual intercourse committed privately would be a crime punishable under the Islamic law. Yes, that may look bizarre. But it is only so because of the dominance of the traditional, incomplete

definition of the crime. People are so accustomed to such traditional definition that any deviation from it would look outlandish. The full truth about the Islamic criminal policy has been buried under such misconception, which is caused by a simple, probably innocent, approach to the definition of zina.



Not only the short, traditional definition of the offence that causes astonishment. Our elaborate, combined definition does the same, albeit from a different viewpoint. Go back and read the definition closely and imagine the defined act: a man and a woman conducting sexual intercourse in the presence of four people! Who would do that? I recall being interviewed in Khartoum, Sudan, by a smart American journalist, knowledgeable of Islam and the East. Her areas of concern included Islam and its criminal law. We happened to talk about the very subject of this article. In fact that interview is one motive behind this account. I expressed my idea on the combined (substantial-evidential) definition of the crime of zina. When I finally stated the above definition and came to the ingredient of “an audience of four male adults ...” she interrupted me by saying: “This is disgusting”! I immediately responded, almost spontaneously, “Indeed it is”!

In fact, that is why the crime (in its com-

bined definition version) is made punishable, because it is disgusting. Here we come closer to the inner criminological policy in Islam about this particular sexual offence. As far as the jurisdiction of worldly courts of law are concerned, God allows the judge powers limited only to such acts as may be testified upon by four male witnesses of integrity. No worldly judge has any power whatsoever to seek to try or punish those who commit extra-marital sexual intercourse in privacy – away from the eyes of others.

It is worthy to mention at this stage that under Islam there is a dual penal system. The first part is similar to the traditional penal systems, which is described in this article as the worldly courts of law. The other part, believed by faithful Muslims, is the punishment in the Hereafter for ‘sins’ committed on earth. These sins are defined in the Qur’an and the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the case of zina, where the acts by the accused fall short of satisfying the above definition, with both substantive and evidential aspects thereof, the accused will be set free and acquitted of the offence of zina, because of lack or shortage of four witnesses. However, assuming that the offence is otherwise complete, except for the witnesses, then God will punish such offender in the Hereafter, as God knows with no need of testimonial evidence. Another important point is, where only less than four witnesses view the act, none of them is allowed to say a word on the incident, otherwise he will be severely punished.

To conclude, what is essentially punishable in the case of the offence of zina is the obscenity and vulgarity of committing such act in public (symbolized by the 4-witness requirement), and not any secretive act of sexual intercourse.



Why do Muslims, Christians and Hindus coexist peacefully in Kerala State?

By Qais Bajaeifir

If anything distinguishes Kerala and sets it apart from other Indian states, besides its mesmerizing scenery, breathtaking tropical greenery and captivating topography, it is the civilized coexistence of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. In Kerala, religious plurality, tolerance and cultural diversity come into play on the ground and members of different religions live together peacefully, setting a notable example of social, multireligious and multicultural harmony.





The coexistence of diverse religious groups in Kerala, historically known as Keralam, dates back thousands of years. Over the centuries, people hailing from a wide variety of cultures - Arab merchants, Jewish and Christian migrants, and even European traders - followed the spice route to Kerala and settled there. A predominately Hindu state, Kerala has since time immemorial welcomed foreigners in, and locals have even converted to the religions incomers brought with them.

Muslims, Hindus and Christians all speak the same language - Malayalam; there are no special villages for Muslims, Christians or Hindus. Instead, they all live together as neighbors. Children of different religions sit side by side at school and even play together. In the same neighbor-

hood, one can see a mosque, a church and a temple all standing next to one another, as evidenced in the center of the state capital of Trivandrum (now known as Thiruvananthapuram). Kochi in the southwest, the most densely populated city in the state with over 667,000 inhabitants, has the oldest synagogue and the oldest European church in India, both dating back to the 16th century. A significant Jewish community also existed in Kochi until 1947 when many migrated to Israel and other countries like Australia, with only a small number deciding to remain. What is believed to be the first and oldest mosque in India, Cheraman Juma Mosque, is found in Methala in the Thrissur district of Kerala. It is said to date back to the seventh century when its founder Malik bin Dinar arrived in India to spread Islam.





MALIK BIN DINAR BUILT 11 MOSQUES IN KERALA, THE MOST IMPORTANT OF WHICH IS CHERAMAN JUMA MOSQUE

The adherents of all these major religions borrowed cultural practices and lifestyles from each another, and the result was the cultural diversity found across Kerala

Communal violence and flare-ups are rare among Muslims, Christians and Hindus. In 2017, the president of one Hindu temple donated some 40 square me-

ters of its land to a neighboring mosque so the Muslim community could build an extension. With Muslims constituting 30 percent of its over 33 million-strong population, and Christians and Hindus making up 20 and 50 percent respectively, Kerala has the highest religious pluralism rate of any Indian state. It is no wonder that its treasured civilized coexistence is Kerala's true point of pride.

Reasons

One possible reason behind this peaceful coexistence in Kerala - dubbed one of the ten paradises of the world by the National Geographic Traveler - is the state government's provision to all Keralites equally of basic needs and services and the protection of everyone's rights. In a healthy environment where everyone is treated equally it is difficult, if not impossible, for resentments to fester or conflicts to arise. Conflicts erupt when the basic needs of one group in society are threatened or not met, such as the need for food, water, public services, safety, housing, sanitation, security etc. When no one is denied access to basic social and economic rights, no one



feels neglected and everyone feels they are treated equally, there is little cause for grievance.

Another reason is Kerala's high rate of literacy which, matching that of many advanced countries, is the highest in India. In 1991, India's National Literacy Mission, tasked with creating a literate society, was able to declare full literacy across Kerala. The high rate of literacy has also had a beneficial effect on the empowerment of women and gender parity. Women are encouraged to pursue education and even the poorest families send their girls to schools. Compared with their counterparts in other Indian states, women in Kerala have fewer children and longer life expectancy.

The state government places great emphasis on education and allocates to it a large portion of its annual budget. Education is taken seriously across Kerala, and in 2017 it became the first Indian state to achieve a primary education attendance rate of 100 percent. It also has one of the best health-care systems with the highest life expectancy rates in India. When such basic needs are met, there will be

no conflict. Perhaps that is why the Muslims of Kerala have a greater inclination to live in peace and harmony with Hindus and Christians and are more willing to work side by side with them and other members of the public for the greater good of society.

around three thousand years ago to trade in spices. They mixed with the local population, marrying locally and settling there. Keralites were duly influenced by Muslim culture and values, and many embraced Islam when it was first brought by Malik bin Dinar. People were impressed



A third factor is that all Keralites, whatever their ethnic origins, are united by a single language, Malayalam. There are no barriers to communication and everyone can express their ideas and thoughts clearly.

Arab traders

Arab merchants arrived in the coastal region of Kerala

how Muslims practiced the religion in all aspects of daily life. Islam spread quickly in Kerala and beyond to all parts of India. Malik bin Dinar built 11 mosques in Kerala, the most important being the Cheraman Juma Mosque. It has undergone renovation several times of the years and can today accommodate some 3,000 worshippers.





Islamic Education in Africa

Dr. Muhammad Salim

The International University of Africa has published a book titled: “A Symposium on Islamic Education in Africa” held by the University in Jumad Awal 1440AH corresponding to January 2019. The book consists of five volumes as well as a special volume containing the activities of the first symposium held in 1408AH corresponding to 1988AD on the same subject.



The reality of Islamic Education 30 years before:

The book of the first symposium deals with the most important issues discussed in that symposium which are: the problem of Islamic Education caused by colonial power in Africa, the obstacles faced by Islamic Education, the project of developing education to increase awareness level, the educational policy and its reflections on Islamic culture in Africa, the school stages, the obstacles faced by society in educational aids, buildings, finance and woman education, the problems of setback of education, problems of Islamic education curricula, besides the importance of finding the efficient teacher, and the importance of Arabic Language as it is the medium of Islamic sciences." More than a hundred scholars, thought leaders, those concerned with the Islamic Education, educators from universities and higher institutes, ministries, and Islamic associations participated in the panel discussion.

