

Letter From the Editor

The Closure of Al-Aqsa Mosque

The Israeli occupation authorities have closed Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound and prevented Muslims from praying therein; and they erected barriers blocking entrance to it. They also carried out violent attack against Muslims who were forced to pray at the outside Mosque courtyards after they refused to enter through the gates at which electronic metal detectors were installed by the said authorities. These arbitrary measure are – unfortunately - still going on till the writing of these lines. Furthermore, the Muslim World League and its affiliate International Organization for Muslim Scholars have strongly condemned the closure of the Mosque and blocking of Muslims from its entering. At their joint relevant statement, the two organizations indicated that the action affects the sacredness of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the general feeling of Muslims and described it as targeting the legitimate right of the Muslim communities for enjoying religious freedom.

Furthermore, the statement considered that the action as an impeding factor for the efforts and endeavors of peace. It called upon relevant international organizations, associations and committees to firmly stand up to this risky action and to consider all pretexts given don't reach – in the evaluation of every impartial individual and peace advocate – the risk of undertaking this perilous action.

This aggressive step, exercised by the Israeli occupation forces against the second most significant Mosque erected on earth after the Grand Mosque in Makkah and to which the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him) made his nocturnal journey- was considered among the Israeli adopted policies with which it challenges the feelings of the Muslim Nation.

It is no doubt that the installation of electronic metal detectors at the gates of Al-Aqsa Mosque as well as fixing permanent military barriers at them aim at end-

ing the role of the Islamic Awkaf (Endowments) in supervising over Al-Aqsa Mosque as occurred before for the Ibrahim Mosque in Al-Khalil?

This aggressive step is also intended to isolate the Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound from its surrounding in the old city and speed up the process of evacuating the Mosque and imposition of complete control over it.

The Muslim World League has emphasized at a number of conferences and occasions the holding fast to the Arabic and Islamic nature of the sacred city; and that the right of Arabs and Muslims is inalienable and can't be relinquished and that the Israeli actions in the judaization of the city and eradication of its Islamic feature are illegitimate. Furthermore, it called upon international community to intervene to pressurize Israel to retreat from its aggressive actions and to appeal to humanitarian and international organizations as well as associations to confront what is taking place at Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Quds and put an end for the repeated serious violations, enforce the Zionist occupation entity to respect sanctuaries and encourage regional and international bodies to take required action for the protection of Al-Quds.

The Muslim World League has appealed to the leaders of the Muslim Nation to make every possible effort for the protection of Al-Quds city and its inhabitants as well as combat the actions to which Al-Aqsa Mosque is exposed and which comprise aggression, closure and desecration as well as the attack and prevention of worshippers from praying therein.

Allah says *“And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in the places for worship of Allah, His name should be celebrated?- whose zeal is to ruin them?. It is not fitting that such people should themselves enter them except in fear. For them , there is nothing but disgrace in this world, and in the world to come, an exceeding torment”* (Qur'an, 2:114).



The Muslim World League *Journal*

Secretary-General

H.E. Dr. Muhammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa

Supervisor General

Media Affairs Dept.

Adel bin Zamil Al-Harbi

Chief Editor

Dr. Osman Abu Zeid

Editor

Mohammad Zakir Hossain

Layout and Graphic Designer

Khaled Awad Al-Muazzin

The Muslim World League Journal

P.O. Box: 537

Makkah, Saudi Arabia

Tel: 00966 (012) 5600919

E-mail:

mwljournal@themwl.org

www.themwl.org

No. 11&12

• Dhul-Qaadah-Dhul-Hijjah1438/August-Sept. 2017 •

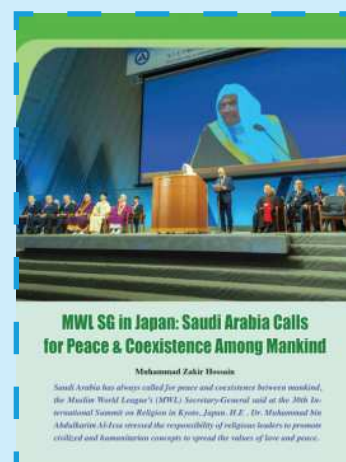
Vol.45

CON

Welcome the 'Prince of Youth'
HRH Muhammad bin Salman
on his new position



SG of MWL in Japan: Saudi Ara-
bia Calls for Peace & Coexistence
Among Mankind



Letter from the Editor

The Closure of Al-Aqsa Mosque.....1

Dr. Al-Issa urges the Japanese Muslim community to enhance the spirit of positive integration and humanitarian cooperation.....12

Dr. Al-Issa meets with the Speaker of the Japanese National Diet (Bicameral Parliament) and Mayor of Hiroshima14

Rabita Roundup.....16

Final communiqué of OIC foreign ministers' meeting on Jerusalem & Al-Aqsa Mosque22

Hajj – the global message of peace and unity

M. Naser Jawed.....36

Hajj - A spiritual experience

Aftab Hossain Kola.....40

The Performance of Hajj in Islam

Ahmad Wahaj Siddiquie.....43

Hajj Guide

Dr. Hothaifa Kharrat.....46

TENTS

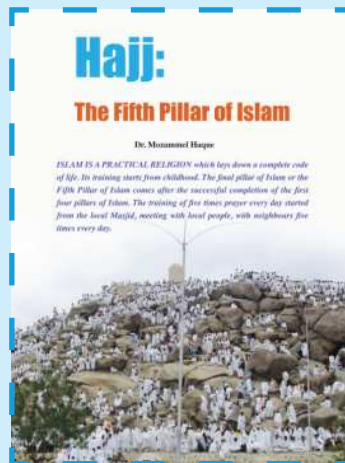
Attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem: Islamic View

26



Hajj: The Fifth Pillar of Islam

33



Al-Haramain Railways:

A Paradigm Shift on Serving the Pilgrims

Abdullah Al-Tiari.....49

Interfaith Iftar Evening at the ICC:

The Message of Love, Mercy and Solidarity

Dr. Mozammel Haque.....51

Indonesia to build International

Islamic University in 2018.....53

Biharis and their sacrifices for Pakistan

Dr. Ali Al-Ghamdi.....58

Book Review:

And The Mountains Echoed

Dr. Osman Abu Zeid.....60

Opinion:

Remember me when I am gone

Nadina Ronc.....64

Annual Subscription Rates

Saudi Arabia

Individual subscribers: SR. 36

Organizations: SR. 100

Other Countries

Individual subscribers: \$20

Organizations: \$26

Cheques payable to Muslim

World League may be sent to

Circulation & Subscription Deptt.

Muslim World League,

P.O. Box: 537

Makkah, Saudi Arabia

All articles and correspondence may please be addressed to Chief Editor, The Muslim World League Journal. While we reserve the right to edit, summarise or reject any contribution, no article, report or letter will be returned to the sender.

Views expressed in The Muslim World League Journal do not necessarily represent those of the Muslim World League. Articles published may, however, be reproduced with acknowledgement.



Welcome the 'Prince of Youth' HRH Muhammad bin Salman on his new position

Syed Abdulaziz

Appointing his Royal Highness Muhammad bin Salman as a Crown Prince confirms the stability of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and gives clear evidence that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz and the members of the Allegiance Council are keen to maintain the stability of the country on the basis of Islamic Shari'ah and for the benefit of people.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has remained a great example of security and stability since King Abdulaziz united this country and established the building blocks of this great entity, which every generation is benefitting from his achievement. Thus the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, throughout the history and the succession of King's continued to root the factors to elements of development.

During the era of King Salman bin Abdulaziz, (the King of firmness and determination) it can be witnessed that he encourages young leaders to contribute in the development process and cope in a world of rapid change. Under the guidance of King Salman bin Abdulaziz, HRH Crown Prince will work hard in increasing the role and the position of Saudi Arabia in all the Islamic and International issues.

However, the Saudi Vision 2030 adopted by the Crown Prince has contributed in making a quantum leap in the Kingdom which already marked changes in the national economy by starting to depend on the investment and by increasing Saudi revenues. Hence, this change will increase the efforts undertaking to benefit the Kingdom and its people.

Since his appointment, King Salman has worked on establishing a new generation of leaders from the royal family and the other citizens. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia today under the leadership of beloved King is full of qualified people that are truly capable of renewing the spirit as well as the body of the Kingdom in conformity of a better future.

Muhammad bin Salman was selected as a Crown Prince in addition to his continued position as a Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense comes as an apprecia-

tion of these great achievements. During the tenure of serving the Kingdom, he accomplished and proved that he is capable of undertaking the great challenges of this country. He is the one who set the road map of Saudi Vision 2030 to enhance the national economy and he is the one who is leading the Islamic Military Alliance to counterterrorism and the Saudi Ideological War Center to increase political stability and security in the region and worldwide.

In 2015, he announced this Alliance that consisted of 35 countries and by 2016, the number increased to 41 countries, representing more than two-third that is 72% of OIC member states. One of the first achievements of the alliance was launching the largest military maneuver in the Middle East that was organized in the King Khalid Military city in Hafr Al-Batin for the period of two weeks, where 20 Islamic and Arab countries participated along with the Peninsula Shield Force, making it the largest maneuver in the history of the region after the Second Gulf War. Additionally, the three summits held in Riyadh in the presence of the US President, one of the most important works of His Royal Highness Prince Muhammad bin Salman, were signed at the Gulf American Summit. Moreover, at the Arab Islamic American Summit, the Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology (ITITAL) headquartered in Riyadh was established and 34,000 soldiers were appointed to support operations in Iraq and Syria.

Prince Muhammad bin Salman has managed a number of political and military file with great vigor and accuracy, which makes him admired and attractive personality in Saudi Arabia and worldwide.



MWL SG in Japan: Saudi Arabia Calls for Peace & Coexistence Among Mankind

Muhammad Zakir Hossain

Saudi Arabia has always called for peace and coexistence between mankind, the Muslim World League's (MWL) Secretary-General said at the 30th International Summit on Religion in Kyoto, Japan. H.E . Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa stressed the responsibility of religious leaders to promote civilized and humanitarian concepts to spread the values of love and peace.



This came in Dr. Al-Issa's speech at the opening session on the titled "Islamic Religion" of "World Conference of Religions Summit for Peace" held recently in Mount Hiei in Kyoto of Japan.

Al-Issa stressed the importance of convening international meetings toward off a clash of civilizations.

"We, on behalf of the enlightened Muslim peoples, hope that all people will be pleased with the linguistic and religious meaning of Islam, which contains lofty principles and noble values calling for... equality among the

human race," he said.

Al-Issa added that the MWL not only bears the concerns of the Islamic world, but of humanity at large as Islam's message is global.

Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa has warned of some entities that have gone through failed experiments that tried to lay the foundations of human society on the basis of comprehensive and materialistic philosophies that deny religion and spiritual values, cut off contact with Allah the Almighty and is contrary to human instinct and nature.



He said that such entities have become free of human meanings and moral values motivated by utilitarian material in the worst forms, stressing the responsibility of religious leaders to promote the civilized and humanitarian concepts and take quick and serious action to spread the values of

love and peace around the world, noting that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia always calls for resilient peace building and common coexistence among mankind.

The summit was attended by its Honorary Chairman, Koji Morikawa and a number of representatives of the world's



religious institutions and sects as well as a number of politicians, thinkers and media professionals.

SG of MWL Holds Meetings with Japanese Officials

In the meantime Speaker of the House of Representatives of Japan Tadamori Oshima received the Secretary General of Muslim World League (MWL), Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa while he was on a visit to Japan.

During the meeting, the Speaker of the Japanese Parliament appreciated the League's interest in communicating with Japanese officials to discuss ways of cooperation that serve the common interests.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa has also met with the governor of Hiroshima Prefecture, Hidehiko Yuzaki who welcomed the visit of the MWL delegation to Japan, noting that it is welcomed by officials in the province to work together towards more fruitful cooperation between the two sides.





On the other hand, the Mayor of Hiroshima city Kazumi Matsui received the Secretary General of the Muslim World League, praising the fruitful efforts of the League.

During the meeting, Hiroshima Mayor handed over to Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa the latter's credentials as a member of the International Cities of Peace Association, which calls for the achievement of the "Cities of Peace Without Weapons of Mass Destruction" initiative.

He also confirmed that the membership of the MWL Secretary General in International Cities of Peace will contribute to the joining of more events and cities to this initiative.

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa also attended a somber ceremony marking the 72nd Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima, at the invitation of the Japanese gov-

ernment. The ceremony took place in the presence of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Foreign Minister Taro Kono, Hiroshima governor, Hiroshima mayor, several other officials and diplomats representing 80 countries.

Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui also received the MWL Secretary General. During the meeting, the mayor commended the fruitful efforts of the MWL and handed over to the MWL Secretary General his credentials as a member of the International Cities of Peace Association, which is concerned with the commitment to achieving the initiative of the "Cities of Peace Without Weapons of Mass Destruction".

The Hiroshima mayor also confirmed that the membership of the MWL Secretary General in the International Cities of Peace would contribute to the accession of more organizations and cities to this initiative.

Japanese Deputy Prime Minister meets the SG of MWL, Dr. Al-Issa



Deputy Prime Minister of Japan received the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, while he was visiting Japan.

During the meeting, the Japanese official welcomed the visit of the delegation of the Muslim World League to Japan, stressing the importance of supporting the active partnership between the Japanese government and the League, as representative of the Islamic peoples.

Such a partnership, he added, provide us with a new vision consistent with the objectives of the Japanese government to promote coexistence and integration between the Muslim community and the rest of Japanese society.

On the other hand, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League met with the Japanese Minister of Justice and Security Affairs responsible for the security and counter-extremism issues

in the Japanese government.

The two sides discussed aspects of cooperation between the relevant bodies and the Muslim World League, while the Japanese side also highlighted important features in Islamic culture and its diversity, coexistence and humanitarian action.

Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa also met with Japanese Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and discussed topics related to the Muslim community in Japan and cooperation in countering extremist ideas and messages threatening international peace.

The Mayor of Tokyo also received the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa and affirmed that the visit comes in response to the challenges facing the world today in the light of the growing trends of extremism and the targeting of social peace.



Dr. Al-Issa urges the Japanese Muslim community to enhance the cooperation

MWL Journal Desk Report

In the presence of Prince Huhashi Okimitsu, the brother of the Japanese Emperor as well as many other academic, intellectual and diplomatic personalities, His Excellency the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa opened the Japanese Love Academy of Love during his current visit to Tokyo. His Excellency toured the said Academy's facilities and reviewed its technical and educational apparatus and met its teaching and administrative staff.

On the other hand, H.E. the Secretary-General paid a visit to the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, which is specialized in the enhancement of international understanding, exchange and cooperation, as well as mankind wellbeing and international peace.

His Excellency the Secretary General Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa was warmly met by H. E. Mr. Yohei Sasagawa, President of Sasakawa Peace Foundation, who warmly welcomed H.E. Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa and indicated that the Foundation- based on its concern with coexistence

among values and cultures and enhancement of social security- looks forward to cooperating with the Muslim World League for desired investment in this field and for the enhancement of coexistence values between Japan and the Muslim countries.

From his side, H. E. the Secretary-General has wholeheartedly welcomed the joint cooperation which is anticipated to largely benefit world peace and notably enhance the values of cultural, civilizational, (positive) coexistence, cooperation and exchange. He also indicated that the renewed vision of the Muslim World League (MWL) focuses on the effective cooperation with all in order to achieve intellectual and social security as well as vanquish extremism that is active in the areas of vacuum, conflict, ignorance and poverty.

In the context of the visit, H. E. the Secretary General of the Muslim World League has received an invitation from the Japanese Olympic Committee 2020 to visit and meet with its members. During the meeting, the Muslim World League received a request from the Committee to cooperate with them in arranging the



Islamic presence to ensure its specialty and explore diversity of its culture.

The Chairman of the Committee Mr. Yukihiro Mora, has presented during the meeting, which was held at the headquarters of the Committee, an adequate explanation the preparations for the reception of the large sporting event. He noted that the Committee looks forward to cooperating with the Muslim World League, believing in the high degree of authenticity which it enjoys among the Muslim peoples.

On the last day of the visit, the Muslim World League organized a comprehensive meeting for the leaders of the Muslim community in Japan in the presence of His Excellency the Secretary General.

The said meeting thoroughly discussed the ways that help to unify the word of the Muslim community in Japan and support the formation of a higher council that serves a representative of the community that regulates the general policies of the Islamic centers and institutes as well as supports the coordination of attitudes among them. This Council also links these Islamic bodies with the official Japanese institutions, and shall at a clear transparent relation with these official circles via providing them with regular reports, reviews or any information needed, together with respecting the law of the country (Japan). Furthermore, this Council should be officially licensed by the Japanese Government and ought to be recognized by the said Government as the official representative of the local Muslim bodies); and that its members must be approved by the said Government, which shouldn't have any reservation against any one of them. Finally, the participants have agreed they should continue in discussing the draft project of the said Council in next meetings or sessions like the action of other communities.

H.E. the Secretary General has indicated during the meeting the Muslim World League, in its capacity

as international popular organization representing the Muslim peoples, finds itself committed to do anything that leads to everything that would unity of the word of the Muslims, securing of good education for them and support of the efforts of the leaders of Islamic action towards securing institutionalized performance.

His Excellency also commended the distinctive model offered by the Muslim community in Japan and the satisfaction of the government with its activities. This was augmented by the facts of the informal survey carried out during this visit by the Muslim World League regarding this model. He called upon those concerned to pay particular attention to the importance of maintaining and developing this great and highly important achievement, stressing the need to build relations, based on trust, cooperation and transparency, with individuals and public as well as private local institutions. The Islamic community is encouraged to invite all these non-Islamic entities to attend their respective occasions and ceremonies of Muslim communities and its institutions as well as make friends with them and support the needy groups, whether Islamic or non-Islamic. This is in fact the vanguard for attracting their heart to Islam and enhancing their confidence and friendship in Muslims. Furthermore, Islam is replete with encouragement for doing benevolent deeds and rendering it's supported to everyone and even to even animals that have livers and need to drink. When you provide them with water or anything else to sustain, you will be rewarded. Allah Almighty says(He “ *Allah does not prevent you from dealing with those who neither fought you in religion nor expelled you out from your homes as to be just with them and be benevolent to them . Allah does love those who are just.*” Qur'an 60: 8. This is the horizon of and humanity of Islamic law; and that the religion of Islam was sent down as mercy for mankind in guidance the worlds in guidance, care and provision of things. There are many relevant stories in this connection , which we don't want to mention due to shortness of time , and that changed even the course of nations, not only individuals, to the right path due to this Islamic wisdom, which many people unfortunately ignore or go stray in its interpretation .Finally, His Excellency emphasized that the Muslim World League, trust, cooperation and transparency “He pointed out that the Association is visiting Japan these days to enhance this civilizational vision that stems from the sagacious Islamic horizon as well as thoroughly discuss the ways required for supporting this vision.



Dr. Al-Issa meets with the Speaker of the Japanese National Diet (Bicameral Parliament)

MWL Journal Desk Report

In response to an official invitation by the Japanese Government, His Excellency the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa participate in the 72nd Anniversary of Hiroshima Atomic Bombing, amid huge and remarkable presence that comprised distinguished diplomats from USA and certain European countries as well as international prominent religious and ideological symbols.

