

THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE

# Journal

vol.46

Rabi Al-Thani 1439/January 2018

No.4

**Islamic Scholars  
urges at KUC  
2017 Bring mass  
media into practice**

## **MWL vows to wipe out extremist ideology**



**An Islamic Perspective on Media and Society**



# Letter From the Editor

## Donald Trump's decision shocked to the world community

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump triggered an international furor on December 6, when he recognized Al-Quds – or Jerusalem – as the capital of Israel, and relocating the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The decision overturned decades of US policy and ignored international consensus that the city's status should be decided only in a future peace agreement.

Therefore it came as a shock to the world community, which immediately rebuffed the decision. Saudi Arabia led the chorus of criticism.

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman effectively said: "Palestinians have the right to Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem as their capital."

The Muslim World League (MWL) and the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) followed suit, both rejecting the decision as a negation of any peaceful solution to the conflict.

MWL Secretary-General Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa prudently feared "the decision will face great Islamic anger and which opens serious repercussions."

The OIC on the other hand threatened to go to the UN Security Council to seek UN's full membership. Several European and Asian countries too deemed the decision as uncalled for, not to speak of worldwide protests and rallies. The Palestinians also took to the streets of Gaza and the West Bank with some pelting stones in anger and anguish. In response, Israel rained bullets killing several youths and wounding scores.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas questioned Washington's role as arbiter of Middle East peace negotiations and sought the United Nations to take over the mantle of final arbiter.

The US president opened a Pandora's box. He deserved brickbats for touching upon a very delicate issue that – everybody agreed – required talks and a lasting solution instead of any half-baked measures that may aggravate the situation.

Yet, in the pursuit of a "new approach," Mr. Trump charted a totally unconventional path, awarding a long cherished wish of Israel and its voraciously land-hungry Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

This heated up the Muslim sentiments, raising the degree of resentment against the United States, leaving no space for any sensible thinking or patience to await the final decision by the US leader on the whole issue.

We must not miss the point that Trump did not talk of an undivided Jerusalem when he recognized the city as Israel's

capital, meaning that he has managed to avoid falling into the Israeli narrative of a "unified Jerusalem."

While Israel categorically refuses to share Jerusalem as capital city with the State of Palestine, Trump has left "the door open to having the west and east of the city as the capitals of Israel and Palestine, respectively."

This is why Saudi Foreign Minister Adil Al-Jubeir said in an interview that Trump peace plan is 'not yet finalized', and the administration is still consulting with all parties, including Saudi Arabia and said that "the president is serious." Trump will present a clear plan in early 2018.

Even Israel says it is waiting for Washington to finish drawing up a peace plan.

Israel Katz, an Israeli minister said: "The Americans are preparing a peace deal. They did not tell us the details. They did not speak about a 'Deal of the Century'. Rather, they asked what we can accept, and they asked the Palestinians the same thing. And they will offer – as they put it – something creative."

The White House has said Trump remains committed to the goal of peace and notes he has not taken a position on the boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem or resolution of its contested borders.

Trump has set an ambitious goal of brokering Mideast peace and tasked his son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner to help lay the groundwork for direct negotiations. Kushner and other top Trump aides have traveled to the region to meet with Palestinians, Israelis and officials from Arab nations.

The status of Jerusalem is central to any peace negotiations between Palestine and Israel. The Palestinians have made it clear that east Jerusalem will be the capital of their future state.

Over the longer term, Trump has risked the odds of violence because it deepens Palestinian despair. The president will have to shed the mask of ambiguity, sooner the better. The furor was created because the announcement was widely perceived as siding with Israel. Being the leader of a responsible country, Trump must not do anything that caused the hopes of any real change in the status to fade, leading to another round of bloody violence.

In all this, we miss a sensible response and a patient understanding of the things unfolding before us. Violence has not paid an inch of benefit for Palestinians. It is high time we acted on matters of Palestine, or any matter of Muslim interest, in a prudent manner that requires patience and a rational thinking and a practical approach.