States have been divided into four groups as per the strength and weakness of Islamic Education in each group:

1. Group of countries which are members in the League of Arab States, besides the states in which Arabic is the language of everyday life such as Somalia, Djibouti, and Chad.
2. Group of states of effective majorities: Nigeria, Senegal, and Zanzibar.
3. Group of states of Islamic majorities: these are states in which Muslims are the majority as it is the case in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra lion, and the like, besides the states of effective minorities such as Uganda, Kenya and the like.
4. Group of states of small Islamic minorities such as Rwanda, Zaire (Congo now), Gabon and the like.

The book shed light on the reasons of marginalization of Muslims in most African countries, on being kept away from participating in politics, on not sending their siblings to modern formal government schools, on preferring to establish private schools to teach their siblings Arabic, religious subjects as well as modern sciences and the difficulties faced by them to achieve such goals.

It is stated that these problems were faced upon the arrival of the European colonization to the African continent as it brought along the Western educational systems through its ecclesiastical institutions. Accordingly, Muslim siblings turned away from it lest it may not affect them; therefore, they were kept away from the administrative and political influence. As a result, the graduates of ecclesiastical schools dominated and took hold of administrative and political jobs that enabled them to exploit the sources of Muslims for establishing further western educational



schools. Moreover, the educational institutions in Africa do not include, within its curricula and other educational programs, the special requirements of Muslims in the field of education. All the above-mentioned reasons made Muslims establish special schools to teach their siblings Islamic education and Arabic besides other modern subjects. However, to do so, Muslims were faced by problems that prevented them from achieving their goals. Such goals are many, but the most important are:

- Arabic language requires a lot of effort so that it becomes an educational language through which youngsters can attain the religious meanings to be capable of understanding the Qur'anic and Prophetic traditions texts. It is mentioned that concern over Arabic is derived from the faith in Islam and the relation with Arabic is a relation with the Holy Qur'an which Allah the Almighty has revealed it in the Arabic language. Allah the Almighty said: "Thus have we sent

this down-Arabic Qur'an...etc" (Surat Taha, Verse: 113). This involves that Arabic must be respected to take its proper position by spending on establishing schools and taking care of their mission by improving their curricula, providing books and efficient teacher in all specialties.

- Curricula are not related to the environments in which such curricula are taught: the educationalists consider it an educational problem that lessened the efficacy of the Islamic educational institutions and prevents them from teaching Islamic subjects at government schools. It is proved by a scientific study that an attempt to export the Islamic educational curricula to the African communities is doomed to failure. Also, to design one curriculum for the different African countries is useless and vain because such countries are of different environments and cultures, thus, some issues have priority over others. Also, preparing curricula is one of the most important issues as it needs to

cope with the updated changes in the world. Academic books also need to be provided by establishing printers and publication houses to meet the requirements of schools.

· Multiplicity of curricula at Islamic education institutions.

The existence of intellectual trends in the educational methodology at Arabic schools that contradict each other is among the basic obstacles that led to the setback of the Arabic language. Such intellectual trends are represented in the Sufi Curriculum, the Liberation Curriculum, and the Ancestral Curriculum.

1. The Sufi Curriculum is considered to be the first one for the Islamic education in Africa and it is a natural extension to the Qur'anic schools which were based on solitary retreat system (Khalawa system, singular of Khalwa) and to belong to a jurist (Faqeeh), thus, this leads to practice the Sufi remembrances and rituals. Such schools have played a basic role in establishing the Arabic language; especially the inception of these schools was during the colonial rule and post-independence era.

2. The Ancestral Curriculum: This is one of the most influential curricula on African people although it came late with a variable effect from a country to another. It relied upon jurisprudential dialectics, monotheism, and maintaining of the Prophet's traditions and the rules that control the conduct of the individual in the Islamic society. Most students who belong to this school of thought are graduates of Saudi universities and the institutes of Qatar and Kuwait.

The colonial administrations, particularly, the French one have distorted this curriculum before they leave, as well as instigated disagreement between these schools and the schools that adopt the Sufi curriculum. The two schools were brought into a strong

conflict here and there and sad clashes occurred between the two parties. Disputation meetings were held with the relationships of the Islamic nation almost cut off. However, some educated groups from the two parties, who graduated in Arab universities, managed to reconcile the dispute between the two parties, achieved intimacy and understanding between them and urged them to direct their efforts in spreading Islam among non-Muslim people.

3. The Modern Curriculum: this one has a scientific tint, and it prevailed the post-independence era, where the Westernized educated people to dub the Arabic educated people as being dervish and jugglers. The supporters of this curriculum want to confirm that there is no difference between what they do in Europe and what is taught at Arabic schools.

By adopting this modern school curriculum, Islamic education made a big jump as it has become free from the hold of Sufism to enter the cultural competition arena between Western and Arabic education so that many students were able to migrate to Arab countries to pursue their higher education.

· Scarcity of efficient Muslim teacher: This had a negative impact on Islamic education process resulting in African Muslims being uninterested in education posts because they could not find the schools that qualify them to such posts; even those who are qualified could not find the institutes that train them. Moreover, there were no curricula for teachers to be trained on. To solve this problem there must be specialized institutes in different regions of Africa to graduate qualified teachers to meet the needs of the continent.

· Lack of educational aids at most schools, such as blackboard, chalk, schoolbook, linguistic labs, simplified dictionaries and literature books series. However, these aids, if

they were not of utmost importance at that time, yet they became elements of representation and attraction in the age of competition among different languages and cultures, especially, Muslim students at government schools would like to pass the exam they sit for, no matter if they have to sit for an exam in Christian education as long as it guarantees success for them.

· Lack of school building: This is one of the basic problems of the educational process. Schools are cottages that are often built of local materials if schooling is not practiced under trees. The ceiling of these traditional school buildings is made from tinplate which reflects heat. This is because African states do not allocate budget for Muslims education. Expenditure on education is mainly born by students' guardians despite being impoverished. There is no foreign support by cultural centers as is the case in the European countries. This problem is considered to be an impediment to Islamic education in Africa. It is a complicated problem that cannot be solved and overcome except by exerting efforts of support from in and outside the continent.



· The general economic crisis that hit the Islamic communities of Africa due to the economic colonial policies, the result is Muslims failure to make their sons pursuing their education throughout school stages. Sons of Muslims got puzzled as to nowhere to go following finishing the first three years of schooling. Do they have to attend secular government schools that link them with modern styles of life and cut them off their cultural identity and move them some steps towards Christianity? Or to go for crafts which do not require education to allow other non-Muslims to dominate over matters making it worse than it is?

Although faced by these obstacles, Muslims succeeded in establishing a few schools for the stage between high school and elementary school. However, Islamic university education is hardly existent except for a few institutions counted on the fingers of one hand.

The first symposium held 30 years ago demonstrated the reality of Islamic education in Africa and the outputs set forth by the symposium to solve the problem. No doubt that publishing the works of the first symposium explained the situation as to what has been and has not been achieved by the African countries.

What about the second symposium on Islamic Education in Africa?

The reality of Islamic Education in Africa: Africa came next to Asia, as the second biggest continent of the world in terms of area and population. Its population is estimated to be one billion according to 2009 census. The name Afri is given to any group of people who live in North Africa while some historians are of the opinion that the origin of the word turns back to the Phoenician language "Afar" i.e. dust. However, some

studies confirmed that the word is derived from the Amazigh word (Ifri or Ifran) which means cave in a reference to cave dwellers. Some sources indicate that the word Africa or Ifri is designated for the Amazighian tribe of (Banu Owaifer) which lives between Algeria and Tripoli and the name was maintained in one of its forms when designated to the Islamic African kingdoms that were established later; also there are those who consider it to be of a Greek origin.



In the introduction of the book, it is mentioned that the aim of the second symposium is to evaluate the outputs of the first symposium to know to what an extent that the goals of the first symposium have been achieved; as well as to realize the strong aspects and the weak aspects for the purpose of benefiting from success and to avoid failure, if any, and to provide a future vision for Islamic education in Africa plus taking account of the latest developments in the area.

An analysis of the reality of Islamic education institutions was made. For example, Dr. Saeed Burhan Abdullah, a faculty member of the University of Comoros, presented a study on the Islamic education in Co-

moros during the colonial era focusing on the ancestral school, Falah schools, Fatah, Al Noor and the institutions of Islamic education in post-independence time in terms of identifying these schools, counting them, their development phases, their curricula, their educational levels, their outputs, obstacles faced by them and the role of the noble Sharif of (Alaween) in spreading the legal (Sharia) science in East Africa in general and Comoros in particular.