The ceremony witnessed the delivery of a number of speeches that recalled the tragedy and urged the international community to work together towards a world that is free of weapons of mass destruction, as well as saluted the Japanese people, who managed to surpass the extremely painful tragedy and rise to its feet to occupy its high status at the list of the developed countries.

H.E. Musa Omar, the former Sudanese ambassador to Tokyo, the Director of the Islamic Center (It is a Tokyo-based independent religious institution), said, The international presence of the Muslim World

League (MWL-the League) came in the wake of its new vision, which strengthened its positioning at the global level. The League is the religious institution that represented the Islamic side in the celebration of this Anniversary amid the presence of prominent dignitaries as well as international bodies and institutions. This translated the distinction of the significant presence of the League in its historical and international dimension and the magnitude of confidence in this Islamic organization after the due strengthening of its position around the world, as it was able to fill up as representative for Muslims the Islamic seat in this Anniversary.

The Director of the Islamic Center Dr. Musa Omar said, The International, ideological & humanitarian appreciation for Muslim World League' New Vision has gained it due international presence, about which we are really glad. We sincerely wish for the League further presence and interaction, because this matter eventually serves Islam and Muslims. How we were in fact in need of such interaction and communica-



tion with all people. Furthermore, Islam is the religion of wisdom and farsightedness. When Muslims isolate themselves from others in such international occasions and anniversaries, they will be excluded and that people won't feel comfort about their institutions, particularly the most important one, rather their leader, I mean the Muslim World League. We have to commend this orientation of the Muslim World League, because it is very comfortable to us and gives a new hope that we think we will make great change, which – we in fact – felt its change. This is included in the current programme of the visit of H. E. the Secretary General of the Muslim World League to Japan, which is replete with popular and government audiences and meetings. This is augmented by the fact His Excellency met a number of senior Japanese officials and attended a highly significant conference” Dr. Musa Omar concluded by saying that His Excellency attended the activities of the what is the most significant is that the attendance of His Excellency for the 72nd Anniversary of Hiroshima Atomic Bombing, but the most important aspect of his Excellency's attendance is that it was done in response to an official Japanese invitation , that was directed for the first time to an Islamic organization , with the magnitude of the Muslim World League.

The ceremony was attended by a large number of Japanese leaders including the Speaker of the Japanese (National Diet-Bicameral Parliament/Legislature), H. E. Prime Minister Shinto Abe, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, Governor of Province of Hiroshima Hidehiko Yuzak, Mayor of Hiroshima city Kazumi MatsuI and Leader of KOMITO Party, an ally of the ruling party, in addition to representatives of eighty countries from around the world.

In the context of his visit to Hiroshima city, His Excellency the Secretary General met Mr. Tadamori Oshima, the Speaker of the Japanese (National Diet-Bicameral Parliament/Legislature), with whom he discussed a number of mutual concerns. Furthermore, the Speaker applauded the presence of the Muslim World League and its interest in communicating with the Japanese officials regarding the discussion of the ways of cooperation in a manner that serves the common interests.

His Excellency also met the Governor of the Province of Hiroshima Hidehiko Yuzak, who welcomed him and commended the League's participation with the Japanese at the Anniversary of Hiroshima Atomic Bombing, drawing the attention to the fact that the officials of the Province welcome the Muslim World League in order to work together with it for further cooperation.

On the other hand, the Mayor of Hiroshima City, Kazumi MatsuI, received the Secretary General of the Muslim World League, welcoming him and the accompanying delegation, noting that the attendance of the Muslim World League for this occasion is an influential message of peace, that is added to the credit of two sides and means a lot to the inhabitants of the Province.

During the reception, Mayor of Hiroshima city handed over to His Excellency Sheikh Alissa his credentials papers as a member of the World Association for Peace Cities, an act that means the pledge to achieve the Initiative titled “Peace Cities Without Weapons of Mass Destruction”. Finally , the Mayor stressed his confidence that the membership of Secretary General of the Muslim World League will contribute towards attracting further cities and entities to join the Initiative.

Rabita Roundup



MWL condemns the closure of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Israeli occupation authorities

Holy Makkah

The Muslim World League and its affiliate the World Body of Muslim Scholars condemn the Israeli occupation authorities for barring the Muslims from praying in Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The statement issued in this vein said that such measure violates the holiness of Al-Aqsa Mosque, hurts the general feelings

of Muslims and targets religious freedom in its very legitimate right. The statement said such action would hinder peace efforts and endeavors. It calls on all relevant international bodies, organizations and committees to stand firmly to this risky undertaking. And that all excuses are beyond the appreciation of every neutral and peace advocate vis-a vis this risky action.



The Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa received at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyib, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar and the Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders (MCE) who was visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia accompanied by Dr. Muhammad Mahrasawi, the Director of Al-Azhar University.



The MWL's Secretary General receives at his residence in Makkah HE Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia.



The Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa receives the British Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Simon Paul Collis. During the meeting, they discussed a number of issues of common interest.



H.E. the MWL's S.G. receives Sheikh Farid Uddin Massoud, President of the Scholars Association in Bangladesh.



The Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa met with the Sudanese Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Abdulbasit Badawi Al-Sanussi. During the meeting, they discussed issues of mutual interest.



His Excellency the MWL's SG received Mr. Gulam Moshi the Bangladeshi Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During the meeting they discussed issues of common interest.



The Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa receives Secretary General of the World Council of Religious Leaders Bawa Jain. During the meeting, they discussed issues of common interest.



The MWL conducted a ceremony honoring 32 Hafizs of its institute in Kyrgyzstan, & 68 Qur'an competition winners before the Deputy Mufti.

MWL delivers health insurance to 15,000 Sudanese orphans



The Muslim World League (MWL) recently delivered health insurance cards to 15,000 Sudanese orphans and their families at a cost of about SR2,365,000 (\$630,557).

The delivery of the health insurance cards was in partnership with the Sudanese Health Insurance Fund (SHIF), Okaz newspaper reported.

The MWL is the parent organization of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), with Hassan Shaabar as Secretary-General.

Shabar said that his organization has paid great attention to orphans, with the organization currently sponsoring more than 78,000 orphans in 35 countries, supervised

by its offices around the world.

For his part, Hamid Rifai, Director of the IIRO in Sudan, said that the health insurance program included orphans and their families in the states of Khartoum, North Kordofan, South Darfur, Kassala, Jazira, Gedaref, White Nile, Red Sea, Nile River, and Sennar, among others.

Sudanese Minister of Social Security and Development Mashaaf Al-Dulab stressed that the IIRO is the first organization to guarantee health insurance for orphans in partnership with the SHIF. He also called on all charitable organizations and institutions to work in this field to help improve health services, especially among orphans.



Final communiqué of OIC foreign ministers' meeting on Jerusalem & Al-Aqsa Mosque

The Foreign Ministers of the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) reaffirmed the centrality of the Palestinian cause and the religious and spiritual character of Jerusalem for the entire Muslim Nation and its determination to defend it from all threats caused by the Israeli occupation authorities.

This was stated in the final communiqué of the Open-Ended Extraordinary Meeting of the OIC Executive Committee at the Level of Foreign Ministers on Jerusalem and the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, held in Istanbul, Turkey, on Tuesday 1st August 2017. The following is the full text of the meeting's final communiqué.

Proceeding from the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and referring to the resolutions of the OIC on the cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif (East Jerusalem), the Committee, Emphasizes the exemplary religious tolerance established throughout centuries under Islamic rule in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, Reiterates the fact that Al-Haram Al-Sharif, being the first Qibla of Islam and one of its three most sacred Masjids, is a sanctuary that belongs to Islam, Welcomes UNESCO World Heritage Committee resolution on the Old City and City Walls of Al-Quds, Welcomes the selection of Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the OIC Youth Capital for 2018.

Reaffirms the centrality of the Cause of Palestine and the religious and spiritual character of the City of Al-Quds Al Sharif for the entire Muslim Nation and its determination to defend it from all threats caused by the colonial Israeli occupation; emphasizes the Arab and Islamic character of Al-Quds Al-Sharif (East Jerusalem), capital of the State of Palestine; and affirms its rejection of any attempts susceptible to prejudice the Palestinian right to full sovereignty over the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif (East Jerusalem) as the Capital of the State of Palestine;

Strongly condemns Israel's recent provocative actions, including the closure of Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound (Al-Haram Al-Sharif) and the banning of Palestinian Muslims and Christians from their natural right to worship in the holy sites in Al-Quds Al Sharif, through employing collective punishment measures and the use of lethal and excessive force against peaceful Palestinian worshipers, which led to the killing and injuring of many Palestinians in Al-Quds Al-Sharif;

Also condemns the targeting of journalists and medical staff, by Israeli occupation forces, especially in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, as well as the brutal and heavy-handed measures against worshipers who entered Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and considers these assaults and incitement against these protected persons to be part of the regime of oppression the colonial occupation

employs to maintain its occupation; urges the international community to hold Israel accountable for its crimes against the Palestinian people;

Unequivocally condemns recent premeditated Israeli attempts to alter the historic status quo in Al Quds Al-Sharif, including the installation of metal detectors and cameras in and around Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and reiterates in this regard rejection of actions taken by occupying forces, including removing trees and digging in Bab Al-Asbat (Lions Gate); and warns that any similar steps in the future would be unacceptable and illegal and shall be confronted by the Organization;

Also unequivocally rejects the illegal and arbitrary colonial practices and measures in the City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, including building illegal settlements, denying Muslim and Christian Palestinians access to holy places, prejudicing the sanctity and status of holy sites, including illegal digs and excavations under the Old City, including Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound (Al-Haram Al-Sharif), which threaten the structural integrity of homes and holy sites in the sacred City and cause the forcible displacement of its Palestinian inhabitants;

Rejects and condemns attempts by Israel to legislate altering the demographic composition in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, particularly a proposed law to change the boundaries of Al-Quds Sharif by removing large Palestinian neighborhood and replacing them with illegal Israeli settlements, as well as a proposed law making ending the occupation of Al-Quds Al-Sharif practically impossible; and reiterates in this regard that any measure and/or legislation Israel adopts in relation to Al-Quds Al-Sharif are illegal, null and void under international law and several relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions;

Salutes the steadfastness and strength of Palestinian people in Jerusalem, who confronted the illegal Israeli measures with mass peaceful protests and prayers; reiterates its absolute support and admiration to the strength and perseverance of the Palestinian people, who are protecting Al-Quds Al-Sharif on behalf of the Nation;

Salutes also, in this regard, the support and efforts exerted by the Palestinian people under the leadership of his Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas in the face of the recent illegal Israeli measures;

Thanks in this context, the Republic of Turkey, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia and Kingdom of Morocco for their principled and longstanding and proactive support; also appreciates and commends the efforts being made by other leaders of Member States in supporting the Palestinian cause and in countering the illegal actions by Israel, the occupying power, in Al-Quds Al-Sharif;

Recognizes and commends the efforts of His Majesty King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, the Custodian of Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem, to protect Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif and to end all unilateral and unlawful Israeli measures that violate international law and purport to alter the historical and legal status quo in the Holy Sites.

Welcomes the statement made on 22 July 2017 by the President of Turkey, H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the Chair of the Islamic Summit and profoundly appreciates his invaluable efforts for the removal of the restrictions imposed on Al Aqsa Mosque;

Appreciates the efforts of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for the contacts with world leaders and for making tireless endeavors to ensure that Al-Aqsa Mosque is not closed to Muslims, that they are not prevented from offering their prayers in the Mosque and for the removal of the restrictions imposed on entering the Mosque, which thankfully succeeded in a manner that restored normalcy and tranquility for worshipers, thereby preserving their dignity and security;

Commends the efforts of the His Majesty King Muhammad VI, King of the Kingdom of Morocco, in his capacity as Chairman of Al-Quds Committee, particularly through the letter he addressed to the United Nations Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres on the systematic aggression in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque and the need to return to the status quo.

Reiterates that these illegal and provocative Israeli measures and all other restrictions imposed by Israel, the occupying power, violate the legal and historical status quo and international law, constitute a blatant aggression against holy sites in Al Quds Al Sharif and the Palestinian people's national and natural rights and reflect the occupying Power's intent to divide Al-Haram Al-Sharif temporally and spatially;

Expresses grave concern over the persistent public statements by senior members of the Israeli government that incite religious sensitivities, feed tension, and incite violence, and the possible catastrophic ef-

fects of these irresponsible policies;

Determines that the rapidly deteriorating situation on the ground was provoked and is sustained by calculated and premeditated actions by the occupying Power, which implemented additional illegal policies and practices that are part of its colonial occupation of the State of Palestine, which aim to make this occupation irreversible, while ensuring the violent subjugation of the Palestinian people with impunity;

Condemns all illegal policies and practices and colonial activities by Israel, the occupying Power, particularly settlement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem as well as the illegal and inhuman blockade on Gaza, and regrets that the current Israeli government is neither committed to peace nor interested in the two-state solution, making its policies and actions the most dangerous threat to the prospects of peace, which must be confronted;

Supports the steps announced by H. E. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine in response to this premeditated and calculated Israeli escalation, including the suspension of all official contacts with the Israeli government until it reverses its illegal steps and acts responsibly;

Welcomes the resolution adopted by the extraordinary meeting of the Ministerial Council of the League of Arab States, which was held on the 27th of July, upon the request of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Chair of the League of Arab States Summit;

Urges the International Community to undertake necessary efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, in accordance with the internationally recognized basis of the two-state solution, including international law, the relevant United Nation resolutions and the Arab Peace initiative achieving without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967;

Calls on member states to uphold their responsibilities towards the Cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif, including by:

1. Working with the international community at all levels, including the UN Security Council, in order to ensure protection for the Palestinian people, especially in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and put an end to all illegal practices of the occupation, which must be made to scrupulously abide by its obligations under international law;
2. Supporting the request of H.E. Mahmoud Abbas,

the President of Palestine to the UN Secretary General on 2014 to put Palestine under the international protection system, in particular the area of Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, while respecting its historical and legal status quo;

3. Extending all possible forms of support that would help hold Israel accountable for its crimes and protect the Palestinian people, their territory and property;
4. Opposing and responding to attempts by some states to legislate recognition and/or support of Israel's illegal occupation of Al-Quds Al-Sharif;
5. Providing urgent assistance to the Palestinian people in order to alleviate their suffering and support their steadfastness;
6. Taking practical and effective measures to ensure a complete ban of all settlement products from their markets as well as measures to ensure that companies profiteering from the illegal occupation of Palestine are denied access to OIC Member States;
7. Referring to Jakarta Declaration adopted at the 2016 OIC Extraordinary Summit on Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and in this regard requesting the OIC Secretariat to produce an updated and credible list of products of illegal Israeli settlements as a common reference for the OIC Member States in implementing relevant Resolutions of the Council of Foreign Ministers;
8. Responding to cynical and illegitimate attempts to adopt legislation that criminalize freedom of expression in relation to opposing and confronting the illegal Israeli occupation.
9. Calling on relevant UN Organs including the United Nations Human Rights Council to address the recent crisis in Al-Aqsa Compound;

Calls on the international community to uphold their individual and collective legal responsibilities, including by:

1. Adopting a clear and firm position, in conformity with international law and United Nations resolutions, rejecting the illegal and irresponsible Israeli measures to alter the historical and legal status quo in occupied East Jerusalem as well as the demographic and cultural composition of the city through its illegal colonial settlement construction;
2. Desisting from any activities or statements that

might support or encourage Israel, the occupying power, to continue its violations and pursue its illegal colonization and annexation of Al-Quds Al-Sharif (East Jerusalem), including any such encouragement through the transfer of their diplomatic missions to the city or the holding of any official meetings there;

3. Assuming their standing legal and moral obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, to confront and stop the belligerent Israeli violations of international law;
4. Taking practical and effective measures to ensure that companies and persons contributing to the continuation of the settlement regime on the territory of the State of Palestine are held accountable for their actions in accordance with international law.
5. Taking all necessary steps, at the state and international levels, to hold Israel accountable for its gross violations against Palestinian rights and lives as well as international law, including international humanitarian law; Decides to stay seized of the matter.

The meeting condemned in the strongest terms the Houthi and Saleh militias and those who support and provide them with arms, ammunition and missiles to target Makkah Al-Mukarramah for the second time on 27 July 2017 as an aggression against the sacredness of holy places in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a provocation of the sensibilities of Muslims all over the world, and an evidence of their rejection to abide by the will and decisions of the international community. This heinous aggression attempt against Makkah, once again, after the first attempt in October last year proves without doubt the insistence of the Houthi and Saleh militias on targeting holy sites in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in implementation of conspiratorial plans against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its citizens and residents and a futile attempt to jeopardize the Hajj season. The meeting considers it an aggression against all Muslims everywhere in the world, in view of the holiness of the sacred city being the cradle of revelation and the Qibla of Muslims.

Expresses gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Turkey for hosting the open-ended Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee of the OIC.

Attack On Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem: Islamic View

Dr. Busari, K.K

The recent attack on Masjid 'Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, which led to its closure for the first time since 1969, calls for a serious discourse among Muslim Nation throughout the World. The Israeli police entered the Mosque and ordered people inside to leave. The violence was as a result of the Israeli Defence Minister, Moshe Yaalon's verdict which outlawed two Muslim groups that confront Jewish visitors to the compound. The attack came with tensions which led to three Arab Israelis open fire at Israeli police near the site, killing two of them, before fleeing into the sacred compound for escape but they were eventually shot dead by security forces. The clash took place just hours before the start of the Jewish New Year. The latest violence appears to

have been sparked over access to the site, sacred to both faiths. Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, condemned what he called an Israeli police attack at the site, while Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu said authorities must prevent rioting there. Rioters barricaded themselves inside the Mosque and threw fireworks but police said that protesters may wanted to disrupt visits for Jewish New Year. Hence, the masked Palestinians clashed with Israeli police at 'Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem before the start of the Jewish New Year. Muslim Nation should wake up from slumber to pray fervently for the defence of 'Al-Aqsa Mosques because it is our heritage.



Al-Aqsa Mosque: Its etymology and Brief History

Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa translates from Arabic into English as “the farthest mosque”. The name refers to a chapter of the Qur’an called “The Night Journey” in which it is said that Muhammad traveled from Makkah to “the farthest mosque”, and then up to Heaven on a heavenly creature called Al-Buraq Al-Sharif. Al-Aqsa Mosque as a whole is confused with a particular building within it, also known as Al-Jami’ Al-Aqsa or Al-Qibli or Masjid Al-Jumah or Al-Mughata; these names refer to the southern building with the silver lead dome.

For centuries, Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa referred not only to the mosque, but to the entire sacred sanctuary, while Al-Jami’ Al-Aqsa referred to the specific site of the mosque. This changed during the period of Ottoman rule (c. early 16th century to 1917) when the sanctuary complex came to be known as Al-Haram Al-Sharif.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque is located on the Temple Mount, referred to by Muslims today as the “Haram Al-Sharif” (“The Noble Sanctuary”), an enclosure expanded by King Herod the Great beginning in 20 BCE. The mosque resides on an artificial platform that is supported by arches constructed by Herod’s engineers to overcome the difficult topographic conditions resulting from the southward expansion of the enclosure into the Tyropoeon and Kidron valleys. At the time of the Second Temple, the present site of the mosque was occupied by the Royal Stoa, a basilica running the southern wall of the enclosure. The Royal Stoa was destroyed along with the Temple during the sacking of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE.