# The Muslim World League Journal

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No.4

• Rabi Al-Thani 1439/December 2017 •

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## 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.

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# MWL vows to wipe out extremist ideology

**Muhammad Zakir Hossain**

*Within the framework of its global message for the dissemination of peace and harmony among peoples, and as part of its activities at international point activity performed in the second European Union Capital, Strasbourg, the Muslim World League (MWL) concluded its Conference on “Islam is the Message of Peace” which was held in cooperation with the Association of Alsace Muslims, in the presence of H. E. Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary-General of the Muslim World League and the effective participation of elite intellectuals, researchers and academics, in addition to the attendance of diversified religious, social and governmental leading figures.*





***Dr. Al-Issa during his speech  
in the conference***



***Dr. Rabih Amara, Vice President of the Association of Alsace Muslims, delivering his speech***

During the conference, the participants affirmed their support towards the initiatives of dialogue and cultural coexistence around the world, exploitation of previous experiences in enhancing world peace, dissemination of a culture of mercy and cooperation for mankind benefit. They also reiterated the strengthening of cooperation among religious institutions around the world for promoting communalities and consolidating noble values, as well as cooperating for the confrontation of the atheist phenomenon, the associated rising of hatred waves, notable increase of violence, family disintegration and the alarmingly prevalent of moral decadence.

They underlined that encouraging the institutions vision that adopt moderation can be considered one of the most important means of drying up the sources of extremism and terrorism. They consider this matter capable of revealing the misguidance of the followers of terrorism and elucidating its present and future threat on both the Muslim Nation and world peace and security. They also indicated that it is essential to cooperate in the dissolution of international disputes and ending the ongoing conflicts, which can be done via adopting an impartial international mechanism that have the authority to oblige the aggression parties to cease their hostilities, force them to return the usurped rights to their due owners and establish justice, stop interference in the affairs of others as well as implement the programs of economic and social development that is anticipated to achieve community security, deepen the sense of man for his humanity, dignity and belonging to his homeland. Such programs will also

eradicate unemployment, poverty, crime as well as financial corruption that scatter potentials, drain resources, dismantle social fabric and prevent the establishment of society whose members enjoy security and decent living.

The participants have confirmed that confrontation of terrorism will not be decisive except by defeating it intellectually. This requires the academic institutions to set adequate measures for precise clarification of ambiguous concepts and correct the erroneous ones, explain the truth, refute misleading suspicions, and protect society from the traps of the currents extremism. All this can be done by enlightening individuals on the objectives, tenets, provisions and controlling principles of Islam as well as elevate the level of awareness among Muslims towards the challenges and the newly emerging issues, which the Muslim Nation is facing today. Additionally, the conference discussed that the participants should take advantage of the positive historical legacy in addressing the ethnic and religious conflicts as well as overcome the situations of the clash of civilization and cultural discordance and should establish the understanding, integration and dialogue between different components.

At his inaugural speech H. E. Dr. Al-Issa stressed that Islam is the religion of peace, (warning at the same time against the incorrect readings practiced by extremist groups for the dissemination of their deviant and misguided ideas among the people). He also pointed out the approach of the MWL to enlighten all on the sublime values of Islam, especially on supporting the efforts of coexistence, tolerance

and comprehension of Allah's law in diversity and disagreement, which is considered the cornerstone for achieving peace and harmony.

His Excellency indicated that the religious sentiments, which is stripped or uncovered of awareness and wisdom and fails to take into account the consequences that come at the top of the Shari'ah objectives in extracting rules, is seen as the dilemma that misled many people, including the slogan they raise in the name of Islam is a false one.

His Excellency said, "When we talk about the vocabulary of peace, we talk about a matter necessitated by life on our planet; we talk about something that everyone, without exception, needs and we talk about something that can never be enjoyed by anyone without the other. In other terms, this is in fact the promising and enlightened position for peace. Besides, it sharply conflicts with extremist theories, whether they are guided by ideologies of religious, intellectual or political extremism."