The book also discussed the role of religious institutions in spreading the (Sharia) legal sciences and Arabic language in Africa (Almurabiteen) “the Garrisoned Group as an example”. It also dealt with the spread of Islam, the methods and reasons behind the success. The care and concern of the state about education are one of the reasons for spreading science and knowledge at that time.

A dialogue was held on free Islamic education in North Africa represented in “Ibn Badees’ practice in Algeria”. The symposium came up with some results and findings the most important of which were:

- The practice of Ibn Badees in Islamic education is a pioneering one at mosques in terms of its religious and cultural function. It is worth to be studied from various aspects as mentioned below.
- The reformation function of Islamic education from the point of view of Ibn Badees as he viewed it to be the basic reform of different pivots upon which the education process is built which are scholar, learner, and scientific subject.
- The legal (Sharia) dimension of education: Ibn Badees drove this dimension from the Holy Prophet’s tradition (Sunnah), especially the behavioral (pertaining to deeds) Sunnah. It is proved that the Prophet (peace

be upon him) did not build his own house until he built the mosque to perform prayer in it and teach his companions there. Thus, Ibn Badees considers the mosque relation with prayer is like its relation with learning and educating, for education is the basis of Islam, and Allah the Almighty must not be worshipped ignorantly.

· Ibn Badees' opinion of Islamic education: His effort in this field came fruitful and the mosque education developed into free Arabic education. Schools were established for this kind of education. The society scholars fellows of Ibn Badees continued the work following up his method in caring about mosque education to develop it into free formal schools.

The book also discussed the problems of Islamic education in the middle of Africa "Chad state as an example" amidst the several educational changes in the middle of Africa and the nature of problems that stand in the way of the education process. The study conducted came to the necessity of preparing, qualifying, and training of teachers, attracting efficient competent, immigrant experts and to finance scientific research. The study recommended supporting Islamic education financially and educationally.

The book also dealt with the problems of Arabic Islamic education in West Africa. The study reached several results, the most important of which are: Lack of correct curriculum with many Arabic Islamic schools, the curricula taught are not suitable for the local environment as the curricula of Arabic institutes are limited to legal (Sharia) sciences and Arabic language; this led to the ignorance of graduates in European languages and physical sciences, weakness of

subjective material potentialities, the inexperienced administrative cadre the matter that affects school running administratively and scientifically and the problem of recruiting the graduates of these schools because government does not recognize certificates of religious school graduates.

The study recommended having a fund for the union of Islamic universities in Africa to help Islamic schools in designing curricula, establishing endowments to lift the financial burden off schools and to establish an institute affiliated to the union of Islamic universities in Africa to qualify the teachers of Arabic Islamic schools.

The symposium discussed the role and the efforts exerted by religious groups under the title: "Religious Groups and its impact on Arabic and Islamic education in Africa, Nigeria as an example." The study aims at exploring the cultural and intellectual roots of religious groups in Nigeria, and the impact of deviant sects on the Arabic and Islamic education, and the relation of these sects with the deterioration of the Islamic education system in Nigeria.

The symposium also discussed the impact of the extremist religious movements such as (Boko Haram) on the Arabic and Islamic education in Nigeria and the necessity for a faithful national will to solve the intellectual conflict among the religious movements in Nigeria.

The study recommended that people should shun intellectual and cultural deviation and rectify the concept of monotheism and practice worship on the basis of Islamic Sharia, to form committees for designing curricula for schools and the Islamic universities in Africa together with considering objectives and content.

Five stunning floating mosques of the world

By Aftab Husain Kola

Among the most distinctive sights in any Islamic place is a mosque with a dome and slender, tall minarets looming large on the horizon. From simple, open space surrounded walls of sun-baked brick of the bygone era to the re-

cent ones that are architecturally stunning edifice, the mosque is intended to function primarily as a religious centre and also occasionally serve as a educational and social place for the town's Muslim population.





Amirul Mukminin Mosque, Makassar, Indonesia

Having been to more than 15 countries during my stint as a media person I always made it a point to visit important mosques of a place, for my regular prayers and also to apprise myself of the Islamic/educational/dawah activities that are happening in mosques. Through this feature I will not be touching upon the great mosques but will focus on some of world's finest mosques that juts into the waters - yes, they are known as floating mosques.

1. The King Hassan II Mosque, Casablanca, Morocco

The stunningly beautiful Moorish style mosque whose minaret adorned with a broad band of colored tilework and crowned with a crenelated top cranes straight out of the Atlantic waves to a height of 200-meter. From its peak, a powerful laser beam splashes indicating the direction of Makkah. Perched on an outcrop jutting into the ocean,

it is a fine specimen of the very best Moroccan artisanship: hand-crafted stone and wood, eye-catching marble flooring and inlay, gilded cedar ceilings and exquisite zellige (traditional Moroccan tiles mostly used in mosques and palaces) abound. Set against the scenic setting of the Atlantic Ocean the mosque designed by French architect Michel Pinseau, and commissioned by King Hassan II (1929-1999) was completed in 1993 with the help of 6,000 craftsmen. The Hassan II Mosque can accommodate 25,000 worshipers inside the building with an additional 80,000 able to pray in the surrounding vast courtyard. The mosque is fitted with large windows, which opens out to the ocean where the building juts out over the Atlantic. A segment of the prayer floor is made of glass so that worshipers can see the sea below. Guided tours of the mosque in French, English, German and Spanish are conducted outside prayer times for decently attired visitors.





The King Hassan II Mosque, Casablanca, Morocco

2. Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei

An architectural delight to the eye, the Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque, locally called Masjid Omar Ali, was opened in 1958 in Negara Brunei Darussalam, a tiny nation flanked by South China Sea along the northern coast of the Island of Borneo. One of the defining landmarks of Brunei's capital city of Bandar Seri Begawan, the mosque sits royally in an artificial lagoon on the serene banks of the Brunei River. A timeless architectural work of art, the mosque is named after the current Sultan's late father, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, the 28th Sultan of Brunei.

Topped by an exquisite dome made of real gold, the mosque is an epitome of classic Islamic architecture. Clad in Italian marble and Chinese granite, its magnificent stained-glass windows, hand-made Arabic carpets, English chandeliers, elegant arches and aes-

thetic columns make this iconic mosque one of the most beautiful ones in the world. It can accommodate a congregation of approximately 3,000 worshippers. Besides a large prayer hall for men, there is a women's prayer room separated and located upstairs, which can be accessed by a staircase. Says Adi Yusri, Brunei's celebrated photographer and whose photos accompany this article, "The mosque is beautiful beyond description." Well-manicured gardens bursting with flowers and shrubs, water fountains and also benches for visitors are part of the mosque's beautiful environs.

3. Fatima Al-Zahra (Rahma) Mosque, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Named after Fatima, one of the daughters of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), this graceful floating mosque in Jeddah's North Corniche area is the world's most visited floating mosque. Jutting into





Fatima Al-Zahra (Rahma) Mosque, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

the Red Sea, the mosque was opened in 1985. During peak Umrah and Hajj seasons, pilgrims who visit Jeddah after Hajj/Umrah make it a point to visit Fatima Al-Zahra mosque. Embracing an area of 2,400 square meters, the mosque design is inspired by Islamic style of architecture. The main dome spans the main prayer hall while 52 smaller domes make up the courtyard. The 23 external umbrellas, adorned with verses of the Noble Qur'an, enhance the beauty of the mosque. The mosque is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, equipment, sound and lighting systems.

The 56 Islamic-styled windows further accentuate the mosque's external look. A separate high-hanging covered wooden area is meant to cater for women to pray. This mosque is one of Jeddah's four mosques that permits non-Muslims to visit during non-praying hours. The three other mosques include Al-Taqwa, King Fahd and King Saud

- all in Jeddah.