In 2012, it was reported that Robert Hamilton, an archaeologist who worked on the Temple Mount after the 1927 Jericho earthquake, had discovered remains under Al-Aqsa mosque that he did not publish in his book on the excavations. These included a mosaic like those used in Byzantine churches, and a Jewish mikveh from the Second Temple period.

Religious Significance of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Islam

In Islam, the term “Al-Aqsa Mosque” refers to the entire Noble Sanctuary. The mosque is believed to be the second house of prayer constructed after the Masjid Al-Haram in Makkah. Post-Rashidun-era Islamic scholars traditionally identified the mosque as the site referred to in the surat (Qur’anic chapter) Al-Isra (“the Night Journey”). This specific verse in the Qur’an cemented the significant religious importance of Al-Aqsa in Is-

lam. The specific passage reads “*Praise be to Him who made His servant journey in the night from the sacred sanctuary to the remotest sanctuary.*”

Isra and Mi’raj

According to the Qur’an and Islamic traditions, Al-Aqsa Mosque is the place from which Muhammad (peace be upon him) went on a night journey (Al-Isra) during which he rode on Buraq, who took him from Makkah to al-Aqsa. Muhammad (peace be upon him) tethered Buraq to the Western Wall and prayed at Al-Aqsa Mosque and after he finished his prayers, the angel Jibril (Gabriel) traveled with him to heaven, where he met several other prophets and led them in prayer.

First Qibla

The historical significance of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Islam is further emphasized by the fact that Muslims turned towards Al-Aqsa when they prayed for a period of sixteen or seventeen months after migration to Madinah in 624; it thus became the qibla (“direction”) that Muslims faced for prayer. Muhammad (peace be upon him) later prayed towards the Ka’aba in Makkah after receiving a revelation during a prayer session in the Masjid Al-Qiblatayn. The qibla was relocated to the Ka’aba where Muslims have been directed to pray ever since.

The altering of the qibla was precisely the reason the Rashidun caliph Umar, despite identifying the mosque which Muhammad (peace be upon him) used to ascend to Heaven upon his arrival at the Noble Sanctuary in 638, neither prayed facing it nor built any structure upon it. This was because the significance of that particular spot on the Noble Sanctuary was superseded in Islamic jurisprudence by the Ka’aba in Makkah after the change of the qibla towards that site.

According to early Qur’anic interpreters and what is generally accepted as Islamic tradition, in 638 CE Omar, upon entering a conquered Jerusalem, consulted with Ka’ab Al-Ahbar—a Jewish convert to Islam who came with him from Madinah as to where the best spot would be to build a mosque. Al-Ahbar suggested to him that it should be behind the Rock “... so that all of Jerusalem would be before you.” Omar replied, “You correspond to Judaism!” Immediately after this conversation, Umar began to clean up the site which was filled with trash and debris—with his cloak, and other Muslim followers imitated him until the site was clean. Omar then prayed at the spot where it was believed that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had prayed be-



fore his night journey, reciting the Qur'anic surat Sad. Thus, according to this tradition, Omar thereby reconsecrated the site as a mosque.

Because of the holiness of Noble Sanctuary itself-being a place where David and Solomon had prayed Omar constructed a small prayer house in the southern corner of its platform, taking care to avoid allowing the Rock to come between the mosque and the direction of Ka'aba so that Muslims would face only Mecca when they prayed.

Prophetic Traditions on The Importance of Masjid 'Al-Aqsa

1, Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he asked the Prophet (peace be upon him), "O Messenger of Allah, which Masjid was built first on earth"? The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) replied, "The Sacred Masjid of Makkah". Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) again asked, "Which was next"? The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Masjid Al-Aqsa". Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) further asked, "How long was the period between the building of the two Masjids"? The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Forty years". Apart from these, offer your prayer anywhere when it is time to pray, although excellence is in praying in these Masjids". (Bukhari)

The Importance of Visiting Masjid Al-Aqsa

2, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "You should not undertake a special journey to visit any place other than the following three Masjids with the expectations of getting greater reward: the Sacred Masjid of Makkah (Ka'bah), this Masjid of mine (the Prophet's Masjid in Madinah), and Masjid Al-Aqsa (of Jerusalem)". In another narration the words are, "For three Masjids a special journey may be undertaken: The Sacred Masjid (Ka'bah), my Masjid and Masjid of Jerusalem (Al-Aqsa). (Muslim, Bukhari, Abu Dawud)

Greater Virtue of praying in Masjid Al-Aqsa

3, Abu Darda (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "A prayer in Makkah (Ka'bah) is worth 100,000 times (reward), a prayer in my Masjid (Madinah) is worth 1,000 times and a prayer in Al-Aqsa Sanctuary is worth 500 times more reward than anywhere else". (Tabarani, Bayhaqi, Suyuti)

4, Anas Ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The prayer of a person in his house is a single prayer; his prayer in the Masjid of his people has the reward of 27 prayers; his prayer in the Masjid in which the Friday prayer is observed has the reward of 500; his prayer in Masjid Al-Aqsa (i.e. Al-Aqsa Sanctuary) has a reward of 5,000 prayers; his prayer in my Masjid (the Prophet's Masjid in Madinah) has a

reward of 50,000 prayers, and the prayer in the Sacred Masjid (Ka'bah) has the reward of 100,000 prayers". (Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah)

The Importance of Donating to Masjid Al-Aqsa

5, Abdullah Ibn Omar (may Allah be pleased with him) relates, I asked the Prophet (peace be upon him), "Apostle of Allah, tell us the legal injunction about (visiting) Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem)." The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Go and pray there. If you cannot visit it and pray there, then send some oil to be used in the lamps". (Bukhari)

6, Maymunah Bint Sa'd (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that she asked the Prophet (peace be upon him), "O Messenger of Allah, inform us about Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem)". He said, "Visit it for prayer ". She further asked, "If one of us cannot visit it, what should we do"? He said, "If you cannot go for prayer then send some oil to be used for its lamps, will be as if he has prayed in it". (Ahmad, Ibn Majah, Abu Dawud, Tabarani)

The Virtues of Wearing Ihram From Masjid Al-Aqsa

7, Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "If anyone puts on Ihram for Hajj or Umrah from Masjid Al-Aqsa and then proceeds to the Sacred Masjid (Ka'bah), their past and future sins will be forgiven, or they will be entered into Paradise". (Abu Dawud)

The Blessed Land of Masjid Al-Aqsa

8, Zaid Ibn Thabit (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "How blessed is Al-Sham"! The Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) asked, "Why is that"? The Messenger (peace be upon him) replied, "I see the Angels of Allah spreading their wings over Al-Sham". Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with her) added, "And the Prophets lived therein. There is not a single inch in Al-Quds (Jerusalem) where a Prophet has not prayed or an Angel not stood". (Tirmidhi, Ahmad)

9, The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Allah has blessed what lies between Al-'Arish (in Egypt) and the Euphrates and has made Palestine particularly Holy". (Kanz Al-Umal)

Masjid Al-Aqsa – The First Qiblah (direction of prayer)

10, Abdullah Ibn Omar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates, "We prayed along with the Prophet

(peace be upon him) facing Al-Quds (Jerusalem) for 16 or 17 months. Then Allah ordered him saw) to turn his face towards the Ka'bah (in Makkah). (Bukhari)

11, Al-Bara (may Allah be pleased with him) added, "Before we changed our direction towards the Ka'bah in prayer, some Muslims had died or had been killed and we did not know what to say about them (regarding their prayers). Allah then revealed: And Allah would never make your faith (prayers) to be lost (i.e. the prayers of those Muslims facing Bayt Al-Maqdis were valid) {2:143} (Bukhari)

Masjid Al-Aqsa – The Station of Al-Isra and Al-Miraj

12, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "On the night journey Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) was taken on a night journey (Al-Isra and Al-Miraj), two cups, one containing wine and the other containing milk were presented to him (peace be upon him) at Al-Quds (Jerusalem). He looked at them and took the cup of milk. Angel Gabriel said, "Praise be to Allah, who guided you to Al-Fitrah (the right path); if you had taken (the cup of) wine, your Nation would have gone astray". (Bukhari)

13, Regarding the statement of Allah in the Holy Qur'an, "*And We granted the vision (ascension to the Heavens) which we made you see (as an actual eye witness) was only made as a trial for the people*". (17:60) Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "The sights which Allah's Apostle was shown on the Night journey where he was taken to Bayt Al-Maqdis (i.e. Jerusalem) were actual sights, (not dreams). And the Cursed tree (mentioned) in the Qur'an is the tree of Zaqqum. (Bukhari)

14, Jabir Ibn Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "When the people of Quraysh did not believe me (i.e. the story of his Miraculous Night Journey), I stood up in Al-Hijr and Allah displayed Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) in front of me, and I began describing it to them while I was looking at it". (Bukhari)

15, Abdullah Ibn Hawwala (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "I saw on the night of Al-Isra and Al-Miraj (the Night Journey) a white column resembling a pearl which the Angels were carrying . I asked them, "What are you carrying"? They said, "The Column of the Book, we have been ordered to place it in Al-Sham. Later in my sleep, I saw the Column of the Book being



taken away from under my headrest. I began to fear lest Allah the Almighty had abandoned the people of the earth. My eyes followed the Column of the Book. It was a brilliant light in front of me. Then I saw it was placed in Al-Sham. (Tabarani)

16, Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “I was brought the Buraq, a tall white beast, bigger than a donkey, smaller than a mule. It could place his hooves at the farthest boundary of his gaze. I mounted it until I arrived at Bayt Al-Maqdis. I tied it at the ring where the Prophets tied it before (i.e. Buraq Wall or the Western Wall). I entered Masjid Al-Aqsa Sanctuary and prayed 2 rak’ah there...” (Muslim)

Masjid Al-Aqsa – The Place for Major Events

17, Mujamma Ibn Al-Harith (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Ibn Maryam (Jesus) will kill Al-Dajjal (the Anti-Christ) at the door of Ludd (a town in Palestine)”. (Ahmad, Tirmidhi)

18, The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said regarding Al-Dajjal: “He will stay in the land forty days; he will enter every place on earth except the Ka’bah, the Prophet’s Masjid, Al-Aqsa Sanctuary and Mount Sinai”. (Ahmad)

19, Nahik Ibn Suraym Al-Sakuni (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “You will fight the pagans until the remnant of you fights on the river of Jordan, you to the east of it (present day Jordan) and they to the west of it (occupied Palestine)”. (Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani)

20, Maymunah Bint Sa’d (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that she asked the Prophet (peace

be upon him), “O Messenger of Allah, give us a pronouncement about Al-Quds (Jerusalem)”. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, “It is the land where they will be raised (Al-Hashr) and gathered (Al-Mahshar)”. (Ahmad, Tabarani)

21, Mua’th Ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “The Flourishing state of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) (under the non-Muslims) will be taken when Yathrib is in ruins, the ruined state of Yathrib will be when the Great War comes, the outbreak of the Great War will be at the conquest of Constantinople and the conquest of Constantinople when Al-Dajjal (Anti-Christ) comes forth”. He (the Prophet) struck his thigh with his hand and said, “This is as true as you are here or as you are sitting (meaning Mua’th Ibn Jabal). (Abu Dawud)

22, Awf Ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “The rest of the world will be destroyed forty years before Al-Sham is”. (Ibn Asakir)

23, The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said regarding the inhabitants of the blessed land, “They and their wives, children and slaves (male and female) are in ribat (guardians, literally a fort) in the cause of Allah”. (Tabarani)

24, Al-Nawwas Ibn Saman Alkalbi (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “If Al-Dajjal comes forth while I am amongst you then I shall dispute with him on your behalf, but if he comes after I am not with you, a man must dispute on his own behalf, and Allah will take to protecting every Muslim. Those of you who live up to his time should recite over him the opening verses of Surah Kahf, for they are your protection from his

trial”. We asked, “How long will he remain on earth”? He (peace be upon him) replied, “Forty days, one like a year (1 day will be equivalent to 1 year), one like a month, one like a week and the rest of his days like yours”? We asked, “Will one day’s prayer suffice us in the day which will be like a year”? He replied, “No, you must estimate of its extent. Then Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Virgin Mary) will descend at the white minaret to the east of Damascus. He will then catch Al-Dajjal up at the gates of Ludd and kill him”. (Abu Dawud)

Masjid Al-Aqsa – The place of Mujahideen

25, Umamah Al-Bahili (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “A group of my Ummah will remain on truth, they will vanquish their enemy and those who disagree with them will not be able to harm them until Allah commands”. “Where are these people”? The Companions (may Allah be pleased with him) asked. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “In and around Al-Quds (Jerusalem)”. (Ahmad)

26, Muawiyah Ibn Sufyan (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “There is a group among my followers who will continue to be openly on the truth. No one who opposes them can harm them until the coming of the Hour”. The Companions (may Allah be pleased with him) asked, “Where will they be”? The Messenger of Allah said, “They will be in and around Bayt Al-Maqdis (i.e. Jerusalem)”. (Ahmad)

27, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “A group of my Nation will not cease to fight at the gates of Damascus and at the gates of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) and its surroundings. The betrayal or desertion of whoever deserts them will not harm them in the least. They will remain victorious, standing for the truth, until the Final Hour rises”. (Tabarani)

Masjid Al-Aqsa – The Best Place of Residence

28, Abdullah Ibn Omar (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “There will be migration upon migration. The best of the inhabitants of earth will reside where Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) migrated (Jerusalem)”. (Abu Dawud)

Masjid Al-Aqsa – The Desired Site of Musa (Moses)

29, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “The Angel of death was sent to Musa. When he came to Musa, Musa punched him on the eye. The Angel re-

turned to Allah and said, “You sent me to a servant who does not want to die”. Allah ordered the Angel, ‘Return to him and tell him to put his hand on the back of an ox and for every hair that will come under it, he will be granted one year of life’. Musa asked, “O Lord! What will happen after that”? Allah replied, ‘Then death’. Musa decided, let it be now’. Musa then requested Allah to let him die close to the Sacred Land (near Masjid Al-Aqsa) so much so that he would be at a distance of a stone’s throw from it”. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) added, the Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, “If I were there, I would show you his grave below the red sand hill on the side of the road”. (Bukhari)

Liberation of Masjid Al-Aqsa Prophesied

30, Awf Ibn Malik relates, “I went to the Prophet (peace be upon him) during the battle of Tabuk while he was sitting in a leather tent. He said, ‘Awf, Count six signs, between now and the approach of the Hour (Qiyamah/Doomsday): my death, the conquest of Al-Quds (Jerusalem); a plague that will afflict you (and kill you in great numbers) as the plague that afflicts sheep; the increase of wealth to such an extent that even if one is given 100 hundred Dinars (Arabian currency), he will not be satisfied; then an affliction which no Arab house will escape; and then a truce between you and Banu Asfar (i.e. Byzantines) who will betray you and attack you under eighty flags. Under each flag will be twelve thousand soldiers”. (Bukhari)

31, Shadad Ibn Aws (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “I-Sham will be conquered and Al-Quds (Jerusalem) will be conquered and you or your sons will be Imams there, if Allah will”. (Tabarani)

The Preference of Masjid Al-Aqsa

32, Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) advised Abdullah Ibn Hawwala (may Allah be pleased with him) to join the army in al-Sham, over any other. However, the Prophet (peace be upon him), noticing Ibn Hawwala’s indifference said, “Do you know what Allah says about Al-Sham? Allah said, ‘Al-Sham you are the quintessence of My lands (safwati min biladi) and I shall inhabit you with the chosen ones among My servants’”. (Tabarani)

33, Abdullah Ibn Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) repeated the following statement three times: “When the dissension takes place belief shall be in Al-Sham”. One



version of hadith states, “safety will be in Al-Sham”. (Tabarani)

34, Abdullah Ibn Hawwala reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “At some point you will be (split into) standing armies: one army in Al-Sham, on in Yemen and one in Iraq”. Abdullah Ibn Hawwala asked he Prophet (peace be upon him), “Choose for me, Messenger of Allah in case I live to see that day”. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, “You must go to Al-Sham, for it is the chosen land of Allah in all His earth. He protects, by sending them there, the chosen ones among His servants. If you do not wish to go there, then go to Yemen. Allah has given me guarantee concerning Al-Sham and its people. (Abu Dawud, Ahmad)

Masjid Al-Aqsa – The Site of the Future Caliphate

35, Abdullah Ibn Hawwala Al-Azdi (may Allah be pleased with him) reported, the Prophet (peace be upon him) put his hand on my head and said, “Ibn Hawwala if you see that the Caliphate has taken abode in the Holy Land then the earthquakes and tribulations and great events are at hand. The last Hour on that day will be closer to people than my hand is to your head”. (Ahmad, Abu Dawud)

36, Yunus Ibn Maysarah (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “This matter (the Caliphate) will be after me in Madinah, then Al-Sham, then Al-Jazira, then Iraq, then in Madinah, then in Al-Quds (Jerusalem). If it is in Al-

Quds, its home country is there, and if any people expel it, it will not return there forever”. (Ibn Asakir)

37, Al-Numan Ibn Bashir (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Prophethood will last with you for as long as Allah wants it. Then Allah will end it if He wishes to end it. Then there will be the Rightly Guided Caliphs according to the method of Prophethood and things will be as Allah wishes them. Then Allah will end it if He wishes it. Then there will be a voracious kingdom and things will be as Allah wishes them. Then Allah will end it if He wishes. Then there will be Khilafah (Caliphate) according to the method of Prophethood. Thereafter the Prophet (peace be upon him) fell silent”. (Ahmad)

38, Abdulrahman Ibn Abi Omayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Prophet (saw) said, “There will be an oath of allegiance according to guidance in Al-Quds (Jerusalem)”. (Bukhari, Muslim) Masjid Al-Aqsa – The Place Where Allah’s Revelation Descended