He added, "When we recall the fundamental values of Islam, we find that they are based on the teachings that require and harmonize with peace. Therefore, Allah Almighty said about His Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him); "and we have sent you not but as mercy to humankind" (Surat Al-Anbiya'a). Mercy is indeed the basis and pillar of peace. In a famous Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said- "I was sent to complete good ethics". Among the most important aspect of these ethics is the establishment of



***Scholars, elit intellectuals, researchers, academics and attendance of deversified religious, social and government leading figures attended the conferenece***

peace, security, stability and harmony. He indicated that when the religious sentiment of an individual is lacking religious awareness he can be provoked and the result is extremism. Therefore, the good example set by individuals in their dealings and the spreading of the Islamic awareness have due importance because they are very essential in this connection".

He stressed that extremism doesn't fear military confrontation as much as it fears intellectual one, especially after it has developed an intellectual entity. Although this entity is fragile and weak, we remark that extremism is not, in fact, ruled by a system; as it has neither established a political entity nor a military force. It was established by a virtual entity that employs electronic internet cyberspace, which enters every country in the world without an entry visa. It was able to make room for the promotion of ideas without a license. Thus, we

find that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made sincere and tangible efforts for countering these electronic terrorist accounts, through both the World Center for Combating Extremist Ideology "ETIDAL" and the Center for Intellectual Warfare, an affiliate of the Saudi Ministry of Defense. Likewise, the Muslim World League has exerted similar efforts in this area for intercepting these messages by both clarifying the truth of Islam and the dismantling of the theories of extremism.

After that H.E. Dr. Rabi Amara, Vice President of the Association of Alsace Muslims, delivered a speech in which he expressed his thanks to the Secretary General of the Muslim World League for organizing this conference in cooperation with the Association of Alsace Muslims and pointed out that this conference comes after the series of terrorist events experienced in Europe and especially in France that resulted in

anti-Islamic tendency and emergence of certain anti-Islamic slogans, such as that of Islamophobia, which has been effectively exploited, escalated and generalized by some of those who are counted as an integral part of the media body of certain European countries.

“We should concentrate and ponder via wise vision over such matters for addressing and projecting the real image of Islam in dealing and cooperating with the other in peaceful manner,” he added.

After that H. E. Vice President of the Representative Council of Muslim Communities in Strasbourg gave a speech in which he thanked the organizers of the Conference for selecting this significant theme for the event (Message of Peace) and indicating that all religions reject the appearance of terrorist groups which are falsely attributed to Islam. Furthermore, he commended the efforts of the MWL in addressing all the issues that are faced by Muslim communities with due wisdom and carefully studied awareness programs, while hoping that this conference will also issue recommendations that encourage love, interaction and acquaintance among individuals.

After all the speeches, the conference started its sessions that covered four topics -“Islam and peace”, “common denominators for life and positive coexistence”, “experiences and challenges” and “towards societal peace.”

#### **Dr. Al-Issa meets the President of the European Youth Forum**

However, on the sidelines of the



*Dr. Al-Issa in his visit to the Grand Mosque*

event in addressing humanitarian issues and global interaction with all, both at popular and governmental levels, H.E. Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa met the President of the European Youth Forum, Mr. Louis Martinez. an affiliate to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, the second capital of the European Union.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Director of the European Parliament presented a detailed description of the tasks of the Parliament, mechanism of its work and the responsibilities discharged by it.

During the meeting, they discussed aspects of cooperation in which the MWL could contribute together with the European Parliament to all issues, especially those (issues) of communities and the consolidation of the concept of citizenship and integration in order that peace can prevail among the people with their different religions and beliefs.

Both the sides discussed the

problems related to the immigrants coming from other countries to the European continent, as well as finding appropriate solutions to them according to resolutions adopted by international community.

At the end of the meeting, the Director of the Parliament accompanied H.E. Dr. Al-Issa in a tour around the Headquarters of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, including the Main Hall of the Parliament and other sections. After that H.E. Dr. Al-Issa was invited to watch a documentary about the Parliament explaining its achievements since its establishment.