4. Amirul Mukminin Mosque, Makassar, Indonesia

Being world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia is home to more than 800,000 mosques. With its approximately 18,000 islands ranging from tiny atolls to the second- and third-largest islands in the world, Indonesia has strong coastal cultures, and people living in areas surrounding the country's principal rivers are more than familiar with making a life close to the water – or even on it. Thus the country has several floating mosques, like Oesman Al Khair Mosque, North Kayong; Amirul Mukminin Mosque, Makassar; Arkham Babu Rahman Mosque, Palu (administrative and cultural hub for the whole Sulawesi province), to mention but a few.

Here, I will highlight Amirul Mukminin Mosque in Makassar. Built on wooden stilts,





Malacca Straits Mosque, Bandar Hilir, Malacca, Malaysia

the modest yet stylish twin-domed Amirul Mukminin mosque in Makassar was opened for praying in 2009.

Indonesia's first floating, the mosque spans an area of 1,683 square-meter. During high tides the 164 foundation piles are submerged in water making the mosque appear to be floating at sea. Located on Losari beach in the heart of Makassar city, South Sulawesi, the mosque is a three-storeyed building with the first floor reserved for men and the second floor for women to pray in congregation. With a capacity for 500 people, the mosque is crowned by two domes, of nine meters each. In Ramadan, the mosque is a beehive of activity, hordes of Muslims come here to break the fast. From the mosque's verandah, the sunset view is a feast for the eyes.

5. Malacca Straits Mosque, Bandar Hilir, Malacca, Malaysia

Malaysia has the strategic advantage of abutting two great seas - the Indian Ocean wash-

es one shore while the South China Sea the other. The country is home to many floating mosques; notable of them include the Malacca Straits Mosque, Tengku Tengah Zaharah Mosque, Kota Kinabalu City Mosque, Tanjung Bungah Floating Mosque. There are other mosques which overlook the waters but cannot be called floating mosques.

Here, spotlight is on the Malacca Straits Mosque built on stilts at the shores of Malacca in Bandar Hilir. Consecrated in 2006, the mosque is a fine specimen of Malay architecture interspersed with Middle Eastern elements of architecture. Topped by a gold-colored dome and four corner turrets and a slender graceful minaret annexed from main prayer structure which works as the guide for water crafts, boats and air ships to stride safely across the sea, the mosque is a feast for the sore eyes when illuminated after dusk. The use of stained glass with Islamic motifs enhances the quality of the light falling inside the building.





Global Press
Idris Elnaw



Urbanization and Challenge of Food Sustainability

Austin

Living in a city turns you into a cannibal. That, at least, is the metaphor preferred by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who considered cities a pit of human corruption. Rousseau was so convinced of the malign effects of urbanization that he “would rather see men grazing on meadow grass than devouring each other in cities.” Urbanization inures people to the suffering of the countryside, and as townspeople crowd together, their capacity for compassion toward others atrophies. Urbanites become the kind of people who are

ready to sacrifice one another to satisfy their appetites: cannibals.

Rousseau’s fear that cities inspire inhabitants to pursue their own interests at the expense of others remains as relevant today as it was in the eighteenth century. And nowhere is this truer than in the food system.

For as long as there have been towns, there have been strategies to feed them. In the United Kingdom, the allotment movement during the Industrial Revolution established a system that gave the working poor





access to land for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables. Today, these urban gardens remain a popular means of sustenance for British urbanites; an estimated 350,000 people have allotments and another 800,000 want them, explained a report on Daily Star newspaper.

Cities worldwide are recognizing the importance of urban agriculture, and particularly urban agroecology, which uses biological diversity – rather than chemical inputs – to build soil quality, increase crop yields, and manage water use. Metropolitan areas from Rome to Sao Paulo have supported agroecology to tackle health crises, climate change, and poverty.

But if you have never heard of this type of farming, a careful reading of Rousseau might explain why: it threatens the wealth that urban elites accumulate.

Rousseau anticipated where and how democracy becomes subverted: “If cities are harmful, capitals are even more so,” he once wrote. “A capital is an abyss where nearly the entire nation goes to lose its morals, its laws, its courage, and its liberty.” In the context of food, capitals today are where money is spent to stop local govern-



ments from protecting citizens.

Consider the food industry’s lobbying campaign during the run-up to the recent midterm elections in the United States. In Washington State, The Coca-Cola Company, PepsiCo, and Keurig Dr Pepper spent over \$ 20 million to craft a ballot measure to prevent cities from raising taxes on groceries – including sugar-sweetened beverages, which are known to increase the risk of type 2

diabetes.

Washington State residents were persuaded to sacrifice one another.

They are not alone. Over the last decade, 12 American states have passed legislation to stop municipalities from addressing the public-health crisis of processed foods, and at least 26 states have enacted laws to shield food companies from lawsuits linked to diet-related diseases.



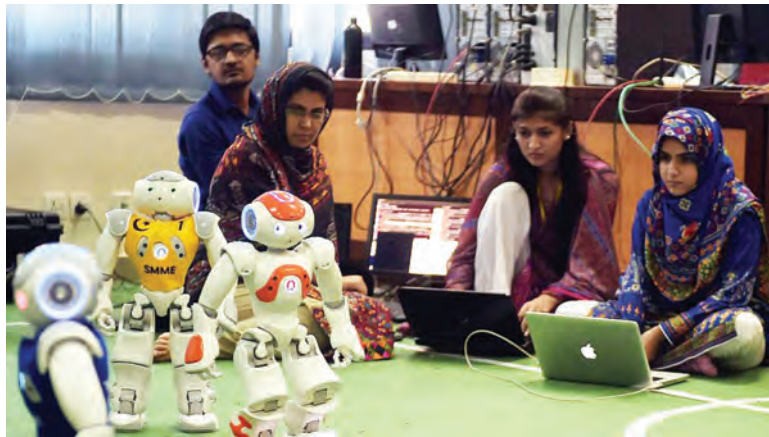


Pakistan eyeing the New Tech Wave

San Jose, California

Technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship are the key ingredients for economic success in the twenty-first century, as the US and China are demonstrating. If Pakistan can also realize its huge untapped potential in these fields, the result could be a more dynamic country that is better placed to solve many of its other problems.

In the old days, it was the discovery of natural resources, such as gold or hydrocarbons that drove



the world's most dynamic economies. Today, it is technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship. As we all

know by now, a one- or two-person tech start-up with no physical assets can become a multi-billion-dollar company and transform entire industries, almost in the blink of an eye.

This tech-driven revolution potentially gives developing countries a great chance to speed up the modernization of their economies. For example, Pakistan – which has 130 million people and a largely traditional economy – and other developing countries could





look for inspiration to China, which just two decades ago had a small tech start-up industry, but is now home to nine of the world's top 20 digital companies.

Asad Jamal the founder and chairman of ePlanet Capital, a Silicon Valley venture capital firm wrote "I moved to Silicon Valley and founded ePlanet Capital, I was new to the field and unsure what to expect. In 2000,

I met Robin Li, a Chinese entrepreneur in his twenties who was seeking funding for his new company, Baidu. Based on conventional investment criteria, Baidu's chances of success seemed low. The company had no track record, limited funding, and an inexperienced team, yet they were aiming to challenge search giants Google and Yahoo".

He continues "But I soon

learned that in the new Internet world, these obstacles were perfectly normal and surmountable by visionary, passionate entrepreneurs with big dreams and ideas. Consequently, my firm went ahead and invested in Robin's vision. Within five years of that first meeting, Baidu went from little more than an idea to being the leader in China's Internet search industry, leaving Google and Yahoo far behind. Today, it is one of China's top three Internet companies, forming the so-called BAT triumvirate along with Alibaba and Tencent. Robin himself is now the Larry Page (or Bill Gates) of China, with a net worth of over \$10 billion".

Baidu's story is similar to that of many other successful tech firms. Like Alibaba, Apple, Google, and Facebook, the company was driven by young founders rather than older business tycoons. Since then, the pace of technological innovation has accelerated further, with the computing and Internet revolution morphing into a new one powered by artificial intelligence, nanotech-biotech, and cyber-physical systems. Here, too, the opportunities for visionary entrepreneurs are huge.





Global Press



Anti-Muslim politician converts to Islam

By Idrees Elnaow

A former member of Geert Wilders' far-right Dutch party announced that he has converted to Islam. Joram Van Klaveren said he made the

switch from critic to convert while writing a book about Islam. "During that writing I came across more and more things that made my view on





Islam falter”.