Conclusion

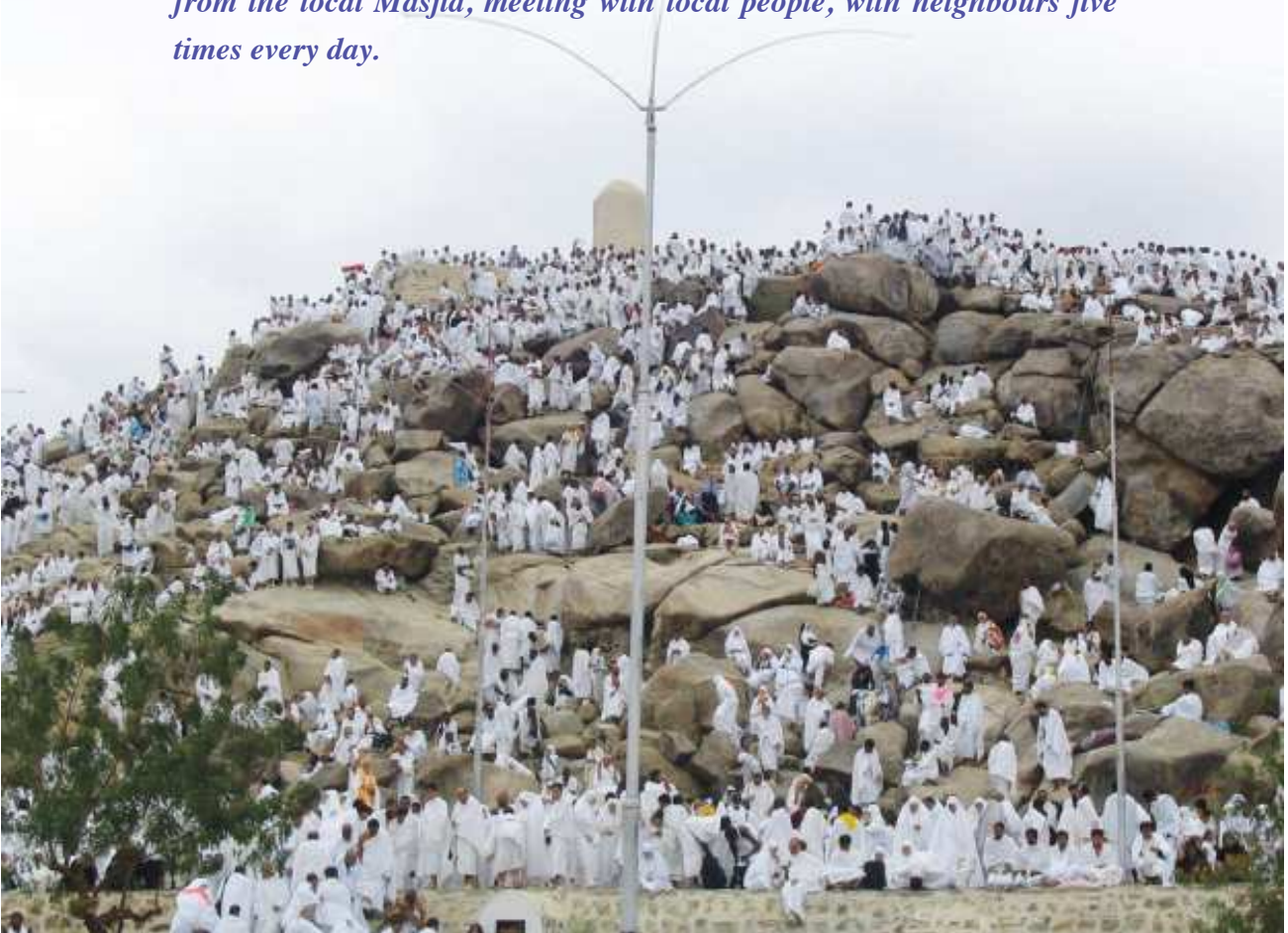
It is for the aforementioned reasons and many more that we need to understand our responsibilities regarding safeguarding Masjid al-Aqsah which is in great danger of being demolished by extremist Jews. Masjid Al-Aqsah.

Hajj:

The Fifth Pillar of Islam

Dr. Mozammel Haque

ISLAM IS A PRACTICAL RELIGION which lays down a complete code of life. Its training starts from childhood. The final pillar of Islam or the Fifth Pillar of Islam comes after the successful completion of the first four pillars of Islam. The training of five times prayer every day started from the local Masjid, meeting with local people, with neighbours five times every day.



But the ultimate objective or the summum bonum of Islam is establishing peace and harmony in the whole universe, and for that reason, it makes various provisions for creating peace and harmony in the lives of mankind as well as in the universe. Peace and harmony can be achieved only when there is solidarity and universal brotherhood among human beings. Islam preaches this concept and puts it into practice through the unique annual assemblage of the pilgrims during Hajj.

The institution of Hajj in Islam is quite extraordinary and unparalleled. It is only Islam that has made the annual assemblage at one place, Makkah, an obligation for the capable Muslims from all corners of the world. In other words, it may be called the World Muslim Congress. This assembly has many distinctive features which no other gathering has and no other religion stipulates. The concept of unity and brotherhood is embedded in Islam in such a way that one is truly amazed to see millions of Muslims dressed in two white sheets of cloth gathered at one particular place, i.e. in Arafat during a fixed time on certain fixed days in the year. All human and man-made barriers and distinctions are demolished during that assembly.

We shall deal here with the aspects of unity and universal brotherhood which, besides others, are quintessential among the concepts of Hajj. First, let us take universal brotherhood. This universal brotherhood emanates from the following basic concepts and is demonstrated in a most authentic and brilliant manner here on this occasion:

Adam is the first man from whom all human beings have sprung up;
Abraham is the father of monotheistic religion;
Acceptance of all prophets as prophets of God;
Belief in all revealed books of Allah.

Thus, this acceptance of Abraham as the patriarch of the concept of Tawheed and recognition of the continuity of Prophethood from Prophet Adam to the Last Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them all) and having faith in all revealed books keeps up a chain of faith known as Islam throughout the world. This binds the whole humankind into a bond of brotherhood whose genealogical father is Adam and the spiritual father Abraham. Thus Muslims believe in the continuation of the human race on earth. There are no conflicts and controversies in the monotheistic religion decreed by God. All Muslims (those who consciously and willingly surrender to the Will of the Creator) belong to this Ummah

and therefore constitute a fraternity of faith. This is one way the Hajj conveys the message of universal brotherhood.

This aspect of universal brotherhood can also be noticed during Hajj when Muslims come from remote corners of the world and congregate in Makkah in the vicinity of the House of God, i.e. Baitullah. Though they might have come from the east or west, north or south, and all differences in colour, language, race and nationality notwithstanding, they find their oneness on the basis of their faith in One God, One Qiblah, One Book and One Prophet.

The practical training for this universal brotherhood starts from the local or neighbourhood level with the five times daily prayers in the mosque, which gets enlarged with the Friday prayers once a week. The circle is again made substantially larger during the Eid prayer, and it becomes internationalised transforming into a global gathering once in a lifetime. So, as I mentioned at the beginning, the concept and training in universal brotherhood, which reaches its peak, starts from the very childhood at the local level.

As regards unity, Islam, first of all, removed all man-made bonds and barriers bringing all human beings into one global family tracing their genealogical origin to common parents and biological chemistry to one element, i.e. clay. Almighty God has laid down in the Holy Qur'an, "*O Mankind, We have created you from a male and a female.*" (49:13) This establishment of absolute equality on the basis of their ancestral origin and biological composition removes all artificial differences between man and man.

The enforcement of the concept of Muslim brotherhood is the greatest social ideal of Islam. Islam places emphasis on unity and unifies mankind on the basis of one God, one Book - the Qur'an, one Qibla - the Ka'aba and one leader - the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Noble Prophet's mission was to establish unity and peace throughout the world. The Islamic concept of unity transcends all other forms of unity based on territory, geographical boundary, linguistic and ethnic affinity. He united Muslims on the basis of faith, which is the Oneness of God, Islam.

On this vital concept was based the Prophet's sermon in his last pilgrimage, which shows that Islam cannot be completely practiced until this ideal is achieved. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) unified and cemented the Muslim Nation under the banner of La ilaha illallah Muhammadur-Rasoolullah by establishing the first-ever Islamic state in Madina, which later on

took the shape of a grand Caliphate. Under the Caliphate the Muslim Nation was unified and integrated. Thus the first concept of universal and worldwide unity was demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) more than fourteen hundred years ago having been guided and inspired by God for establishing unity and peace in the world.

Islam is essentially a community and group-oriented religion. So, the practical lesson in unity and equality first starts within the family, then in the neighbourhood, especially through the institution of five daily prayers in the mosque and still on a larger scale in the locality, during weekly Friday prayers, and then in much larger gatherings in the two Eid prayers and ultimately in the international or global gathering during Hajj. This very characteristic and feature of Islam demonstrates the universality of this religion and its heavenly origin which transcends all worldly barriers of race, colour, class and nationality. Pilgrimage is the best occasion to bind again the loose threads, tighten them on the basis of belief and in the presence of God and frustrate the nefarious machinations of the enemies of the Nation's unity.

Another aspect of Hajj is making sacrifice in the way of God for the cause of Islam. As Islam itself is a religion of sacrifice, its different pillars also contain the same features and characteristics. It is a known fact that the Islamic or Hijra calendar starts with the month of Muharram and ends with the month of Hajj. The first month of the Islamic calendar, Muharram, is the month of sacrifice – a sacrifice made by the grandson of Muhammad, Hussain ibn Ali, who laid down his life at Kufa in the cause of Islam and its ideals. Similarly, the 12 months of the Hijra calendar, the month of Hajj, marks the remembrance of the sacrifice made by the Prophet Ibrahim for the sake of God and His Pleasure.

The Patriarch, the first Prophet of monotheistic religion, Islam, the Prophet Ibrahim was ready to sacrifice his most loved one for the sake of God. He loved his only son, Ismail, more than anything else. God asked him to sacrifice Ismail. Ibrahim was going to sacrifice Ismail, in the way of God by His Order. The Holy Qur'an explains the story of Ibrahim and his son Ismail thus:

Then when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: *"O my son; I see in vision that I offer you in sacrifice. Now say what is your view."* (The son) said: *"O my father; do as you are commanded; you will find me, if God so wills, one practising patience and constancy."* So when they had both submitted their wills (to God), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead

(for sacrifice), We called out to him, *"O Ibrahim; you have already fulfilled the vision; thus indeed do We reward those who do right."* (37:102-105) The Qur'an says: *"And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice."* (37:107)

The sacrifices made by Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail for the love of God left an indelible imprint on the history of mankind. This sacrifice is still remembered and re-enacted during Hajj. Ibrahim left a glorious record of sacrifice to please God.

In modern times, sacrifice is symbolised by an act of slaughtering a camel, cow or lamb for the sake of God during the days of Eid Al-Adha, i.e. starting after the Eid prayer till the sunset on the third day of Eid. Sacrifice is a strongly recommended Sunnah of the Prophet and was introduced in the second year after Hijra. The purpose of sacrifice is to remind oneself of the great sacrifice of Ibrahim.

The sacrifice of life and wealth in the way of God is the zenith of a man's belief. God says: *"By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which you love; and whatever you give, of a truth God knows it well."* (Al-Qur'an 3:92) This means that when something, which has been held so dear, is sacrificed in the way of God one may hope to secure God's Pleasure. The verse tells us that to attain righteousness one has to sacrifice things, but to attain it in perfection one has to sacrifice things, dearer to one.

Every sacrifice and every effort is to be aimed at seeking God's Pleasure. That God be pleased with us is the real capital of our lives and it is to win this pleasure that everything should be sacrificed. In the words of the Qur'an: *"Surely my prayers and my sacrifice, my life and my death is for God alone, the Lord of the Universe."*

In the modern age, the pilgrims, when they start their journey to Makkah for performing Hajj with only two white sheets on their bodies leaving behind their wives, children, kith and kin and their wealth and properties, they practically exemplify their act of sacrifice for the love of God.

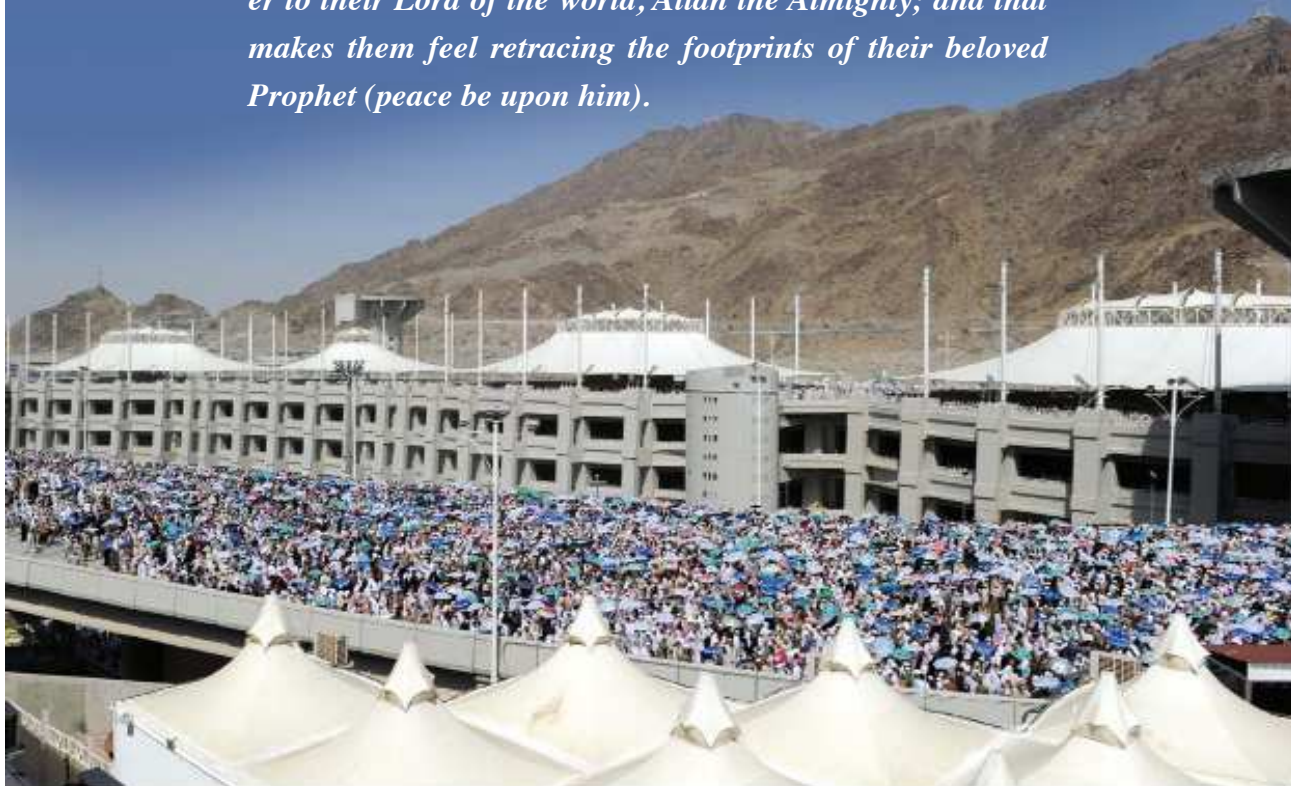
Hajj is the greatest training and practical demonstration of the spirit of sacrifice and the spirit of Jihad in the way of God. It shows that Islam does not end with giving some utopian ideals for the human life. It is not only a religion; it is the guidance for the whole mankind to shape their lives in this world and hereafter. That's why God makes provision for the teaching and training of humankind in every quality through practical implementation.

Hajj :

the global message of peace and unity

M. Nasir Jawed

MUSLIMS from all over the world are set to converge in the holy land of Makkah Al-Mukarramah to undertake a long-cherished pilgrimage – a spiritual journey that fulfills their lifetime wish to perform Hajj; that brings them closer to their Lord of the world, Allah the Almighty; and that makes them feel retracing the footprints of their beloved Prophet (peace be upon him).



It is much beyond that. By performing Hajj rituals, the pilgrims join the millions before them – since the time of Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) – who undertook the trek in universal call for peace, unity and harmony.

Hajj literally means, “to set out for a place.” It has been elaborated as “to continuously strive to reach one’s goal.” The goal here is to meet the Almighty, seek His proximity and win His pleasure, as also to declare Allah’s Oneness and His sole ownership of the universe.

This demands sacrifices on the part of a pilgrim; more than that it requires the Muslim to forget for a while the worldly desires, detach from family and friends and relinquish temporal feelings.

Hajj then binds pilgrims in one thread of humanity when they all – wearing two pieces of white clothes wrapped around their bodies – turning the teeming masses at Hajj as one single community, all seeking peace and mercy of their Lord Almighty.

Spiritual Significance

The nearly week-long affair virtually lifts a mortal being above earthly living when the pilgrim begins to see life as a precious gift from Allah to be taken care of and preserve it, as Allah has always wanted from His faithful in every generation, all through the ages.

If we realize life as beautiful, we will never harm fellow beings, animals, insects or environment. This is the inherent of Hajj. Wearing plain, unstitched dress and surrendering before our Creator – all together in millions; regardless of color, race or ethnicity, we all make Hajj, by the grace Allah, a prime example of humanity in peace, harmony and coexistence. Islam’s literal meaning of peace and surrender (before Allah) then becomes a living role model for all human beings.

A global message of peace

When the teeming masses of Muslims gather for Hajj –cutting across color, culture and class; transcending the barriers of ethnicities, languages and geographies – the city of Makkah becomes the living example of a peaceful existence. It becomes a universal model for coexistence despite differences in outlook, both spiritual and terrestrial.

Hajj then becomes a truly universal affair.

On his first pilgrimage to Makkah, Al-Hajj Malik Al-

Shabbaz, better known as Malcolm X — an American — had once famously said: “There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blonds to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual. Displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America led me to believe never could exist between the white and the non-white.”

Malik, who appreciated the “color-blindness of the Muslim world’s religious society,” was renowned for preaching that whites were “devils” — especially the blond, blue-eyed ones. He profoundly reassessed these views during the Hajj. This transformation, of course, sealed his break with the Black nationalist movement of the Nation of Islam, which advocated “a relatively new religious movement preaching black self-reliance” and hatred toward white race.

Malik validated in the 20th century what Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) had declared more than 1400 years ago: “O people! Verily, your Lord is one and your father is one. There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab and for a non-Arab over an Arab; nor for red over the black, nor for the black over the red except in piety. Verily, the noblest among you is he who is the most pious.” In his farewell sermon in Hajj, the prophet (peace be on him) maintained that all humans are brothers in humanity.

Hajj “plants the seed to celebrate the diversity of our common humanity. Pilgrims return home enriched by this more pluralistic and holistic outlook and with a new appreciation for their own origins,” a scholar said.

Allah says: “...*But help you one another unto righteousness and pious duty. Help not one another unto sin and transgression, but keep your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is severe in punishment.*” (Qur’an, 5:2)

Thus, the inherent message of Hajj is that a Muslim should live in peace with his brothers in humanity, even if they are of different faiths. A Muslim should live in peace with his brothers and sisters in humanity, notwithstanding the different faiths they subscribe to. The Qur’an states: “*We created you from a single pair of a male and female (Adam and Eve), and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other and not that you might despise each other. The most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you*” (49:13)

In his farewell sermon on the plains of Arafah,

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) stressed on this attribute when he said, “O people! Verily, your Lord is one and your father is one. There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab and for a non-Arab over an Arab, nor for red over the black nor for the black over the red except in piety.”

By contemplating on the rituals of Hajj, the pilgrim develops a closer relationship with God and promotes the unity of mankind, tolerance. He conveys messages of peace to all people-Muslims and non-Muslims.

A study conducted in 2008 by the Harvard Kennedy School in the United States found that the Hajj played an important role in promoting tolerance among pilgrims.

The study – entitled “Estimating the Impact of the Hajj: Religion and Tolerance in Islam’s Global Gathering” – revealed that the annual pilgrimage helps to develop a tolerant attitude among pilgrims toward other religions and cultures.