#### **Important points by Dr. Al-Issa**

- Dr. Al-Issa: We must give a message to all citizens on integration, tolerance and respect for others.
- Some sectarian groups were deeply saddened by historical events for which we are not responsible.
- Thought is not only spread





*Dr. Al-Issa visits the Grand Mosque in Paris*



*Dr. Al-Issa visits Grand Mosque in Paris*

by force with the religion of God or confrontation, but with the help of good wisdom and advice.

H.E. Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa visited the Grand Mosque in Paris and met the Director of the Islamic Institute, Dr. Daleel Abu Bakr, and a number of Imams.

#### **Dr. Al-Issa visits the Grand Mosque in Paris**

Dr. Daleel welcomed H. E. Dr. Al-Issa and his accompanying delegation, while indicating to His Excellency about the Grand Mosque in Paris, with its ancient history and how it has always been since its inception. Likewise, he also discussed the agreement with the MWL and on following the same

steps outlined by it.

Dr. Daleel said, “This is a very good and dignified visit. We always call upon the MWL to double its continued support to the Islamic community here in France, especially in these critical days, where the said community needs awareness through conducting meetings, conferences or seminars”.

He added that: “We want to clarify to non-Muslims that Islam is a religion of love and tolerance, and it is a religion of dialogue and coexistence with the other; and it is a universal religion. Praise be to Allah that the MWL, through its tours, activities, programs and great efforts, has always given due concern to the Muslim communities with the help of its offices or its bodies or through the Islamic centers it supervises. This is a great message for which the MWL should profoundly be thanked, because it has a special place in the hearts of Muslims who feel tranquility when they hear the name of “Muslim World League” for its Headquarters (Secretariat General) is located in the holiest place on the earth that is Makkah, which embraces the Qibla of Muslims”.

Dr. Al-Issa then delivered a speech to the Islamic community in France, in which he said, “The MWL looks at itself as part of you and that it works with you to achieve its sole objective, which is focused on serving Islam and Muslims and raising the awareness of the Muslim community as well as advising them to follow Allah’s guidance.”



*Dr. Al-Issa reviews the vision of the MWL in a high-level, elite dialogue*

He said that the League is mainly concerned with serving Islam and Muslims such as giving a positive mental image of them to the world. “Indeed, Islam spreads only because of its good reputation, ideology is met with similar ideology and the religion of Allah is spread with wisdom and good exhortation and not spread by force or intellectual competition. Furthermore, the wars were regretfully waged among the Muslim themselves before they were fought with any other circle,” he added.

His Excellency pointed out that some sectarian groups unfortunately adopt certain historical events, for which they are not responsible, and so are we not as such acceptance is against reason. The Muslim must look to what is before him and is held accountable to his Almighty Creator for what he was entrusted with regarding himself and his community. His responsibility centers on the message that was entrusted to him, especially if it is a message of an institution. This in fact represents the vision and approach of the MWL.

He said: “We must give a message to all in social responsibility, integration, tolerance, respect for others, and should tolerate those who disagree with us in opinion. We are all in a single boat that must be protected and we do a single work that is intended to achieve a single objective, serve a single message and adopt one vision. However, despite all odds, we do appreciate that how one bravely shouldered this responsibility and stand to all local challenges. Fur-

thermore, the League supports in the context of concern and keenness for positive integration, which is a message to all, because without such positive integration, the matter will reversely be rebound and that Islam does not need such a reverse course that does not serve its good reputation.”

#### **Dr. Al-Issa visits UNESCO**

Furthermore, Dr. Al-Issa visited UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, and met the Acting Director General, Mr. Eric Falt, who warmly welcomed him and lauded the pioneering and significant role played by the MWL in enhancing cultural interaction and civilizational dialogue, underling that it is important to cement rapprochement among people as well as disseminate the culture of citizenship and integration among the members of communities within the framework of promoting love and fighting hatred, violence and extremism.