His publisher says his conversion came as Van Klaveren, who was brought up as a Protestant, was researching a book that was intended to be critical of Islam.

“With this book, we hope to contribute to getting rid of the many misconceptions about Islam and preventing polarization in our society,” said Muhammad Ben Hammouch, chairman of the book’s publishing house. “During that writing, I encountered more and more things that shook my vision of Islam,” he said. Van Klaveren, who grew up in an orthodox Protestant Christian environment, said “I have been searching for a long time. It feels a bit like a religious homecoming for me.”

Van Klaveren was a member of parliament for the Freedom Party (PVV) from 2010 to 2014, but quit the party after Wilders’ asked supporters during a rally in 2014 if they wanted more or fewer Moroccans in the Netherlands, to which the crowd chanted “Fewer! Fewer! Fewer!”

After leaving the PVV, Van Klaveren set up his own party, For Netherlands, but failed to win a seat in the 2017 national election and quit politics.

Van Klaveren was a harsh critic of Islam during his time as PVV politician, now saying “PVV policy: everything that was wrong had to be linked to Islam in one way or another.”

Arnoud van Doorn, a former PVV official, was an earlier convert to Islam. Van Doorn congratulated Van Klaveren on his decision via Twitter, writing: “Never thought that the PVV would become a breeding ground for converts.”

In fact, Klaveren has reverted to the nature of its true origin, truth and road to paradise. Islam is the religion of peace and tranquility, the religion of all the prophets. An open mind searches and questions. Klaveren has obviously chosen to go to Islam’s roots and origins for his information rather than forming judgements and opinions based solely on the behavior of terrorists and hypocrites who hijack Islam for self-serving motives. Klaveren has proven he is true follower of Islam; it is amazing what knowledge and wisdom does. So many people who are anti-Islam do not even know or understand it. They lack basic knowledge and cannot even answer simple and important questions about it.





Unspeakable horror of Boko Haram

Maiduguri, Nigeria

Fatima portrays little emotion as she describes how she came close to killing her own son. Wearing a black headscarf, the 18-year-old Nigerian is lovely, although the raised scars that run down the left side of her face, neck, and body – scars she got escaping from the brutal terrorist group Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria – suggest some unspeakable horror.

“I did not like the boy in any way,” she says softly

of her son, Mohammed. “I didn’t want to have eye contact or even see the child. I tried to murder him, to poison him.

Real Ordeal

Fatima is subdued and matter-of-fact during the several hours we talk about her ordeal. We are sitting on a mat on the dusty ground in an open-air tent that does little to abate the relentless heat in Bakassi camp for internally displaced people in Mai-

duguri, the capital of Borno State and the birthplace of Boko Haram. But when someone fetches Mohammed, now 4 years old, from school, her face opens into a broad smile. She laughs as she swings him over her shoulder and tickles him, and he giggles with delight. “I don’t want anything to come between us,” she says.

Mothers’ Isolation

This is not the story behind #Bring Back Our Girls – the hundreds of Nigerian



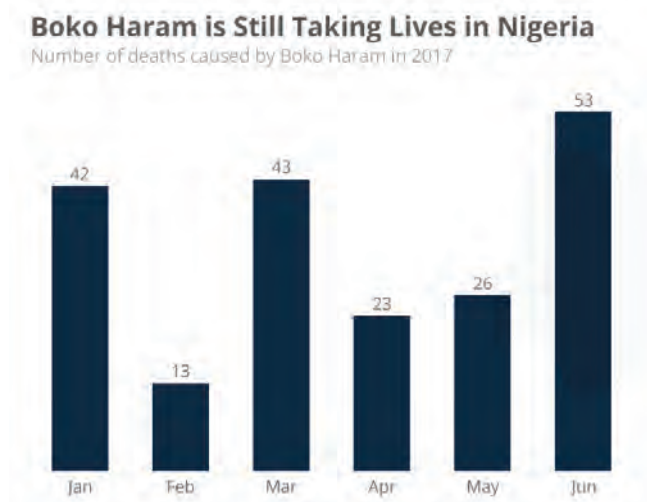
schoolgirls from Chibok whose kidnapping by Boko Haram sparked an international social media campaign to rescue them. It is the story of the thousands of others and their children.

The mothers, many no more than children themselves, are shunned by their husbands or fathers or mothers and forced to live in isolation in the squalid camps that have mushroomed around Maiduguri. On top of the widespread stigma against victims of sexual violence in this traditional, patriarchal society, the survivors face an additional burden. Many people fear that the “Boko Haram wives,” as they are derisively called, have been radicalized and are spies for the insurgents or may even kill them – fears that are compounded by Boko Haram’s practice of using girls as young as 10 as suicide bombers, says a report published in CS Monitor newspaper.

Collective Nightmare

The Bakassi camp in Maiduguri, a mélange of tin-roofed shelters, houses more than 26,000 people displaced by fighting in northeastern Nigeria.

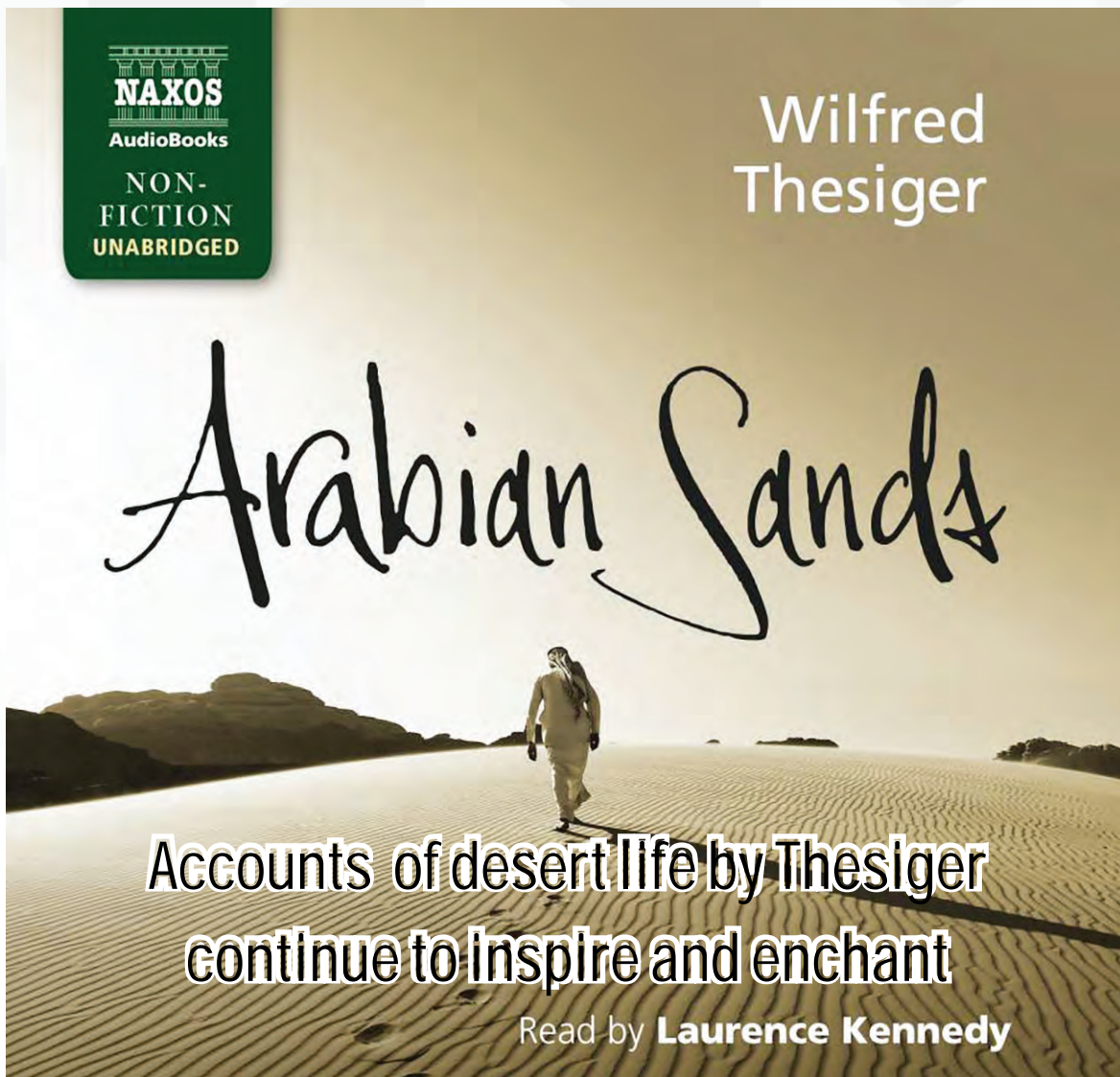
The people’s worries



are understandable, says Cindy Chungong, country manager for Nigeria for International Alert, one of a handful of nonprofits that in collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) are working to reintegrate victims into communities. People have suffered tremendously at the hands of Boko Haram. Many witnessed their family members and neigh-

bors slaughtered, their cattle stolen, their crops and livelihoods destroyed. But still, “it is absolutely traumatizing for those girls and women. Their suffering is part of the collective nightmare that has gripped northeastern Nigeria for a decade now – in which virtually everyone has been affected. What’s unusual about the crisis is that some of its most severe effects are psychological.