Hajj and its Rituals

Allah Almighty mentions about Hajj and its rituals in the following words: “*Hajj is (in) the well-known months, and whoever is minded to perform Hajj therein (let him remember that) there is (to be) no lewdness nor abuse nor angry conversation in Hajj. And whatsoever good you do Allah knows it. So make provision for yourselves (hereafter); for the best provision is to ward off evil. Therefore keep your duty unto Me, O men of understanding. It is no sin for you that you seek the bounty of your Lord (by trading). But, when you press on in the multitude from Arafat, remember Allah by the sacred*



monument. Remember Him as He has guided you, although before you were of those astray. Then hasten onward from the place whence the multitude hasten onward, and ask forgiveness of Allah. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. And when ye have completed your devotions, then remember Allah as you remember your fathers or with a more lively remembrance.” (Qur’an, 2:197-200)

The rites that a pilgrim undertakes during Hajj, if carried in a proper manner, fill Muslims’ heart with spiritual content and a sense of regeneration. They purify one’s body and soul.

Since Hajj is like meeting Almighty Allah, the pilgrims devote themselves to remembering Him by engaging in dhikr (praising Allah), repentance, supplications and seeking forgiveness.

They pray for their families, friends and for peace in the world.

This strengthens their values both moral and ethics that help him achieve inner peace.

Hajj is the fifth most important pillar on which Islam is based. Others being a solemn declara-

tion of one’s faith in one God, five times daily prayers, offering regular charity and fasting (during the month of Ramadan).

Pilgrimage to Makkah is obligatory once in a lifetime on those who are capable, financially and physically.

It is an annual event that draws no less than 3 million people – men and women and of different age groups. They all create a spiritual ambiance, the likes of which is not to be found anywhere in the world.

Prophet Abraham had prayed for Muslims who come for Hajj and which is mentioned in the Qur’an: “*Our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in an uncultivable valley near unto Your Holy House, our Lord! That they may establish proper worship; so fill the hearts of some among men with love toward them, and provide them with fruits in order that they may be thankful.”* (Qur’an, 14:37)

Every step he takes in the journey of Hajj, he transforms himself into a spiritual being. At the outset, he declares “*Labbayk Allahumma labbayk* (Here, I am O

Allah, here I am)” thus declaring his presence at the call of Allah for the journey.

When he sets out for Hajj, he leaves behind family and wealth in Allah’s trust. In his Ihram clothes, he remembers death when he will leave the world in similar dress. While carrying out various Hajj rituals, a pilgrim hopes to have all his sins forgiven, and to return home as free of sins as a newly-born baby.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “Whoever performs Hajj and stays away from lewdness, wrangling, and obscenities will return home like a newborn.” (Al-Bukhari)

After Hajj, a Muslim enjoys inner peace and looks forward to meeting Allah in Paradise. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “The performance of Umrah is an expiation for the sins committed (between it and the previous one). And the reward of Hajj mabrur (the one accepted by Allah) is nothing except Paradise.” (Al-Bukhari)

Saudi Arabia’s vital role

The Saudi king proclaims himself as the Custodian of the Holy Mosques thus declaring his responsibilities to not just serve the Hajjis in the best possible manner, but also take care of their safety and security.

Taking note of the ever-swelling number of pilgrims all through the year – shrinking space for the pilgrims to circumambulate the Ka’aba or perform other rituals – the government has undertaken giant projects worth billions of dollars to expand Makkah’s Grand Mosque.

Several bridges and tunnels have been built to accommodate the ever-increasing number of pilgrims performing rites at sites outside Makkah such as Mina, where accidents have occasionally occurred.

The Grand Mosque has undergone at least three major expansions. Muslims who visit it intermittently to perform Hajj or the lesser rite of Umrah have noticed vast increases in the mosque’s size.

Safety and security

As the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia readies itself to host Hajj this year, pilgrims have begun arriving by land, air and sea.

The event is held in the month of Dhul Hijjah, the last month of the Islamic calendar. This year it occurs on Aug. 30 to Sept. 4

The government has pressed into service thousands of personnel — security, defense and others — who have been working tirelessly for months to receive the estimated 3 million pilgrims.

The Kingdom has always placed in priority the safety of the pilgrims who come in millions to perform Hajj once in a year also those visitors who perform Umrah all through the year.

Keeping hundreds of thousands of pilgrims safe, and securing the Grand Mosque and its surroundings, are daunting challenges.

The government should be given high marks for its continuing efforts to make Hajj as safe and secure as possible. It has taken many measures to ensure that the risk of past tragedies such as stampedes and fires is greatly reduced, by raising awareness about the dangers of fires and flammable materials, and by building new tunnels and bridges to reduce con-

gestion.

Authorities have drastically increased the presence of security personnel to guard against potential security risks in view of Daesh threats that in recent times have targeted the sacred cities in the Kingdom too. The sanctity of the Grand Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet’s Mosque in Madinah is immaterial to the thugs of Daesh, who have tried to target both in the past.

The government has spent billions of dollars on sophisticated surveillance equipment, and will have thousands of security personnel in and around Makkah to ensure Daesh or any other group is not allowed to disrupt this most sacred of Islamic religious rites. The authorities have been unequivocal in asserting their preparedness to deal with any possible disruptions.

Another major challenge is that pilgrims come from 200 countries and speak hundreds of languages. This has made it difficult for security personnel to ensure pilgrims follow safety procedures to prevent minor incidents from spiraling out of control as panic ensues.

Saudi officials have tried to raise awareness among prospective pilgrims as they embark on this spiritual journey, stressing that following directions and regulations is for everyone’s benefit. Organizers of pilgrimages from other countries have also taken measures to promote safety awareness.

The overwhelming majority of Hajj seasons have been without any major incidents. After God’s grace, the credit should go to the government’s myriad safety and security measures. But that has not stopped some of the Kingdom’s rivals from trying to politicize Hajj.



Hajj:

A spiritual experience

Aftab Husain Kola

This time around the Holy Makkah and Madinah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are teeming with almost three million Muslims who have come from every nook and corner for Hajj. Hajj is one of the five institutions of Islam and every year in Dhul-Hijjah, the twelfth month of the Hijri calendar, Muslims who can afford to undertake Hajj congregate on the Holy Sanctuary of Makkah. The performance of Hajj as an enjoined duty and its superiority is in the statement of Allah: "Hajj to the House (Ka'abah) is a duty that mankind owes to Allah, those who can afford the journey."

‘And Proclaim unto Mankind the pilgrimage. They will come unto thee on foot and every lean camel; they will come from every deep ravine,’ is what the Holy Qur’an states in chapter 22, verse 27. Every Muslim who has attained a responsible age, is in good health, and financially capable and confident must embark on Hajj for at least once in a lifetime. There are several rituals to be followed that last for several days. The rites of the Hajj—which are precisely those followed or approved by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) during his Pilgrimage—are few in number, simple in execution, but rich in meaning.

Origins of Hajj

The pilgrimage of Makkah is built on a solid foundation of several layers of tradition extending back in time, from the records of Ibrahim (Abraham), Hagar and Ishmael, of Adam, the first man and the first Prophet to descend on the Earth. Adam built the Ka’aba in Makkah on Allah’s command. Thousands of generations later, more than 4,000 lunar years ago as calculated by Abdul Gafoor Attar and given in his book *‘Al-Ka’bah wa Al-Kiswah’* Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) came to the same hills. It is reported that Hagar, wife of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), was in desperate search of water to feed her thirsty son Ishmael in a valley of Makkah. She ran between the hills Safa and Marwa seven times until she saw the angels at a spot digging the earth until a pool of water gushed forth and shaped itself into a well which came to be known as Zam Zam.

Hagar and her son Ishmael lived near this spring and were gifted cattle in return for allowing nomadic tribes to water their flocks. Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) returned and re-united with Ishmael (as Hagar had died) and together they built the House of Allah on exactly the same spot as Adam’s Ka’abah. When the construction was completed, Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) performed Hajj annually. His son Ishmael carried on the tradition after his father’s death. Before his death, Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) prayed to Allah asking for a messenger to be sent to guide his son’s peoples. Meanwhile, the idol-worshipping pagan Arabs dramatically altered the Holy Place. At last, time arrived for Allah to answer Prophet Ibrahim’s (peace be upon him) invocation that read: *“Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from among them who shall recite unto them thy revelations and instruct them in*

the Scriptures and in wisdom. Lo! Thou, only thou, art the Mighty, Wise.” (Chapter 2, Verse 129). And the miracle happened. Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born, attained prophethood and changed the course of Arabs and later spread the message of Islam throughout the world. When Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) undertook Hajj thousands followed him. And today, almost three million Muslims (the number is restricted due to OIC regulated quota system) converge on Makkah to carry on the tradition with a strong faith that it will cleanse them of their sins and reinforce their faith.

Personal Hajj experience

I had the honor of performing Hajj about a decade ago. But I keep visiting Makkah every year for Umrah (short pilgrimage). Being settled in Oman that time, I embarked on Hajj from Muscat. Before setting out, I had to ensure that all wrongs are redressed, pay all my debts, had enough funds to undertake the journey and had to keep adequate funds for the maintenance of my family while am away, and prepare myself for good conduct throughout the Hajj. We landed first in Madinah, few days before the commencement of Hajj. Though a visit to Madinah is not part of Hajj yet a visit to the Islam’s one of the two holiest places is highly recommended. And all pilgrims do visit Madinah, either before or after Hajj. Before departing Madinah to Makkah we wear the Ihram, the two pieces of unsewn white cloth that each male pilgrim must wear prior to performing Hajj or Umrah, and make niyah, the intention of performing Hajj or Umrah in Makkah. After four hours of journey by an air-conditioned coach we reach Makkah and perform Umrah. It was 7th of Dhul-Hijjah, two days prior to actually embarking on Hajj. We spend our time in Haram Masjid in Makkah praying, reciting Qur’an, engaging in zikr, etc.

On 8th Hijjah we join a concourse of worshippers chanting the talbiyah, *“Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik”* (O God, here I am answering your call) and enter the valley of Mina, a tiny uninhabited village about seven kilometres east of Makkah, and spend the night there in fire-proof tents. Now, you have train services that take you from Makkah to Mina and further. The scene at Mina touches my heart dearly. I have been waiting for this moment all my life and thank Allah for providing me an opportunity to make Hajj. Religious fervor writ large on faces of pilgrims as the valley of Mina reverberated



with chants of talbiyah as two million pilgrims from around the world converged on the tent city, their first stop on the way to the Plain of Arafat for Hajj climax. Excellent arrangements by the Saudi authorities add to the contentment. On ninth of Dhul-Hijjah, we move toward plains of Arafat. The time spent here is precious and are devoted to prayers, genuine repentance for one's sins, and to prayers for the dead and the living and to come clean after Hajj. It was here the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) delivered his last Hajj sermon 14 centuries ago. Arafat is considered as the climax of Hajj though it is not the conclusion as few days more remain. At no other place and on no other occasion in one's lifetime does the Believer feel so intensely and confidently that he is approaching a merciful, responsive and loving God and a belief that all his prayers will be answered. From Arafat we return to Mina enroute spending the night at Muzdalifa, a valley between mountains in the north and south. Here, we spend our night and engage in worship and gather pebbles for the symbolic ritual of stoning the devil on the following days. Next day, at the break of day, we trudge towards the multi-storeyed Jamrat Complex, about a km away from our tent, where we threw sev-

en pea-sized pebbles at Jamrat Al-Aqaba, which is one of the three elliptical-shaped walls representing the devil. It was a sight which we will never forget. Ably assisted by hundreds of ever-smiling security officials, the ritual was conducted in a peaceful and orderly fashion. Special assistance was provided for the elderly in carrying out the task. It is time for the feast of Islam: Eid Al-Adha — the Feast of Sacrifice. Those who can afford it buy a sheep, a goat or a share of some other sacrificial animal, sacrifice it and give away a portion of the meat to the poor. We repeated stoning ritual for the next two days hurling seven pebbles each day at each of the three walls inside the Jamrat Complex. Pilgrims then return to the Grand Mosque in Makkah, perform Tawaf Al-Efadha, circumambulating seven times around the Ka'abah, then perform Sa'ee, moving seven times between Safa and Marwah. As men need to shave their heads or trim their hair I do the same. With that, pilgrims end their Ihram. It was an enriching and rewarding experience.

So, let us take a pledge that if we have the means we will perform Hajj next year. Let us pray to Allah to make things easier for those who have converged in Makkah for this year's Hajj.

The Performance of Hajj in Islam

Ahmad Wahaj Al-Siddiqui

Lo! The very first sanctuary appointed for mankind. Is that at Bacca (Makkah). A blessed place, guidance to the world. In it are clear signs and the Station of Abraham, And he who enters it attains security. And Hajj is a duty that men owe to Allah for those who can attain a way there to. And he who disbelieves then Allah stands not in need of any of his creatures. (Qur'an-3:96-97)

'The very first sanctuary i.e Ka'bah' appointed for prayers, circumambulation and Hajj and for total submission in the path of Islam is Bacca (Makkah) is blessed place where virtues increase to manifold. The scholars differ who built it first. Few say the Angels, few say Adam and some say Abraham. It can be held that the angels built it first then Adam renewed it, and thereafter Abraham and his son Ishmael rebuilt the entire structure. (Qur'an-2:127). 'A guidance to the worlds' The Muslims throughout the world face the direction of Ka'bah in offering their prayers.



(Station of Abraham) It is that stone on which Abraham used to stand while building the walls of Ka'abah and Ishmael used to fetch him stones. It had special peculiarity in it whenever Abraham stood over it, it used to become soft like cushion for it still has the foot print of Abraham which have been covered partially by copper covering. Anas bin Malik said I saw the station and in it are the hollow of the foot and finger prints of Abraham (Ibn Kathir) The hollow of his foot can still be seen.

While the Prophet (peace be upon him) going around Ka'bah he paced in a running motion in first three rounds and walked in the last four rounds and then he went to the station of Abraham and recited: *And take ye the station of Abraham as a place of prayer. He offered two rakat of prayers taking the station and Ka'bah before him.* (This is the part of long tradition reported By Muslim).

Faraidh i.e. Obligations to Perform Hajj

To perform Hajj in Islam on the following specified rituals:

Ihram: It is two white seamless sheets to be taken on upper and lower part of the body with intention to perform Hajj. (To take any sewn cloth or shorts on lower part of the body is prohibited.)

This Ihram is to be worn from appointed destinations Known as Miqat. The reverence Sunnah has classified these destinations or stations all around Makkah region. In a report of Ibn Abbas the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The place to take Ihram from Madinah is Dhul-Hulaifah now known As Abyar Ali. For Syrians is Jahfa, For Najd is Qarn Al-Manazil now known as Sayl Al-Kabir, for Muslims coming from Yemen is Yalamlam, for others from where they start for Hajj, for Makkans they take Ihram for Hajj from Makkah (Agreed tradition).

No one coming for Hajj is allowed to cross the aforesaid destinations.

But for Umrah the Makkans will go outside the boundary of Al-Haram or to the Ayesha Mosque (Taneem) or to Joarana. No one coming for Hajj is allowed to cross the aforesaid destinations save with Ihram. People coming by air who come to Jeddah should come in Ihram. If they take Ihram from Jeddah, they have to sacrifice a goat in charity in Makkah. The Prophet said one must not cross the Miqat save in Ihram.

2) The other obligatory act is to reach Arafat on 9 Dhul Hijjah even before dawn of next day. The



Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Al-Hajj Arafat i.e. to enter the boundary of Arafat is to get Hajj. It is seen many pilgrims remain outside the boundary of Arafat duly defined all round Arafat on sign boards, they lose their Hajj.

3) The last obligation is to perform Tawaf-Al-Ifadah or Tawaf Al-Ziarah (going round Ka'bah seven times) after return from Arafat, Muzdalifah, and Mina.

Wajibat (actions mandatory to Perform Hajj) After leaving Arafat after sunset, they are required to stay at Muzdalifah for the first half of the night is wajib (mandatory) according to Imam Shafee, but Imam Abu Hanifah said: The stay must be till Fajr prayers i.e. Dawn Prayers. However, the Prophet (peace be upon him) though himself stayed till Fajr prayers, allowed the weak and the persons having animals of sacrifice to leave Muzdalifa after midnight.

2 (a) They will come back to Mina, to Pelt Big Jamrah. The time to pelt starts from midnight till the whole day of Immolation i.e. 10th of Dhul-Hijjah till midnight.

(b) All the three Jamarat are to be pelted on 11th and 12th, the small, the middle and the big Jamrah respectively after midday i.e. after Dhuhr till night, and if one stayed on 13th at Mina he has to pelt all the three Jamarat after morning.

3) To stay at Mina for the most part of the night is wajib according to Shafei school, if he misses his stay for the first night or the last night in performing the last Tawaf, no harm is done to his Hajj. To stay during the night at Mina is only Sunnah to Hanafi school.

4) Any one performing Hajj Ifrad, after pelting the big Jamrah on 10th he will take part of his hair or shave his head to get out of Ihram. But any- one who is doing Umrah along with Hajj, then after pelting big Jamrah, he will do his sacrifice and then take his hair partially or shave his head. The group leaders take all expenses of Hajj including money for sacrifice. They should make sure that their sacrifice is done before they cut their hair. *'And shave not your head until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice'* (Qur'an-2:196) This is known as Tahlul Al-Asghar, it does away all the prohibitions except sex and sexual intercourse with ones spouse. That is allowed only after doing the last Tawaf al Ifadah or Tawaf Al-Ziarah. For the ladies the hair cut is limited to a finger tip for quitting the state of Ihram.

Kinds of Hajj

Hajj Ifrad: is to Perform Hajj during the prescribed months of Hajj. Coming to Miqat, after taking Ihram he should offer two rakat of prayers and say by the words of mouth that he intends Hajj only to please Allah and say Talbiyah i.e. Labbayak. Abdullah bin Omar said Talbiyah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is *Labbayak Allahumma Labbayak, Labbayak la sharika laka Labbayak, Inna Al-Hamdah wa al-nematah laka walmulk La sharikalak* (Al-Tirmizi) Translation: Here I am at Thy service. O My Lord there is no partner with Thee, here I am truly the Praise and the Grace for Thee and Thine is the sole sovereignty. There is no partner with Thee. There is no sacrifice for man doin Hajj-IfRAD.

After reaching the Holy Mosque, he should make Tawaf Al-Qudum i.e. going round Ka'abah seven times and stay in Ihram till the completion

Hajj Al-Tamattu: He will perform Umrah then Hajj in the same journey. He will perform Umrah and go round Ka'abah seven times and then do hastening between Al-Safa and Al-Marwah and cut his hair and put off his Ihram. Then on 8th Dhul-Hijjah he will put

on Ihram from Makkah and go to Mina. He will offer there five prayers, Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib, Isha and Fajr (Dawn Prayer). Then he will go to Arafat. There he will stay there for the whole day of ninth Dhul-Hijjah. He will not leave Arafat before sunset to go to Muzdalifa. There he will offer Maghrib and Isha Prayers together. Stay at Muzdalif till halfmidnight or till Fajr is explained above. He will come back to Mina to pelt Big Jamarah thereafter, he will sacrifice a goat. Stay at Mina is for three days i.e. On 10th, 11th, and 12th. On 12th after pelting all the three Jamarat till after Zohar, He can come back to Makkah.