AFTAB HUSAIN KOLA

The works of late Sir Wilfred Thesiger, the celebrated explorer and writer who brought the life of the desert Bedouin of the Arabian Peninsula to public notice more than half a century ago, by twice crossing the inhospitable Rub' al-Khali desert (Empty Quarter), beautiful in their barren wilderness, still continue to inspire, enchant and inform even today.

The Arabian Peninsula is today one of the

most advanced, modern regions of the world. This Region of the bygone days was a picture of amazing culture and beauty. Today's generation are not aware of how people in Arabia lived their lives in deserts, marshes and mountains. They lived a simple, yet dignified life. It is important that the new generation of people who now use technology for virtually anything and everything need to be told how





their forefathers lived braving the hot and cold weather of the deserts. In this connection, it is time to revisit the classic books on the subject penned by Sir Wilfred Thesiger. His books *The Marsh Arabs* (1964) and *Desert, Marsh And Mountain* (1979), his autobiography *The Life Of My Choice* (1987), his portfolio of superb monochrome photos, *Visions Of A Nomad* (1987), and his description of the traditional life of the Bedu, *Arabian Sands* (1959), continue to inspire, enrich and inform. His books crease on countenances of men and women who lived harsh lives in inhospitable conditions with smiles writ on their faces, which have been depicted through his black and white and images.

Vast sweeps of sand dunes

Spanning more than 2.6 million square kilometers and covering today's Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, the Peninsula is home to world's most inhospitable terrain and climatic conditions. Until the 20th century, the vast sweeps of sand dunes and gravel plains, the baking heat and the food and water scarcity acted as deterrents to European explorers in general, and to cartographers especially. Despite hardships, Wilfred Thesiger undertook two epic journeys in the 1940s across the Rub 'Al Khali, or Empty Quarter, the largest single stretch of sand desert in the world and the second largest desert area after the Sahara and at the same time the most forbidding, and least penetrated region of Arabia. Even today these journeys are being talked about and cherished.

Before Thesiger it was Bertram Thomas, an English diplomat and explorer, the first officially documented Westerner to cross the Empty Quarter riding a camel in 1931, followed by St. John Bridger Philby in 1932, and

though Philby's 400-mile waterless crossing was an amazing feat, both he and Thomas adopted relatively easier routes. Thesiger crossed both the eastern and western "Sands" - the Bedu term for the Empty Quarter- over steep 215 meter high dunes.

Thesiger's books on his travel through Arabia throws spotlight on Bedu Arabs, their lifestyles, their culture, their relationship with the desert, camels, etc. Assigned by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to study the movement of locusts on the Peninsula, he began to travel and live with the Bedouins and, eventually, cross and re-cross the Empty Quarter.

I had the privilege of reading the *Desert, Marsh And Mountain - The World of a Nomad* (Motive Publishing, Dubai) and found it extremely engrossing and got transported to the Empty Quarter as I was shuffling the pages on the subject. When I was in Oman I had penetrated 100-km deep into the Sharqiyah Sands (popularly called Wahiba Sands) driving a four-wheeler and we were not far away from the Empty Quarter and it was a fantastic experience. That was just a very, very small part of the desert. I wonder how Thesiger and others had crossed the Empty Quarter either walking or on camels covering thousand of kilometers braving sandstorms, extremely hot or cold weather and sometime hostile people. Must have been a really enduring journey.

Exploring the Arabia desert

Thesiger was in the Arabia desert from 1945-1950 covering Oman's Dhofar region, Yemen's Hadhramaut, southern Hejaz (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), the Sulaiyil to Abu Dhabi route, the Trucial Coast (UAE) and Interior of Oman. The book captures the wide scope of his voyage and his affinity with the nomadic way of life.

Thesiger writes, "I arrived in Dhaufar





(Dhofar - Oman), on the southern coast of Arabia, in October 1945, and stayed in the RAF staging camp near the small town of Salala (now spelled Salalah, capital of Dhofar region), where the airmen were strictly confined to their camp to avoid incidents with the tribesmen. I had come to Arabia resolved to resolve the Empty Quarter. It was one of the few places left where I could satisfy an urge to go where others had not been.”

It was in 1946 and 1947 that Sir Wilfred made his first crossing, traveling by camel and escorted by a motley group of Bedu Arabs and taking a circular route through the eastern part of the desert from Salalah, on the Arabian Sea coast, to Mughshin, Khaba and back to Boi.

In 1948 he made his second crossing, traversing the western part of the desert from Manwakh to Sulaiyil, Laila and Abu Dhabi on the Arabian Gulf. Besides, he journeyed to Oman's Dhofar and Hadramaut and to Oman and the Persian Gulf states.

Once Thesiger was asked if the beauty of the desert was worth the loneliness and isolation, he said, “I was with the Bedu constantly, the Bedu brought the empty desert to life. There was no privacy in the desert.”

Besides the deserts of Arabia, Thesiger also journeyed Persia and Kurdistan (Iraq) and the marshes of southern Iraq, and also to

Pakistan's Chitral and Hunza, Afghanistan's Hazajarat and Nuristan and then Yemen.

In *Arabia Sands* (published 1959), an international bestseller, Thesiger documents a journey of unimaginable hardship and stunning beauty, as well as a time, place and people on the cusp of change. Through his accounts, he conveyed his declaration of love for the Bedouin Arabs, whose harsh way of life he had shared.

His another book, *Marsh Arabs*, (1964) Thesiger chronicled the seven years he spent, from 1951 to 1958, among the Madan (Marsh) Arabs of the expansive marshlands at the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers in southern Iraq.

Armed with Arabic language, he could distinguish and understand the Arabic spoken in Oman, Iraq, Syria, Morocco, the Hijaz, Egypt and among the Bedouin of Saudi Arabia. He always believed to be one among Bedu one has to adopt their lifestyle. Thesiger said, “I refused to wear sunglasses, even though the glare off the sands was murderous. I didn't want any advantage over the Bedouin.” His dress was a loin-cloth and a long, unironed thawb, and at night slept on his saddle rug next to his camel.

Thesiger was surprised to see Arabia 27 years after left it. Modernity was getting visible and even Bedu Arabs were becoming part





of it. In 1977 he was received with warmth. He was featured on a stamp by Abu Dhabi.

He once said, "The attraction of my trips is that life was reduced to bare essentials. I could load my entire belongings onto a camel in 10 minutes. We clutter and obsess ourselves with possessions, houses, cars ... The Empty Quarter was great precisely because I did manage without 'possessions.' Motors especially destroy the magic of a place for me. I was shocked to see Philby motoring into Marib... [and] just before I left the marshes in Iraq hydrofoil boats were introduced to replace the reed taradas used for 5,000 years."

The bond which he developed with the nomads of Asia and Africa endured the whole of his life. His insistence that he lived as they did and endured the same privations allowed him insights into their cultures and a respect that was unique.

He once remarked, "We marched 12 hours a day, at times for weeks on end, with a pint of water a day and little or no food. Daily fare might consist of a single biscuit - Even the Bedu considered it starvation rations; [and] our camels scrounged grasses left over from rains four years before."