Hajj Al-Qiran: He has to make Umrah and Hajj in the same Ihram, which he had put on the Miqat, he will complete all the rituals of Hajj, only after pelting big Jamrah he will have to sacrifice a goat and put off his Ihram.

Conditions to perform Hajj : Must be Muslim, enjoys freedom, able to afford Hajj expenses, must be wise not idiot, and reached puberty.

Prohibitions after taking Ihram :

- 1) Sexual intercourse with wife, and all actions leading to obscenity.
- 2) Not to run into mistakes and sins involving Allah's disobedience.
- 3) Quarrelling with friend or servants all this is defined in the verse:
"Whoever intends to perform Hajj there is no sexual intercourse (with wife) nor lewdness nor disputing during the Hajj" (2:197)
- 4) Sunnah has included some other prohibitions, use of perfume or Attar, putting on sewn clothes for men, clipping of nails, cutting or shaving of hair, no marriage contracts, women will not cover their face with a cloth, will not wear the gloves. Men will not cover the head nor wear the shoes or socks. Sandal covering the upper part of foot is not allowed.

Ibn Abbas narrated. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

Ladies running into menstruation or puerperium reaching Miqat will take bath, and take Ihram. They will do all the rituals except going round Ka'abah. (Abu Dawood) They will have to wait for Tawaf al Ifadah or Tawaf Al-ziarah till they are clean.

These are the major instructions for performing Al-Hajj Al-Mabroor (Perfect Hajj). Never leave your five daily prayers. Be kind and affectionate in dealings with men and relations.



Hajj Guide

Dr. Hothaifa Kharrat

Each year a large number of Muslims from all parts of the world, from the east and west, arrive in the holy city of Makkah to perform the sacred rites of pilgrimage, serene and secure in the good pleasure of God, and beseeching His mercy and forgiveness during these blessed days.

It is incumbent upon us as hosts to this event to exert our best efforts to ensure a favorable reception for these guests of the All Merciful, providing for all their cares and requirements in the utmost security during their pilgrimage, from the beginning of their blessed journey at their arrival, through to the completion of the performance of their rites, and finally onto their return to their country of origin.

Our principle responsibility towards the pilgrims, during their stay in the holy house of God, is to advise them and guide them to ensure and raise the standards of health and sanitation in their midst. To achieve this and to counsel what is appropriate for the general health and wellbeing is the purpose of this document, bearing in mind the principle that an 'ounce of prevention is worth a pound cure', as we know that most of the health problems encountered by the pilgrims can be prevented to a large extent, by the grace of God,

and by taking general precautions while performing the various rites of pilgrimage.

In this essay we will present some salient principles of health as an advisory to our honored guests to adopt during their visit to God's holy house in the hope that this will assist in alleviating the health problems that often occur during the Hajj season.

Among these advisories and counsels are the following :

How wonderful it would be for all the pilgrims to observe the habits of cleanliness, the care and maintenance of the body even before they attire themselves with the ceremonial garb of the pilgrim. These include clipping the fingernails, trimming the hair, removal of hair from the underarms and the pubis. These are practices whose hygienic benefits have been ascertained by modern science. It will reduce the amount of microscopic organisms, such as viruses, bacteria and parasites that live on our bodies. Cleanliness is the most effective preventative to protect us from the numerous afflictions and diseases are caused by these microscopic pathogens that thrive and multiply on our bodies.

The pilgrim must also ensure that he has received

a recent vaccination against meningitis before he sets foot on the sacred land. This fever is most contagious and very widespread, and at times can be fatal. It has been known to cause a great deal of illness in congested and densely populated areas. There is no doubt that the crowded circumstance of the Hajj offer an ideal ambience for this pathogen to flourish and cause an epidemic.

Meal time is important to the pilgrim performing the rites of the Hajj. He should ensure that his meals are healthy, well balanced and light. They should include all the essential nutritional elements such as fats, proteins and carbohydrates to provide him with the stamina to undertake all the rituals and rites of worship. He should avoid eating to excess, especially rich fatty foods which may lead to dyspepsia and indigestion and the symptoms of internal ailments such as lethargy. All these may hinder the pilgrim from performing his services of worship to the best of his ability.

The pilgrim is advised to ensure that his meals are rich in all the essential vitamins and minerals. Among the most important sources of these are vegetables and fresh fruits. Such meals will reinforce the body's immunity, helping him to avoid any illnesses and ensure his ability to withstand the severe weather conditions of the location.

He must drink plenty of liquids. Clean water is preferable. It is important to avoid the dangers of dehydration and the accompanying severe health consequences. How wonderful it would be for the pilgrim to drink a large amount of fluids so essential for the body's metabolic systems?

It is evident that drinking plenty of fluid is especially important when the Hajj occurs during the warm season, as is the case at this time. The body quickly loses essential liquids and minerals through excess perspiration while performing the activities of pilgrimage.

Furthermore drinking water will help you digest your food, eliminate waste, and is especially important to improve your joint movements. This is a most important benefit for the pilgrim who is performing many movements while carrying out the various rituals.

The pilgrim must also do all he can to ensure the cleanliness of what he eats and drinks, and to know where his food comes from. Beware of street vendors in the area that present and sell their food uncovered in the open air. This invites the incubation of all kinds of pathogens that are the major causes of acute digestive problems such as stomach aches, food poisoning and their associated symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea.

Cleanliness and hygiene of the mouth and teeth is also very important for the pilgrim. He should always clean his teeth with Sewak (or equivalent such as a toothbrush) after finishing his meals, wash hands before and after meals, and ensure that he is using clean utensils for eating and drinking. All these are prudent measures that will minimize the effects of the pathogens responsible for so many diseases. The pilgrim must also avoid leaving uncovered plates and dishes lying around after the meal. These will attract insects and other life forms that serve as carriers of disease.

The pilgrim must also pay special attention to the expiration date of any canned food before he opens it and dispose of anything that is past its expiry date. He should keep these containers in a dry place away from heat.

It also behooves the pilgrims to take special note of the following...

- Hygiene when using the toilet, such as hand washing following use, avoiding defecation in the open air, and ensuring that washroom facilities are clean and hygienic.

There is no doubt that careless hygienic toilet practices are a major contributor to the spread of insects and various harmful microbes. Diseases of the digestive tract will occur as a consequence.

Among the common problems that afflict the pilgrim is 'Heat Stroke'. This occurs most frequently during the warmer pilgrimage season, such as the one at present. The pilgrims are advised to protect themselves against these strokes by minimizing the time spent walking under the direct rays of the sun, and by using lightly colored parasols to reflect the sun's rays. It is also helpful to drink plenty of water and fluids to replenish those that are lost during the hot weather.

The pilgrim may experience sun burns after extended exposure under the rays of the sun. He may also experience burns when walking on the hot pavements or circumambulating the sites, or while walking on the open areas. These burns can be quite extensive and deep, sometimes requiring surgical first aid procedures to remove the burnt skin or other restorative procedures. The pilgrim is advised to minimize the time he spends walking under the hot sun, and to avoid walking barefoot as much as possible.

Respiratory ailments can also occur during the Hajj season and the pilgrims should take sensible precautions to minimize the spread of commonly occurring respiratory ailments. The pilgrim should use paper handkerchiefs, Kleenex™ tissues to cover his mouth

when sneezing or coughing, or when rinsing and inhaling through his sinuses. He should distance himself from anyone who displays any symptoms of a respiratory illness and avoid entering into crowded areas as much as possible. He should choose well ventilated areas when sleeping or resting, and wash his hands often. He should use a special mask to cover his mouth and nose and be sure to change it regularly to avoid the buildup of viruses and microbes that may attach themselves to the mask.

One of the most dangerous disasters that may occur during the Hajj, God forbid, is the outbreak of fire due to faulty electrical equipment, or during the preparation of food near to or inside the tents. The resulting damage from the smoke and open flames have been the cause of many suffocations and even deaths.

Some ways to avoid the perils of fire is to use propane tanks near the tents rather than open flames, and to use tents made of non-flammable material. Use only electrical equipment that is safety rated and free from any damage. Have a well indicated emergency fire exit, and avoid storing any flammable or explosive material in the tent. Always turn out the lights when leaving any of the places of pilgrimage.

One sometimes finds pilgrims who insist on unreasonable or unruly behavior during the Hajj, such as shoving and pushing in crowded areas. They may act aggressively while attempting to approach and kiss the black stone of the Ka'abah, or when climbing to the top of Arafat, the mount of Mercy. They endanger themselves and others by risking falls or slipping leading to bruises and fractures. How wonderful it would be if they would avoid such behavior as a mercy to themselves and to others, perhaps even avoid meeting their own demise?

Among the most disturbing sights one may encounter during pilgrimage is seeing pilgrims who have entered the pilgrimage area without obtaining the proper authorizations from the authorities. As a result they have no shelter and may be seen lying in the shade of a vehicle or a bus. In rare cases they will be the unfortunate victims of an accident, being inadvertently trampled or overrun by a vehicle.

By the grace of God we do not see this happen very often due to the alert actions of the competent authorities who ensure that everyone who enters on pilgrimage has the proper access approvals and is provided with adequate shelter, and by the grace of God, are protected from the consequences of such disorderly conduct that can destroy the feelings of spirituality that

should pervade and infuse the pilgrimage season.

Some pilgrims will arrive who are afflicted with pre-existent chronic disorders that require special care, such as diabetes, high blood pressure or asthma. It is advisable that these pilgrims carry an appropriate health card that clearly describes the nature of their condition. The pilgrim should also ensure that he carries with him the medicines he needs to treat his condition, and ensure the proper storage of these medicines, keeping them in a cool dry place and avoiding the direct rays of the sun.

The pilgrim should inform the doctor responsible for the health of the tour group about his condition. He should inform him about what medicines he needs to take and how to properly administer them. He should take care to avoid exhaustion, and avoid situations where there is shoving or pushing in which he cannot deal. God forbid this could lead to tragedy or fatalities.

Such pilgrims should also consider the possibility of a special dispensation from certain pilgrimage activities. He could consider being carried during the circumambulations, or deputize someone to act on his behalf during stone throwing and other rites. Our religion is one of compassion and mercy, all praise be to God.

An essential requirement of pilgrimage is to have a first aid kit in every tent, and with every pilgrimage tour group. Each kit should contain emergency medicines such as pain relievers, fever treatments, antibiotics, disinfectants, a supply of bandages, antiseptic creams and burn ointments among others.

The pilgrim is advised to be cautious when having his hair cut or trimmed. He should be sure that the scissors are clean, and that the razor is new. Used instruments may have been contaminated with the blood of a sick person. This is a serious cause of concern. Such vigilance will prevent the transmission of many dangerous diseases such as AIDS or other internal infections and inflammations.

In conclusion we beseech the Almighty God that he accept the worshipful acts of our pilgrims at the Holy Sites, and grant that these may be performed in security and safety. God grant that they be safeguarded from all harm, suffering and afflictions during the course of their visit. We beseech the Almighty for the well-being and successful conclusion of this coming Pilgrimage season. May He reward the authorities with the best of rewards for their diligent and tireless attention to the health of the pilgrims?

Al-Haramain Railways: A Paradigm Shift on Serving the Pilgrims



Abdullah Al-Tiari

The Saudi Railways Organization has completed all facilities related to Al-Haramain Railways Project from Madinah to Makkah through King Abdullah Economic City, King Abdulaziz International Airport and Jeddah City. The organization conducted an experimental run demo for a group of media and journalists, at the end of Sha'aban, from King Abdullah Economic City Station, which is the third largest train station in terms of area after the Jeddah and Makkah stations, to Madinah.

Eng. Abdulrahman Fallata, Director of the second phase of the Al-Haramain Railways project, told reporters that the Saudi Railways Organization has completed more than 98% of the work of project in Makkah, located 4 km Northwest of the Holy Mosque, to accommodate about 20 thousand passengers per hour in the coming months, with the implementation of the latest global systems in operation, including the European Train Control System (ETCS).

Falata also state that for the future will be expected

that the main station located in Russeifa Makkah will be in link with 2 other stations planned to be constructed by "Makkah Mass Rail Transit Company " For the transport of pilgrims and visitors from and to the Holy Mosque, through the trains that will be operated by Makkah Mass Rail Transit Company where the stations are equipped to accommodate the means of transport support, through buses and transport vehicles working to carry passengers to and from the railway stations, The primary expects are to transport 114 thousand passengers daily from Makkah station to Madinah through Jeddah and Rabigh during the initial period of operation, up to 124 thousand passengers at the final operation and rush hours.

The capacity of the Russeifa station can be raised to 200 thousand passengers per day if needed including direct trips to Madinah with 60 minute reduction of trip time and design speed up to 320Km per hour and operating speed of 300 km per hour.

The Saudi Mufti:

The Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Sheikh said that the intention of Umrah or Hajj for the passengers of the train along the Miqat of Dhul-Hulayfa is permissible by law; for the fact that stopping the train at the Miqat is difficult for passengers and disrupting the train.

Al-Sheikh added that intending to perform Hajj or Umrah at the station in Madinah is also permissible, so that the pilgrim intends to enter Al-Nasak and to repeat the prayer after leaving directly from the departure station in Madinah. He pointed out that the intention of Hajj or Umrah in that case came because of the proximity to the Miqat and the fear of crossing it because of the speed of the train before entering the Al-Nasak, as well as to avoid disruption of the train and stopping at the Miqat.

Falata said that the capacity of the Russeifa station is up to 20 thousand passengers per hour, taking into consideration when designing to fully enable the disabled and elderly people to get about in facilities and corridors of the station comfortably and easily. He explained that the Russeifa station built on 3 floors, and there are 25 electric elevators and 32 electric escalator on an area exceeding half a million square meters equipped with parking spaces dedicated to buses and cars in capacity of up to 4800 cars.

The station also includes a mosque that can accommodate thousands, a fire station, a helicopter helipad and areas for loading and unloading passengers. Falata confirmed that the purchase of tickets will be made available through a special website on the Internet and dedicated applications for smartphones for this service to be available in all operating systems and available to users in multiple languages; as well as selling tickets through traditional Box offices.

On the completion of the four stations, Engineer Abdulrahman Falata said that the fully completed stations are Madinah station and King Abdullah Economic City station in Rabigh, with 96% of the Jeddah station and 98% of the Russeifa Makkah station completed. He pointed out that the King Abdulaziz airport station was constructed by the general contractor for the new airport project in Jeddah and is part of the costs of the project.

Engineer Abdulrahman Fallata invited us to the

train for the first trip to Madinah, where our colleagues boarded the train and met the young train driver Fahad Al-Salmi who told us that he was trained at the Spanish Institute of Madrid by a scholarship with about forty other young Saudis as a first batch. He received training for a year; the company plans for the first stage of operation to be led by more than 80% of Saudi drivers.

Companies Executing the Project

The first phase of Al-Haramain Railways project was constructed by "Alrajhi Group" It was the construction of the infrastructure, drilling and building the train track which is about 480 km from Makkah to Madinah through Jeddah. It was constructed out through several local and international companies such as Al-Swailem MASCO Co., China Railway Corporation and Al-Arrab Contracting Co. Ltd. in cooperation with the Engineering Union Co. (Khatib Alami) as a designer and supervisor of the construction stages.

The second phase of the project was completed by Al-Shoula Company and a group of Spanish companies which manufactured and supplied the equipment of communication and signaling systems. These companies will also supply and operate the fleet and response for the maintenance of the trains for 12 years and will establish a specialized training Institute at a cost of more than 30 billion Saudi Riyals.

The Specialized Training Institute

The Saudi Railway Company (SAR) established a training institute, under the name of SREB, as the first training institute for the railway sector. It is a strategic partnership between Saudi Railways and the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation to train and qualify Saudis to work in the sector in several disciplines such as drive trains, communications, control and maintenance of fleet and maintenance of the infrastructure.

Al Haramain Railways in Points

Al Haramain Railways project build with the use of modern techniques to adapt and suit nature. New technologies were used in the area between Dahaban and Rabigh, due to the quicksand in that area.

The total capacity of the trains is about 145,955 passengers, noting that project has 35 High-Speed Electric Trains and the capacity of one train reaches about 417 passengers.

Calculating the average rate of trip time between the Makkah and Jeddah, the trains will have about seven trips per hour, equivalent to 2919 passengers between the two cities in one direction.

Interfaith Iftar Evening at the ICC: The Message of Love, Mercy and Solidarity

Dr. Mozammel Haque

An Interfaith Iftar and Dinner Evening was organized by the Islamic Cultural Center, London, held at the Conference Library Hall of the Center, in the evening of Tuesday, the 20th of June 2017. The evening party was attended by more than 130 representatives from 12 faith and religious communities, besides the representatives from various faiths, the Metropolitan Police, local Member of Parliament Karen Buck, MP and community leaders. The diplomatic delegation was represented by Ambassador Dato Aminuddin Ihsan, Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam in London, Mr. Abdulmomen bin Muhammad Sharaf, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Saudi Arabia and representatives of the Embassy of Indonesia, Turkey and Pakistan.



The Iftar Evening was started with the recitation from of the verses of the Holy Qur'an by Sheikh Khalifa, head Imam of the centre followed by Dr. Ahmed Al-Dubayan, the Director General of the Islamic Cultural Center who welcomed the guests.

Welcome address by Dr. Ahmad Al-Dubayan

Dr. Ahmad Al-Dubayan expressed his happiness to see everyone again. He enquired Why we have arranged this event today? And answered promptly that this event was arranged well before all the sad incidents which have recently occurred and we insisted not to change the date of this event as it's better to meet in the hard days. He said, "We planned this day today before all these incidents what happened have not happened at that time. And we kept it as it was; and decided not to change it. Because we would like to meet more in the hard days inviting you today to share with us this fasting month of Ramadan, to know something about us; about our fasting month of Ramadan for those who do not know."

"To share good times together; in the Arabic tradition; the Arabs say when you share someone with food and drinks that means that you are friends forever. We are friends, close friends and I hope this friendship will really be ever lasting and will remain long run always," said Dr. Al-Dubayan.

Ramadan the Month of Mercy and Solidarity

Dr. Al-Dubayan said, "Ramadan is the month of mercy, it is the month of solidarity with other people. Fasting is a kind of worship. The Qur'an tells us the fasting was also a charity in other faiths before. We fast by the orders of Allah and also at the same time to remember those who are poor and do not have enough food to feed themselves. Ramadan is the month when every Muslim must look after their parents, spouse, children and neighbours."

Ramadan the Month of Generosity

He continued, "Ramadan is the month of generosity and being generous. Every Muslim is asked to be more generous than before. Being generous is one of the good manners and behaviours in Islam. And the Qur'an and the Tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has praised about this a lot. In Ramadan it is more confirmed and be precise; come together and share all this this evening together."

Need to spread the true meaning of Peace and soli-

arity to young generation

It is highly important to reach out to the young generation and spread the true meaning of peace and solidarity. Dr. Al-Dubayan said, "Can we return back those manners and those values that we share all together. This is actually the message that we should really bring together. I want the new generation to see this."

"The young generation must understand faith in the right way. We from all the faiths and backgrounds have gathered here to celebrate peace and solidarity and this indeed is a great example that we can live together peacefully. We really hope Insha Allah that this may bring some positive change in the younger generation and that would be able to do something better for the society," Dr. Al-Dubayan said and added, "Role of organisations around us in the society - the faith organisations, the religious organisations - is really badly needed now more than any time before."

Advanced technology and its impact

Dr. Al-Dubayan pointed out the advanced technology cannot be controlled and due to many false information in the media the young generation are not able to identify reliable sources of information and sadly many of them get carried away by the false information. He said, "Evil is everywhere. Now with the advanced technology you cannot control the flow of information; it is going everywhere in every house, every room, in every head of young generation. The problem is: young generation cannot distinguish or know exactly what sources are reliable; they just read something; and they think it is true. Very good example of that is what happened in the fire in the Grenfell Tower a few days ago last week; lots of rumours and really fake news spread in the social media and again the attack in the face book spread over and over. This is for this generation is a source of information, regardless whether it is a reliable source or not."

Islamophobia

Dr. Al-Dubayan also mentioned about Islamophobia. He said, "Islamophobia will do exactly what anti-Semitism did once 70 years ago and we all know the story. We don't want actually Europe and specially this lovely country where Muslims have more rights and succeed more than any other country. We don't want in this country and in Europe face what we call may be the Islamic questions like the 19th century what they call that time the Jewish questions. Something dangerous. And things coming down like a drop of water if some-

body does not speak up really this; this drop of water becomes the one day and it will take us all away.”

Religious organisations responsibility to bring back reliable sources to the young generation

Our responsibility as a religious organisation is to work together with the authorities try to bring things back to the reliable sources and try to spread the real message of peace.

Dr. Al-Dubayan concluded his speech with a hope that this gathering may bring love, mercy, good relation and good intention from the Islamic Cultural Centre to everyone present and to show what Islam truly says. He said, “I hope this gathering today bring us the meaning of love, mercy and good relations, good intentions from our hearts to all of you. And to show you a model about what Islam says about other people. And I believe your presence here with us today is one of the good examples and evidence that we have.”

Finally, he thanked all the respected guests for attending and honouring the Islamic Cultural Centre with their presence.

Member of Parliament for Westminster North, Karen Buck, MP

Member of Parliament for Westminster North, Karen Buck, MP, started by addressing the gathering saying “Assalamualaikum good evening. I have seen many honoured guests. I would be very brief. We want to hear warm messages of support from everyone gathered here this evening. I want to say how proud and grateful I am for the works of the Regents Park Islamic Cultural Center and for Dr. Al-Dubayan and for bringing us together this evening and we see representatives here from mosques, temples, churches synagogues. They are the visible sign of their communities that can be reached out to each other and we shall also see many voluntary organisations and institutions of civil societies and police representatives here.”

Speaking about the month of Ramadan, MP Buck said, “As Dr. Al-Dubayan said it is the holy month of Ramadan to renew our commitment; and to reach out to each other to get to know each other and to continue a dialogue that is even more important in hard times than it is in normal times.”

“The main goal of our meeting is that we believe in God and that religion has great value in our daily lives and that spiritual values are important to all,” said Karen Buck, MP.

Karen Buck MP also pointed out that the United

Kingdom had witnessed a number of sad events recently, but said that she was very happy that the community stood together in a cohesive and solidarity and that it was not and would not be divided. She also mentioned the incredible courage and incredible unity of human kind in these last few weeks. She said, “just returning from the horror in Grenfell Tower in the constituency I used to represent I know well they have been coming together from every faith community, from every corner of the civil society, gathering donations, organising fund raisers, putting money out, reaching out, giving support to those affected and many many young people quite spontaneously wanted to be involved in helping and that is absolutely an wonderful thing to see and something we want to continue.”

Chief Superintendent David Stringer of the Metropolitan Police

Chief Superintendent David Stringer of the Metropolitan Police said that Islam is a religion of tolerance, co-existence and cooperation, and those mosques and religious centres bear responsibility for portraying this true and true message of Muslims and society. He also stressed that the police stand in the service of all religions, called on the importance of dialogue between religions to remove the misconceptions and fear of the other in society and this in turn will reduce the crimes of hatred against the other.

Talking about the tragic incidents took place in the United Kingdom, Stringer said, “It’s a difficult time; it’s a difficult time for London; difficult time for the emergency services. What we have seen is a small number of people seeking to divide us. What I have seen personally is a large number of people, the vast majority of people, working together, standing together and demonstrating visibly sometimes in some events we have to put on like vigils, like the services of hope visibly standing together and supporting each other. The vast majority of people of this country and the city would not be divided and we will absolutely stand together.”

He also said, “Please maintain that stand please maintain your vigilance. He also mentioned about the security around mosques and the places of worship. “We are absolutely determined during this month at this time to keep people safe. We are determined with your support to keep London safe and to keep faith communities safe but we depend on you for community intelligence and for help us to keep safe.”

Venerable Stephen Welch, Arch Deacon of Middlesex, Representing the Bishop of London

Venerable Stephen Welch, Arch Deacon of Middlesex, representing the Bishop of London extended all the “warmest possible greetings.” He mentioned, “I had a little distraction in the last few days because of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. “What I have seen in the shadow of what’s gone on there is quite remarkable. Large numbers of people between faiths and between no faiths just turn out to work as community in response to an enormous tragedy.”

“I think in a gathering like this one can always sense the tangible depth of faith that is here and what can be achieved from that depth of faiths by broader and more open and more passionate collaboration in so many ways for the good of London,” Venerable Welch said and added, “I cannot believe my eyes in the different way; in response the way people of all faiths and none have had responded to the enormous challenge there and I have seen the community and the sense of common response care experience of grief and tragedy was beaten and mingles with hope.”

He said for us there is much to do in together; much to do in educating those young people; rooting the young in the deepest and fertile fruit of human society and civilisation. “Peace be to this house this evening. May justice rein our spirit and may love be in all our hearts. Thank you very much.”

Gillian Merron, Chief Executive of the Board of Deputy of British Jews.

Gillian Merron, Chief Executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews said, “I am here on behalf of the Jewish community across the United Kingdom. I want to wish you all the Happy Ramadan. I want to begin with some thoughts others have done on the awful attack on Muslims in Finsbury Park. We utterly condemn this act of terrorism. All good faithful people all good people should stand together in joining and rejecting hatred and violence from wherever it comes.”

“Hatred of people because of their religion has no place in our society,” she said and added that the divide between Muslims and Jews can only be bridged by getting to know one another, much better. With that in mind I look forward to making new friends this evening as I have done already. On behalf of the Jewish community thanking you for inviting me to break fast with you and Ramadan Mubarak.”

Father Stephen Wang Dean of Marylebone Church

Father Stephen Wang said, “I am here as Universi-

ty Chaplain. I am here as Catholic Dean of this area around Regents Park and also on behalf of the Catholic Church and the Bishop of that people, just to share the sentiment of those people how good it is to be together this evening.”

He talked of the commonality, friendship and commonness. “We talk a lot as people of faiths; we share so much; we dialogue; we recognise what we have in common; we also recognise what we don’t have in common sometimes. And both of them are important. That underlining everything that genuine human friendship which we believe comes from human heart. That unity comes not from the human heart but from the gift as we say; as we believe that the gift of unity is in those deeper values that we share,” Stephen Wang mentioned.

Father Wang also said, “We are standing in the middle of the crisis but without being overwhelmed by it. And I hope and I pray meeting this evening is the testimony of that desire in ourselves, in our communities and in our friendship together and that comes from our love for God and love for each other.”

Pheriza Gan Kotwal , Zoroastrian Trust Funds for Europe

Pheriza Gan Kotwal from Zoroastrian Trust Funds for Europe first talked about the meeting of SACRED (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education in Schools) where she launched Zoroastrian manifesto and syllabus this morning.

She spoke of love and peace and said, “There is no question of preaching peace and love.” She also talked about how much we have in common. For example, she said Muslims wear hat; in our religion, even small child of two or three years, men women or children wear topes; so all have topes she also showed Zoroastrian manifesto; prayer book which is Avasta in Latin or Greek.

His Grace Bishop Angaelos Coptic Orthodox Church

Bishop Angaelos of Coptic Orthodox Church said, “It is a wonderful time to be standing together; we do not only gather here during the month of Ramadan; we don’t only gather in the wake of numerous terror attacks; only a few days ago; we also meet today which is world refugee day and it is a day that culminates quite a lot of challenges we are speaking about: basement, marginalization, terrorism, alienation things which have regrettably been around our world, certainly about centuries but even more tragedy past decades when we

are supposed to be in a different time, in a different development with international agreements, statutes and treaties which apparently safeguard our rights.”

He also mentioned, “This is time for our religious leaders to take ownership of the space. It is time for us to increase the legitimacy of our messages that will never ever come through the tribalism. It is only when we are able to stand with our Muslim community or indeed in other times with Christians, Baha’is, Yazidi’s or people of no faith at all. It is only then we can truly find the absolute perfect space for our faith.”

“Our biggest enemy is not each other,” said Bishop Angaelos and added, “Our biggest enemy is secularism that shows that at best we are irrelevant and at worst we are complicit with it what are happening and for that reason it is time – the fact is that it has happened over the centuries, over the past decades or over the past years does not mean it must continue on our watch. Gathering like we have today at Scotland Yard, like we had yesterday at Finsbury Park, like we have tonight at the Islamic Cultural Centre, this is going to speak louder than any terrorist action; but at least to be genuine.”

The Coptic Orthodox Church Bishop also said, “In this melting pot, in this diverse community we live in, we are each other reality; we are each other’s present; and we are certainly each other future.”

Tricia Hillas Revd Canon St Pauls Cathedral Church.

Tricia Hillas Revd Canon of the St. Paul’s Cathedral Church expressed her gratefulness for the kind invitation to be at the Islamic Cultural Centre and “the warm welcome and the depth of your generous hospitality”. She said, “In this evening, in this holy night, in this holy month, in this holy meal, you set before us gracious hospitality.”

She also mentioned, “Hospitality of venue, hospitality of mass wonderful food. Hospitality of time to be together and to be with you and most of all sharing of what is important to you and of you which expresses that deepest generosity which is of the heart. And the hospitality of the human heart points to the merciful hospitality of the divine heart itself. And there are few things more significant and more holy than opening one’s doors and eating together.”

This was followed by many speeches by all representatives of religions from Jews, Christians, Buddhists and Hindus. All thanked the Centre and the Islamic Community and offered their condolences to the victims of the attack in Finsbury Park London and the victims of

the fire in Grenfell Tower London and thanked the police and emergency services and the British government for their full support and service. The representatives stressed the importance of interfaith dialogue to promote cooperation and understanding between religions and society and the importance of condemning terrorist attacks that could not divide society. He thanked all the Islamic Cultural Centre and its Trustees for the invitation and hospitality during the occasion.

List of speakers

Dr. Ahmad Al-Dubayan Director General Islamic Cultural Centre, London

Karen Buck, MP Member of Parliament for Westminster North

David Stringer, Chief Superintendent Metropolitan Police

Sheikh Khalifa Ezzat, Head Imam, The London Central Mosque Trust

Venerable Stephen Welch, Arch Deacon of Middlesex, Representing the Bishop of London

Gillian Merron, Chief Executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews

Father Stephen Wang, Dean of Marylebone Church

Marigold Bentlet, Assistant General Secretary, Quaker

Pheriza Gan Kotwal , Zoroastrian Trust Funds for Europe

His Grace Bishop Angaelos Coptic Orthodox Church

Tricia Hillas Revd Canon St Pauls Church.

Rabbi Herschel Gluck OBE Chairman of Arab Jewish Forum

Venerable Mioshang Shih, Forguang Shan Buddhist Order, Abbes of London

Professor Harbhajan Singh, Sikh Community Leader

Jay Lakhani, Hindu Council of Britain

David Hampshire, Interfaith Network UK

The Revd Dr. Anders Berguist St. Johns Wood Church

Mr. Lawrence Julius Member of the Board of Deputies of British Jews

Andrea Cooper Salvation Army

Peter Bennets Event Host & Interfaith Coordinator, ICC



Topkapi Palace items featured in Saudi exhibit

Anadolu Agency- A photo exhibition opened with the help of one of Istanbul's main tourist attractions that showcases a majority of the work on display for the first time to the audience.

Mustafa Aksay and Omar Faruk Aksoy organized "Unseen Stages of Makkah and Madinah in Topkapi Palace" in cooperation with Istanbul's Topkapi Palace Museum and the King Abdulaziz Research and Archive Center.

The opening ceremony was held with the participation of the Deputy Governor of Madinah Prince Saud bin Khalid

Al-Faisal, King Salman's Undersecretary Fahd Semari, Director of King Abdulaziz Research and Archive Center Muhammad Nouman and others.

Aksoy said the model of the Masjid Al-Nabawi, or the prophet's mosque, paintings from various periods, miniatures, engravings and works describing the phases of Madinah and Makkah in the past are part of the exhibition.

The exhibition is organized within the scope of activities of the Capital of Islamic Tourism which Madinah is representing in 2017 and will be open for three months.



Indonesia to build International Islamic University in 2018

IINA - "Indonesian President Joko Widodo wishes to make Indonesia's Islam a global significant force," Mastuki, head of the information center of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, said.

Mastuki made the remarks when commenting on the government's plan to start building the campus of Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII), or Indonesia International Islamic University in Depok, south of Jakarta next year.

Indonesia, which is home to the largest Muslim population on earth, is widely recognized as a land of moderate Islam. The archipelago takes pride in religious harmony.

President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) made public that plan in July of last year during the opening ceremony of the 26th Qur'an Recital Competition (MTQ) in Jakarta. But he did not mention an exact time frame for the plan to materialize.

The President: "The time has now come for Indonesia to become a source for the Muslim world's thinking, a source for the Muslim world to learn." He mentioned Indonesia as becoming like a patented drug recipe, which is a moderate Islam.

Meanwhile, Vice President Jusuf Kalla said that UIII would open post-graduate programs only and that

the Ministry of Religious Affairs would coordinate the operation of its campus, *Global Indonesian Voices* (GIVnews). reported.

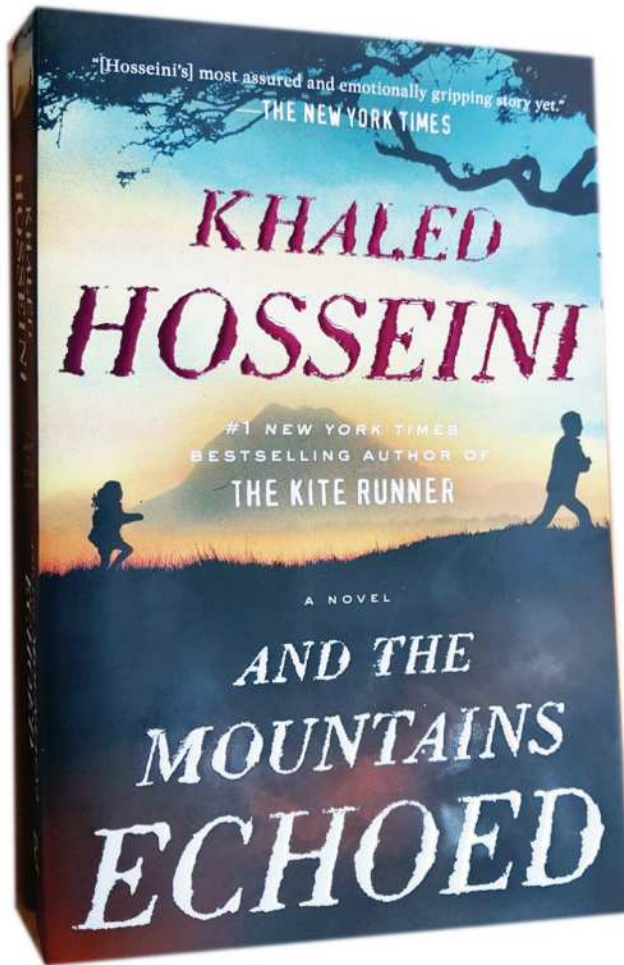
A number of experts from other countries like Egypt, the UK, the United States, Canada and Australia will be involved to design curriculums for the university. Students are expected from those countries and others, according to Kalla as reported by Tempo.co.

"There will be lots of research and development of ideas, and their contents will be 'international,'" the Vice President told the reporters. The university will have a grandiose, large campus in an area where student dormitories and a housing complex for lecturers will also be located. As much as 75 percent of students are expected to be foreigners.

UIII is meant to prepare Islamic thinkers and intellectuals, Jusuf Kalla said as reported by the Cabinet Secretary website.

The vice president added that the government would allocate a relatively small amount of funds for building the new university. Funding, including grants, had been planned to come mainly from abroad. A senior official at the ministry of religious affairs had said that many Western countries had expressed interest in the would-be university.

ARTS & CULTURE



AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED

Dr. Osman Abu Zeid

I said to my companion as we were leaving the Tawfiq Islamic Center in Minneapolis: "Could you please do me a favor and take me to a bookstore?". He said "Yes, there is a good one where you can get all the books you want". Shortly, we were in front of a bookstore at the Somali community market.

He said: “You will find all the religious Arabic books you could consider. The book *Riyadh Al-Salihin*, The Meadows of the Righteous, is sold in fine editions”.

I said to him “What do you mean? I want a store where I can find novels of the ethnic minorities in America” and asked him specifically about a book by Maya Angelou entitled ‘Mom & Me & Mom’.

He looked at me suspiciously; the sheikh who was preaching us a few minutes ago, and he even led us at the Tarawih prayers! Then, He took out his cellphone and wrote the title of the book and cheered “The book is at a bookstore in the Mall of America, and its price is such... So let’s go”. I was recalling in my mind, as I was browsing in the store halls, the complaining of the parents I met about their children. Dozens of stories and situations to those who have lost their hopes in the children who have endeavored to raise them on the religious and national inherent. It was a wonderful coincidence as my hands came into the novel “*AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED*” by an Asian author, KHALED HOSSEINI, and as I stood on my feet reading the golden introduction that outlined the suffering of Muslims with their children in their distant “diaspora”...

Once upon a time, in the days when divs and jinns and giants roamed the land, there lived a farmer named Baba Ayub. He lived with his family in a little village by the name of Maidan Sabz. Because he had a large family to feed, Baba Ayub saw his days consumed by hard work. Every day, he labored from dawn to sundown, plowing his field and turning the soil and tending to his meager pistachio trees. At any given moment you could spot him in his field, bent at the waist, back as curved as the scythe he swung all day. His hands were always callused, and they often bled, and every night sleep stole him away no sooner than his cheek met the pillow.