Writing in his autobiography, *The Life of My Choice*, he said, "There was of course the lure of the unknown; there was the constant test of resolution and endurance. Yet those travels in the Empty Quarter would have been for me a pointless penance but for the comradeship of my Bedu companions." Thesiger recollects repeatedly how he was forced to leave his adopted tribal home as revolutions, political and technological, forced him out of the latest variation of nomadic life to which he had adapted. Be it the Empty Quarter, or in the marshes, and later the mountains, Thesiger did savor an uninhibited sense of physical and emotional freedom.

Thesiger demonstrated remarkable sympathy towards the tribal people with whom he had developed a sense of bonhomie, his love to animals, his innate spiritual feeling for the controlling power of the land itself.

One of the world's last explorers, Thesiger's travels were by non-mechanical means of transport; he walked, rode camels or, used reed boats to navigate the marshes. Without maps but with the help of local Bedu Arabs Thesiger undertook his journey.

Death of Thesiger

Wilfred Thesiger passed away in 2002 in a retirement home in Coulsdon, Surrey. He was 1993. Long before his death he donated his priceless collection of 25,000 negatives to the Pitt-Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, and the manuscripts of his books to Eton.

Portrait

Thesiger was born on June 3, 1910, at the British Legation in Addis Ababa, where his father served as the British minister at the court of the Emperor of Abyssinia, as Ethiopia was then known. He received education at Eton and Magdalen College in Oxford. Five years with the Sudan Political Service led him to barely known regions of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and to a major Saharan journey which deepened his intense feeling for the desert. After participating at the World War 2, he devoted himself single-mindedly to the life of his choice: seeking always the unknown land, the unchartered mountain ranges, the inhospitable desert, the unspoilt tribe, the society untouched by Western ethos.

In 1934, Sir Wilfred joined the Sudan Political Service which then administered Sudan on behalf of Britain and Egypt. He then joined Britain's elite Special Air Service. Then came his travels which I have touched upon in the preceding paras of this write-up. His books continue to inspire and endure even today.





ISLAMIC VIEW ON THE CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS OF RELIGIOUS CRISES IN NIGERIA

By Busari, K.K.

Nigeria is a pluralistic society, culturally, politically and religiously. A pluralistic society according to Oshitelu (1997, p. 86) is a society with many different cultural and religious groups. He submits further that plurality and pluralism have become common terms in modern society whereas in about two hundred years ago, African society might not be called a pluralistic society in terms of religion but today, there exists ethnic, religious and political pluralism.



Speaking on pluralism, Sulaiman (2000, p. 37) asserts that plurality cannot be wished away, nor decreed out of existence, it is a permanent feature of the society, and will endure as long as society endures.

The problem we face in Nigeria as a pluralistic society is that we could not tap the vast benefits inherent in plurality. Instead, we stuffy them by the incessant fundamentalist activities, religious fanaticism and crises, religious discriminations and intolerance, social crises and religious riots that occurred in many parts of the country in the recent past. The thrust of this paper is to examine the causes of religious crises and riots and their effects on the society. Recommendations will be made and conclusion shall be drawn to serve as suggested solutions to the menace.

Etiology and Effect of Religious Crises in Nigeria

Many scholars, religious people, politicians, clergymen, and press-men had used many adjectives to describe some of the crises that erupted in this country. The summary of the genesis of one crises or their other is “religious” whereas, some are political, some are tribal, while some are truly religious.

The problem in the main, for Nigerians is that, they always overlook the fact of history and dwell unnecessarily on superfluous issues and lies. For example, speaking on “Inter-religious Dialogue and nation-building” Isizoh (2000, p. 1) says:

The recent introduction of the Islamic Shari’ah system of justice in some states of the country has not gone down well with a good number of Nigerians. Violence has erupted in some parts of the country; many lives have been lost and properties destroyed. Many well-meaning Nigerians

have spoken out against killing people in the name of religion.

This was a big lie. It is the Christians in the South that were crumbs. Some others used to say that Nigeria membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (O.I.C.) is the root of all religious crises in Nigeria. They are pretenders. They, more often than not closed their eyes on some of the struggles between the Christians and the Muslims as enumerated above under the theology of Christian Muslim relations in Nigeria.

Causes of Religious Crises in Nigeria

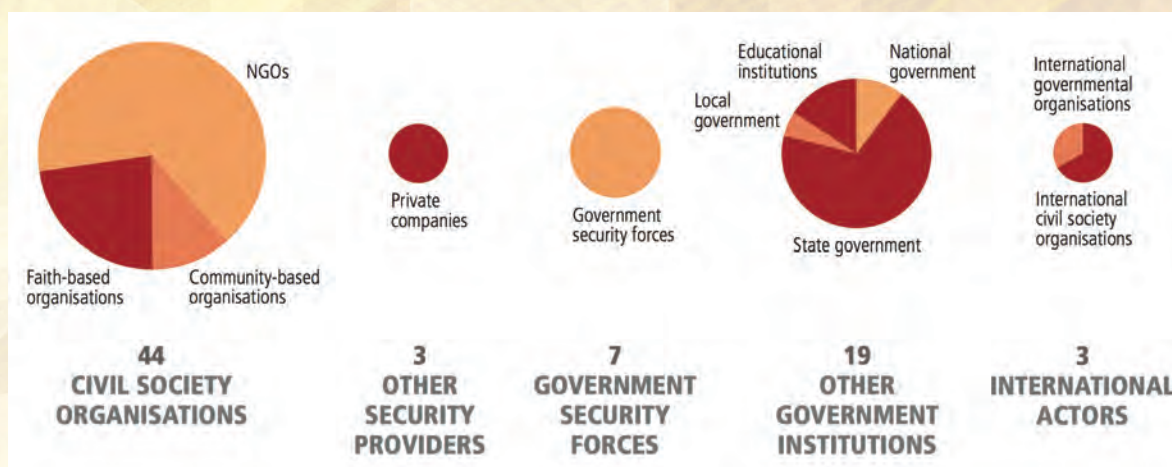
Religious violence has been rampant in our society (Nigeria). No section or zone of the country that has not suffered from religious crises of one form or the other. Below are some causes of religious violence/crises in Nigeria:

1. The Press

The Nigerian Press is another factor that determines whether or not a case should be given a religious colouration. Frankly speaking, reactions of Muslims to Christians or Christians to Muslims could be essentially determined by mass media report (Akinyemi, 2001, p. 266).

Media practitioners are at liberty to determine which incidents is newsworthy, what and what are inimical to their faith and that should not be published and which event out of the many events covered by them is against the other religion that should be made public. Without any iota of doubt, mass media reports or news bulletins, news analysis and features can play a positive or a negative role in the Christian-Muslim relations, depending on the background, the intention and the orientation of the journalist





concerned (Akinyemi, 2001, p. 266).

2. Unnecessary Claim to Superiority

This is a very serious factor for religious tension in Nigeria. Such provocative statement or unnecessary claim to superiority includes: “Awon Elesin Imole (The Muslim Fundamentalists), “Awon Bakatabi” (The Unbelievers: Christians). The Christian would say, Jesus is the only way, nobody can get to the father except through him” Muslims would say, “There is no other religion acceptable to God besides Islam”. These are few of the common statements and claims the adherents of Islam and Christianity make in offices, classrooms/lecture room, hospitals, in buses, etc. it has got to a ridiculous stage that in the west, or Yorubaland some Muslim landlords and landladies will never give their houses to Christian tenants and similarly some Christian landlord or landladies will never give their houses to Muslim tenants. Muslims should recollect that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) lived with non-Muslims while in Madinah. Therefore, Muslims should imbibe the practice of the Prophet Muhammad in their lives.

3. Evangelical Zeal

Akinyemi (2001, p. 264) assents that naturally, Islam and Christianity have missionary tendencies calling people to the worship of God is an obligatory duty to Muslims and Christians. He cited Qur’an 16:12 which says “call to the way of your Lord and Sustainer with wisdom and fair counseling” and the Bible, John 12:49 as saying “he gave me commandment (preaching about the kingdom of God) what I should say and I should speak”.