I will say that, in this regard, he was hardly alone. Life in Maidan Sabz was hard for all its inhabitants. There were other, more fortunate villages to the north, in the valleys, with fruit trees and flowers and pleasant air, and streams that ran with cold, clear water. But Maidan Sabz was a desolate place, and it didn’t resemble in the slightest the image that its name, Field of Green, would have you picture. It sat in a flat, dusty plain ringed by a chain of craggy mountains. The wind was hot, and blew dust in the eyes. Finding water was a daily struggle because the village wells, even the deep ones, often ran low. Yes,

there was a river, but the villagers had to endure a half-day walk to reach it, and even then its waters flowed muddy all year round. Now, after ten years of drought, the river too ran shallow. Let’s just say that people in Maidan Sabz worked twice as hard to eke out half the living.

Still, Baba Ayub counted himself among the fortunate because he had a family that he cherished above all things. He loved his wife and never raised his voice to her, much less his hand. He valued her counsel and found genuine pleasure in her companionship. As for children, he was blessed with as many as a hand has fingers, three sons and two daughters, each of whom he loved dearly. His daughters were dutiful and kind and of good character and repute. To his sons he had taught already the value of honesty, courage, friendship, and hard work without complaint. They obeyed him, as good sons must, and helped their father with his crops.

Though he loved all of his children, Baba Ayub privately had a unique fondness for one among them, his youngest, Qais, who was three years old. Qais was a little boy with dark blue eyes. He charmed anyone who met him with his devilish laughter. He was also one of those boys so bursting with energy that he drained others of theirs. When he learned to walk, he took such delight in it that he did it all day while he was awake, and then, troublingly, even at night in his sleep. He would sleepwalk out of the family’s mud house and wander off into the moonlit darkness. Naturally, his parents worried. What if he fell into a well, or got lost, or, worst of all, was attacked by one of the creatures lurking the plains at night? They took stabs at many remedies, none of which worked. In the end, the solution Baba Ayub found was a simple one, as the best solutions often are: He removed a tiny bell from around the neck of one of his goats and hung it instead around Qais’s neck. This way, the bell would wake someone if Qais were to rise in the middle of the night. The sleepwalking stopped after a time, but Qais grew attached to the bell and refused to part with it. And so, even though it didn’t serve its original use, the bell remained fastened to the string around the boy’s neck. When Baba Ayub came home after a long day’s work, Qais would run from the house face-first into his father’s belly, the bell jingling with each of his tiny steps. Baba Ayub would lift him up and take him into the house, and Qais would watch with great attention as

his father washed up, and then he would sit beside Baba Ayub at suppertime. After they had eaten, Baba Ayub would sip his tea, watching his family, picturing a day when all of his children married and gave him children of their own, when he would be proud patriarch to an even greater brood.

Alas, Abdullah and Pari, Baba Ayub's days of happiness came to an end.

It happened one day that a div came to Maidan Sabz. As it approached the village from the direction of the mountains, the earth shook with each of its footfalls. The villagers dropped their shovels and hoes and axes and scattered. They locked themselves in their homes and huddled with one another. When the deafening sounds of the div's footsteps stopped, the skies over Maidan Sabz darkened with its shadow. It was said that curved horns sprouted from its head and that coarse black hair covered its shoulders and powerful tail. They said its eyes shone red. No one knew for sure, you understand, at least no one living: The div ate on the spot those who dared steal so much as a single glance. Knowing this, the villagers wisely kept their eyes glued to the ground.

Everyone at the village knew why the div had come. They had heard the tales of its visits to other villages and they could only marvel at how Maidan Sabz had managed to escape its attention for so long. Perhaps, they reasoned, the poor, stringent lives they led in Maidan Sabz had worked in their favor, as their children weren't as well fed and didn't have as much meat on their bones. Even so, their luck had run out at last.

Maidan Sabz trembled and held its breath. Families prayed that the div would bypass their home for they knew that if the div tapped on their roof, they would have to give it one child. The div would then toss the child into a sack, sling the sack over its shoulder, and go back the way it had come. No one would ever see the poor child again. And if a household refused, the div would take all of its children.

So where did the div take the children to? To its fort, which sat atop a steep mountain. The div's fort was very far from Maidan Sabz. Valleys, several deserts, and two mountain chains had to be cleared before you could reach it. And what sane person would, only to meet death? They said the fort was full of dungeons where cleavers hung from walls. Meat hooks dangled from ceilings. They said there were giant skewers and fire pits. They said that if it

caught a trespasser, the div was known to overcome its aversion to adult meat.

I guess you know which rooftop received the div's dreaded tap. Upon hearing it, Baba Ayub let an agonized cry escape from his lips, and his wife fainted cold. The children wept with terror, and also sorrow, because they knew that the loss of one among them was now assured. The family had until the next dawn to make its offering.

What can I say to you of the anguish that Baba Ayub and his wife suffered that night? No parent should have to make a choice such as this. Out of the children's earshot, Baba Ayub and his wife debated what they should do. They talked and wept and talked and wept. All night, they went back and forth, and, as dawn neared, they had yet to reach a decision—which was perhaps what the div wanted, as their indecision would allow it to take five children instead of one. In the end, Baba Ayub collected from just outside the house five rocks of identical size and shape. On the face of each he scribbled the name of one child, and when he was done he tossed the rocks into a burlap sack. When he offered the bag to his wife, she recoiled as though it held a venomous snake.

"I can't do it," she said to her husband, shaking her head. "I cannot be the one to choose. I couldn't bear it."

"Neither could I," Baba Ayub began to say, but he saw through the window that the sun was only moments away from peeking over the eastern hills. Time was running short. He gazed miserably at his five children. A finger had to be cut, to save the hand. He shut his eyes and withdrew a rock from the sack.

I suppose you also know which rock Baba Ayub happened to pick. When he saw the name on it, he turned his face heavenward and let out a scream. With a broken heart, he lifted his youngest son into his arms, and Qais, who had blind trust in his father, happily wrapped his arms around Baba Ayub's neck. It wasn't until Baba Ayub deposited him outside the house and shut the door that the boy realized what was amiss, and there stood Baba Ayub, eyes squeezed shut, tears leaking from both, back against the door, as his beloved Qais pounded his small fists on it, crying for Baba to let him back in, and Baba Ayub stood there, muttering, "Forgive me, forgive me," as the ground shook with the div's footsteps, and his son screeched, and the earth trembled again and again

as the div took its leave from Maidan Sabz, until at last it was gone, and the earth was still, and all was silence but for Baba Ayub, still weeping and asking Qais for forgiveness.

Abdullah. Your sister has fallen asleep. Cover her feet with the blanket. There. Good. Maybe I should stop now. No? You want me to go on? Are you sure, boy? All right.

Where was I? Ah yes. There followed a forty-day mourning period. Every day, neighbors cooked meals for the family and kept vigil with them. People brought over what offerings they could— tea, candy, bread, almonds—and they brought as well their condolences and sympathies. Baba Ayub could hardly bring himself to say so much as a word of thanks. He sat in a corner, weeping, streams of tears pouring from both eyes as though he meant to end the village's streak of droughts with them. You wouldn't wish his torment and suffering on the vilest of men.

Several years passed. The droughts continued, and Maidan Sabz fell into even worse poverty. Several babies died of thirst in their cribs. The wells ran even lower and the river dried, unlike Baba Ayub's anguish, a river that swelled and swelled with each passing day. He was of no use to his family any longer. He didn't work, didn't pray, hardly ate. His wife and children pleaded with him, but it was no good. His remaining sons had to take over his work, for every day Baba Ayub did nothing but sit at the edge of his field, a lone, wretched figure gazing toward the mountains. He stopped speaking to the villagers, for he believed they muttered things behind his back. They said he was a coward for willingly giving away his son. That he was an unfit father. A real father would have fought the div. He would have died defending his family.

He mentioned this to his wife one night.

"They say no such things," his wife replied. "No one thinks you are a coward."

"I can hear them," he said.

"It is your own voice you are hearing, husband," she said. She, however, did not tell him that the villagers did whisper behind his back. And what they whispered was that he'd perhaps gone mad.

And then one day, he gave them proof. He rose at dawn. Without waking his wife and children, he showed a few scraps of bread into a burlap sack, put on his shoes, tied his scythe around his waist, and

set off.

He walked for many, many days. He walked until the sun was a faint red glow in the distance. Nights, he slept in caves as the wind whistled outside. Or else he slept beside rivers and beneath trees and among the cover of boulders. He ate his bread, and then he ate what he could find—wild berries, mushrooms, fish that he caught with his bare hands from streams—and some days he didn't eat at all. But still he walked. When passersby asked where he was going, he told them, and some laughed, some hurried past for fear he was a madman, and some prayed for him, as they too had lost a child to the div. Baba Ayub kept his head down and walked. When his shoes fell apart, he fastened them to his feet with strings, and when the strings tore he pushed forward on bare feet. In this way, he travelled across deserts and valleys and mountains.

At last he reached the mountain atop which sat the div's fort. So eager he was to fulfill his quest that he didn't rest and immediately began his climb, his clothes shredded, his feet bloodied, his hair caked with dust, but his resolve unshaken. The jagged rocks ripped his soles. Hawks pecked at his cheeks when he climbed past their nest. Violent gusts of wind nearly tore him from the side of the mountain. And still he climbed, from one rock to the next, until at last he stood before the massive gates of the div's fort.

Who dares? the div's voice boomed when Baba Ayub threw a stone at the gates.

Baba Ayub stated his name. "I come from the village of Maidan Sabz," he said.

Do you have a wish to die? Surely you must, disturbing me in my home! What is your business?

"I have come here to kill you."

There came a pause from the other side of the gates. And then the gates creaked open, and there stood the div, looming over Baba Ayub in all of its nightmarish glory.

Have you? it said in a voice thick as thunder.

"Indeed," Baba Ayub said. "One way or another, one of us dies today."

It appeared for a moment that the div would swipe Baba Ayub off the ground and finish him with a single bite of its dagger-sharp teeth. But something made the creature hesitate. It narrowed its eyes. Perhaps it was the craziness of the old man's words. Perhaps it was the man's appearance, the shredded

garb, the bloodied face, the dust that coated him head to toe, the open sores on his skin. Or perhaps it was that, in the old man's eyes, the div found not even a tinge of fear.

Where did you say you came from?

"Maidan Sabz," said Baba Ayub.

It must be far away, by the look of you, this Maidan Sabz.

"I did not come here to palaver. I came here to—"

The div raised one clawed hand. Yes. Yes. You've come to kill me. I know. But surely I can be granted a few last words before I am slain.

"Very well," said Baba Ayub. "But only a few."

I thank you. The div grinned. May I ask what evil I have committed against you so as to warrant death?

"You took from me my youngest son," Baba Ayub replied. "He was in the world the dearest thing to me."

The div grunted and tapped its chin. I have taken many children from many fathers, it said.

Baba Ayub angrily drew his scythe. "Then I shall exact revenge on their behalf as well."

I must say your courage rouses in me a surge of admiration.

"You know nothing of courage," said Baba Ayub. "For courage, there must be something at stake. I come here with nothing to lose."

You have your life to lose, said the div.

"You already took that from me."

The div grunted again and studied Baba Ayub thoughtfully. After a time, it said, Very well, then. I will grant you your duel. But first I ask that you follow me.

"Be quick," Baba Ayub said, "I am out of patience." But the div was already walking toward a giant hallway, and Baba Ayub had no choice but to follow it. He trailed the div through a labyrinth of hallways, the ceiling of each nearly scraped the clouds, each supported by enormous columns. They passed many stairwells, and chambers big enough to contain all of Maidan Sabz. They walked this way until at last the div led Baba Ayub into an enormous room, at the far end of which was a curtain.

Come closer, the div motioned.

Baba Ayub stood next to the div.

The div pulled the curtains open. Behind it was a glass window. Through the window, Baba Ayub

looked down on an enormous garden. Lines of cypress trees bordered the garden, the ground at their base filled with flowers of all colors. There were pools made of blue tiles, and marble terraces, and lush green lawns. Baba Ayub saw beautifully sculpted hedges and water fountains gurgling in the shade of pomegranate trees. In three lifetimes he could not have imagined a place so beautiful.

But what truly brought Baba Ayub to his knees was the sight of children running and playing happily in the garden. They chased one another through the walkways and around trees. They played games of hide-and-seek behind the hedges. Baba Ayub's eyes searched among the children and at last found what he was looking for. There he was! His son Qais, alive, and more than well. He had grown in height, and his hair was longer than Baba Ayub remembered. He wore a beautiful white shirt over handsome trousers. He laughed happily as he ran after a pair of comrades.

"Qais," Baba Ayub whispered, his breath fogging the glass. And then he screamed his son's name.

He cannot hear you, the div said. Nor see you.

Baba Ayub jumped up and down, waving his arms and pounding on the glass, until the div pulled the curtains shut once more.

"I don't understand," Baba Ayub said. "I thought"

This is your reward, the div said.

"Explain yourself," Baba Ayub exclaimed.

I forced upon you a test.

"A test."

A test of your love. It was a harsh challenge, I recognize, and its heavy toll upon you does not escape me. But you passed. This is your reward. And his.

"What if I hadn't chosen," cried Baba Ayub. "What if I had refused you your test?"

Then all your children would have perished, the div said, for they would have been cursed anyway, fathered as they were by a weak man. A coward who would see them all die rather than burden his own conscience. You say you have no courage, but I see it in you. What you did, the burden you agreed to shoulder, took courage. For that, I honor you.

Baba Ayub weakly drew his scythe, but it slipped from his hand and struck the marble floor with a loud clang. His knees buckled, and he had to sit.

Your son does not remember you, the div continued. This is his life now, and you saw for yourself his happiness. He is provided here with the finest

food and clothes, with friendship and affection. He receives tutoring in the arts and languages and in the sciences, and in the ways of wisdom and charity. He wants for nothing. Someday, when he is a man, he may choose to leave, and he shall be free to do so. I suspect he will touch many lives with his kindness and bring happiness to those trapped in sorrow.

"I want to see him," Baba Ayub said. "I want to take him home."

Do you?

Baba Ayub looked up at the div.

The creature moved to a cabinet that sat near the curtains and removed from one of its drawers an hourglass. Do you know what that is, Abdullah, an hourglass? You do. Good. Well, the div took the hourglass, flipped it over, and placed it at Baba Ayub's feet.

I will allow you to take him home with you, the div said. If you choose to, he can never return here. If you choose not to, you can never return here. When all the sand has poured, I will ask for your decision.

And with that, the div exited the chamber, leaving Baba Ayub with yet another painful choice to make.

I will take him home, Baba Ayub thought immediately. This was what he desired the most, with every fiber of his being. Hadn't he pictured this in a thousand dreams? To hold little Qais again, to kiss his cheek and feel the softness of his small hands in his own? And yet . . . If he took him home, what sort of life awaited Qais in Maidan Sabz? The hard life of a peasant at best, like his own, and little more. That is, if Qais didn't die from the droughts like so many of the village's children had. Could you forgive yourself, then, Baba Ayub asked himself, knowing that you plucked him, for your own selfish reasons, from a life of luxury and opportunity? On the other hand, if he left Qais behind, how could he bear it, knowing that his boy was alive, to know his whereabouts and yet be forbidden to see him? How could he bear it? Baba Ayub wept. He grew so despondent that he lifted the hourglass and hurled it at the wall, where it crashed into a thousand pieces and its fine sand spilled all over the floor.

The div reentered the room and found Baba Ayub standing over the broken glass, his shoulders slumped.

"You are a cruel beast," Baba Ayub said.

When you have lived as long as I have, the div replied, you find that cruelty and benevolence are

but shades of the same color. Have you made your choice?

Baba Ayub dried his tears, picked up his scythe, and tied it around his waist. He slowly walked toward the door, his head hung low.

You are a good father, the div said, as Baba Ayub passed him by.

"Would that you roast in the fires of Hell for what you have done to me," Baba Ayub said wearily.

He exited the room and was heading down the hallway when the div called after him.

Take this, the div said. The creature handed Baba Ayub a small glass flask containing a dark liquid. Drink this upon your journey home. Farewell.

Baba Ayub took the flask and left without saying another word.

Many days later, his wife was sitting at the edge of the family's field, looking out for him much as Baba Ayub had sat there hoping to see Qais. With each passing day, her hopes for his return diminished. Already people in the village were speaking of Baba Ayub in the past tense. One day she was sitting on the dirt yet again, a prayer playing upon her lips, when she saw a thin figure approaching Maidan Sabz from the direction of the mountains. At first she took him for a lost dervish, a thin man with threadbare rags for clothing, hollow eyes and sunken temples, and it wasn't until he came closer yet that she recognized her husband. Her heart leapt with joy and she cried out with relief.

After he had washed, and after he had been given water to drink and food to eat, Baba Ayub lay in his house as villagers circled around him and asked him question after question.

Where did you go, Baba Ayub?

What did you see?

What happened to you?

Baba Ayub couldn't answer them, because he didn't recall what had happened to him. He remembered nothing of his voyage, of climbing the div's mountain, of speaking to the div, of the great palace, or the big room with the curtains. It was as though he had woken from an already forgotten dream. He didn't remember the secret garden, the children, and, most of all, he didn't remember seeing his son Qais playing among the trees with his friends. In fact, when someone mentioned Qais's name, Baba Ayub blinked with puzzlement. Who? he said. He didn't recall that he had ever had a son named Qais.

REMEMBER ME WHEN I AM GONE

The fact that the war in Bosnia was allowed to last for more than 3 years is a disgrace for Europe and the world

Nadina Ronc

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was characterized by ethnic cleansing, rape, looting and the burning of villages but on July 11, 1995, it also became characterized by genocide.

As part of a meticulously planned and executed genocide, Serbs from Serbia along with Bosnian Serbs, under the command of General Ratko Mladic, separated men and boys from their female relatives. What would follow would be unimaginable because it had already once befallen Jews during World War II, so it could not and should not have been repeated -- but it did.

In a matter of a few days, in the worst atrocity in Europe since World War II, Serbian death squads butchered over 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica. To cover their crimes, they buried, dug up and reburied those bodies, making it difficult for families to find even the remains of their loved ones. Some families have only had parts of their relatives' remains identified. Some were told they might never find any remains, and others are still waiting. They are identified by DNA and recognized by the clothes they were wearing at the time of their killings.

This year, 22 years later, the identified remains of 71 more Bosnian Muslim victims were buried yesterday at the Potocari Memorial Centre. When the news broke that Dutch UN peacekeepers stood by and watched as Serbs separated

men and boys from women and that a genocide was taking place in Srebrenica, the world stood by and simply let it unfold.

It is hard to understand how a society (Europe in this case) that stands for human rights and freedoms could condone a genocide in its own backyard. We marked the 22nd anniversary of the genocide committed in Srebrenica. The world, as usual, remembered it for a couple of minutes but they will never apologize for not preventing it.

They will refuse to remember when Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, talked about Bosnia during a speech at the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993. Wiesel turned around to the newly elected President Bill Clinton and said: "We must do something to stop the bloodshed in that country."

Between the time Elie Wiesel made that speech in 1993 and the genocide in Srebrenica in July 1995, almost 250,000 people were killed and 50,000 women and young girls were raped, but it was not in Europe's interest to stop it. While we must move on, we must never forget our history and what happened to us, because forgetting it is tantamount to denying that it happened. We will continue to remember it and also remind the world of the lessons it keeps ignoring: Never Forget Srebrenica - July 11, 1995.

--AA