However, we found that in attempt to fulfill these scriptural injunctions most people overdo it that their actions resulted in religious tension. Our assertion here has bearing with what Isizol (2002, p. 1) says that Nigerian has more tribes than most countries of the worlds thus in some places there are either too many followers of one religion and too few of others, hence efforts by one group to expand its followership has always been resisted by the other. He submits that this expansionist tendency of one group and resistance attitudes of the other group has been a major cause of religious tension or crisis in this country. The unfortunate thing in such circumstance is that such a religious group that resisted conversion of its members to other religion would be called names



like fundamentalists, fanatics, etc. by the lovers of the group that wanted to increase its followership.

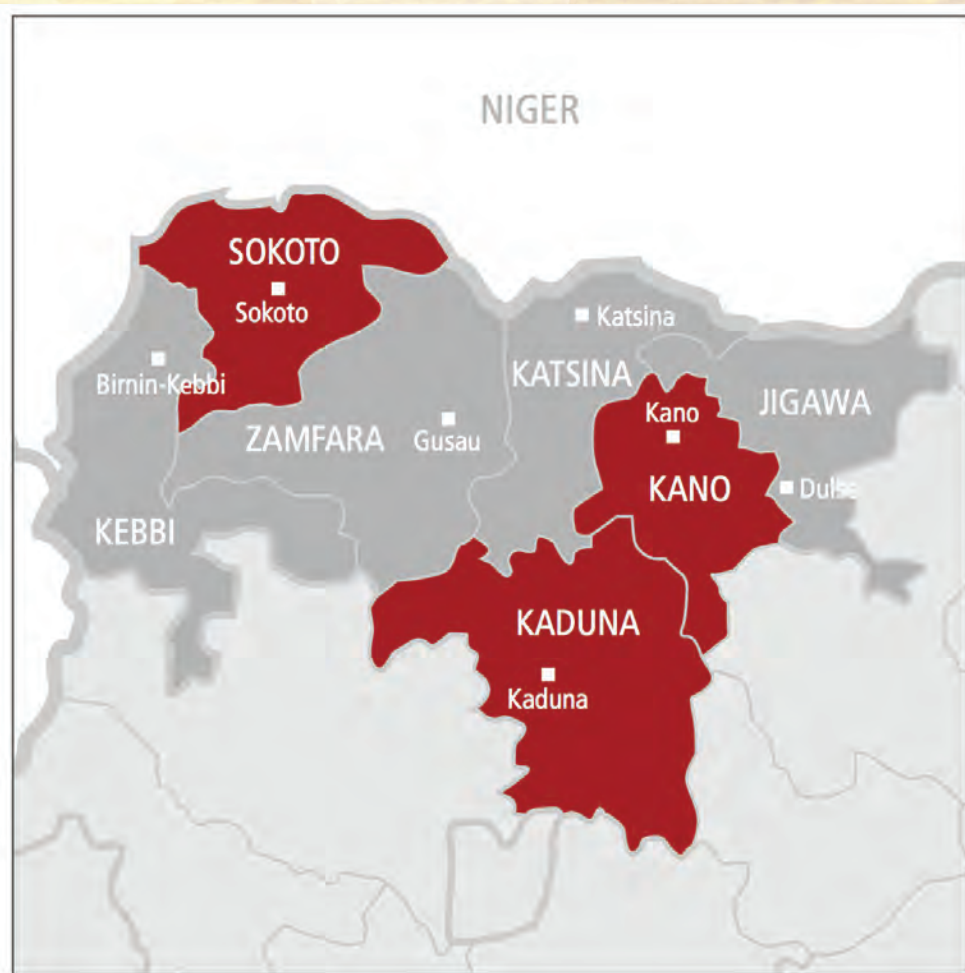
4. Political Factor

The political factor is a fundamental issue in religious crises in Nigeria. Remember that we had earlier asserted that most of the clashes/riots, which led to the destruction of lives and properties occurred in the northern part of Nigeria. The frequencies of riots in the north might be due to the determined efforts of some southern to achieve what the colonial masters could not achieve. Immediately after the amalgamation of 1914, all efforts by the colonialists to penetrate Hausa culture as Islam did were resisted because of the incompatibility of the European culture with that of Hausa culture. Moreover, some northern tribes of the middle belt joined Christianity that was not due to the evangelical efforts of the Missionaries but

due to the Middle-belters resentment to the Fulanis in no uncertain terms and embraced Christianity. The Colonial masters seized that opportunity to sow seed of discord between the northern Muslims and Christians (National Concord, 1987, p. 4).

The creation of twelve (12) states by General Yakubu Gowon was a strategy designed for the purpose of stopping the Biafra Republic from being succeeded and secondly to break and limit the power of the Sultan of Sokoto. The advice was given by a powerful southern politician who was an advocate of the decentralization of the north and the very personality was nursing post military ambition of ruling this country (National Concord, 1987, p. 4). Unfortunately the ambitions did not materialize in the post military presidential election of 1979.

Since 1977, religious crises have in one form or the other occurred and reoccurred in Nigeria in general and the north in particular.



The random but spontaneous reoccurrence of religious crises in the north can be genuinely explained only in terms of politics and is underlying dialectics of tribes.

Guideline to the Muslims on Interactions

Islam makes provisions for homogenous or pluralistic society. It makes a categorical statement in Qur'an 2:256 that "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error: whoever reject Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most truth worthy hand-hold that never breaks".

What should be understood and be happy about the Muslim is that compulsion is incompatible with Islam, because the religion depends upon faith and will, and these would be meaningless if induced by force. Truth and error have been so clearly shown up by the mercy of Allah that there should be no doubt in the minds of any persons of goodwill as to the fundamentals of faith. Surely Allah's protection is continuous, and His plan is always to lead us from the depths of darkness into the clearest light (Ali, 1401 AH).

Muslims should stay clear of anything





that would be tantamount to religious clashes, religious fanaticism or religious fundamentalism. Destructions of lives and properties have no basis in Islam. Even the enemies of Islam and their properties were protected by Prophet Muhammed. The Holy Qur'an (Surat Al-Imran, Verse 159) says, "And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you."

The guideline on Dawah from the Qur'anic point of view is that all Muslim dawah groups should avoid the use of harsh languages and be modest in the choice of words, to be polite, courageous and cheerful in the general approach to the people of other faith.

Muslims and Christians should tolerate one another. There is no other country for us to go. Sulaiman (2000 p. 38) advises that we allow in Nigeria all the social, economic, developmental, legal, and civilization choices available to us operate and compete with each other on equal terms without let or hindrance.

Recommendations

Firstly, Muslims should respect Christians and Christians should also respect Muslims and stop calling each other names. They should refrain from incitement or provocative statements against each other.

Secondly, there should be religious tolerance on both sides. Unhealthy rivalries, petty jealous should become things of the past. Akinyemi's (2001, p. 269) idea should be bought. He recommends that government should introduce inter-religious dialogue and inter-faith relations into the curriculum at all levels primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Thirdly, journalists, broadcasters, church

ministers, Muslims, Alfas, tutors, administrators, politicians etc. should be exposed to religious dialogue and inter-faith relations.

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Steps taken to meet growing demand of Zamzam water

Arab News

The very mention of the word “Zamzam” evokes a feeling of awe in the hearts of the faithful. Zamzam water is considered holy in Islam.

It is found in a 30 meter well in the basement of the Grand Mosque in Makkah, about 20 meters east of the Ka’aba. The water is believed to possess healing qualities, and is treated with reverence by all Muslims.

The Saudi government takes special measures to ensure there is an uninterrupted supply of the water to the Two Holy Mosques all year round, and to pilgrims during the Hajj and Umrah seasons.

In addition to the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Zamzam Water Project, the Zamzam bottling plant operates with a separate mission under the United Office of Zamazamah in Makkah.

Zamzam water is bottled and distributed by the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Zamzam Water Project, which is operated by the National Water Co., and whose new bottling plant can produce up to 30,000 liters per hour.

The construction of the new plant began in 2014. Originally consisting of two production lines, a third was added in 2017, which massively increased production capacity. With the water being dispensed into 200 milliliter bottles, it means that the plant can produce well in excess of 150,000 bottles per hour.

The bottles are then distributed to pilgrims upon arrival in Makkah, and, under the Zamzam Water Additional Services program, are also made available near the central area of Makkah’s Grand Mosque and in other holy places, such as Mina and Arafat.



Islamic Center of Washington