The SG of the MWL indicated that UNESCO should have programs that strengthen cultural interaction and its rapprochement among people as the organization’s major concern, by the virtue of its function as an international respectable body, focuses on the world’s heritage and culture. He also expressed that the MWL is ready to cooperate with UNESCO in the implementation of any initiative that genuinely serves the interest of the people, particularly with regard to effective as well as meaningful cultural and civilization interaction.





***The President of the Union of the Protestant Church praised Dr. Al-Issa's efforts in introducing the new vision of the MWL***

**Dr. Al-Issa meets the President of the Union of Bishops in France**

Likewise, His Excellency Dr. Al-Issa, met Michel Marie Jacques Dubost, C.I.M, Bishop Emeritus of Evry-Corbeil-Essonnes & President of the Union of Bish-

ops in France, where he and his accompanying delegation were welcomed and highly praised for this historic meeting, which was anticipated to have positive results in the fields of rapprochement, interaction and dialogue among the followers of religions and cultures all over the world.



***The Secretary General at the meeting with the President of the Union of the Protestant Church***

On his part, Dr. Al-Issa thanked Michel Dubost for his praise and comprehension on the objectives of the MWL, which undertakes to create a bridge of cultural and civilizational interaction with all. He said: "During my meeting with both His Holiness Pope Francis and Head of the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue, in the Vatican, we agreed to form a Permanent Committee between the MWL and the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue, in the framework of cultural interaction, which both parties seek to achieve."

**Dr. Al-Issa visits IFRI**

The SG of the MWL and the accompanying delegation visited the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI) in Paris, where His Excellency was received by Ms. Degoute Corinne, Vice President for Development of the Institute, and a number of researchers and thinkers, who are members of the Institute.

The Vice President of the Institute welcomed them and wished that the meeting with His Excellency would lead to the adoption of a number of relevant ideas and joint programs that would achieve peace and coexistence with all.

On this occasion, a dialogue seminar was held by His Excellency the Secretary-General of the League and a number of senior advisors and thinkers of the Institute, who are members of this body, in the presence of a group of French media personalities, as well as certain former ministers of the French government. Dr. Al-Issa indicated that the MWL strives hard to transmit noble hu-



*Dr. Al-Issa visits the IFRI*

manitarian messages that achieve love and peace, and clarify the truth of the Islamic religion. He confirmed that interception and defeat of the messages of extremism, published by terrorists through the Internet, and through social networking sites, are considered among the many tasks of the MWL.

The SG of the MWL pointed out that man today needs more time than before to listen to others and communicate with him in the light of the rapid developments. Moreover, man should be known through his perceptions, not through stereotyped images, which is replete with false information generated by historical conflicts and prejudices that cannot be relied upon in the open

space of knowledge and constructive civilizational dialogue.

Dr. Al-Issa stressed the importance of listening to each other, to find suitable formulas for peaceful coexistence among the components of our human societies. For, the difference between us is true; it is a law of life ordained by the Almighty, the Creator. But this doesn't imply that we live the life of antagonism, hatred and fighting as Allah Almighty has created us in different shapes and colors in order to know each other, not to fight or despise one another.

"The difference in opinion- no matter how deep it is - does not prevent us from seeing the issues agreed upon by the wise people of nations, including the risk of the clash of civilization created by

the notion of inferiority complex. Therefore, it is incumbent duty upon us to seek a peaceful coexistence, facing the great challenges that threaten humanity today, as the language of the numbers depicts the magnitude of the suffering that our world is experiencing today at all levels," he added.

The SG of the MWL expressed that the MWL is ready to cooperate with the French Institute for International Relations in all fields that serve all mankind. He hoped that these meetings and discussions, which aim at finding viable solutions to the problems and challenges facing the world today, will continue.

In conclusion, His Excellency answered a number of questions and inquiries raised by the





*Dr. Al-Issa visits Notre Dame Cathedral*

audience.

#### **Dr. Al-Issa meets the Vice President of the Conference of European churches**

In a related context, His Excellency Dr. Al-Issa met in Paris, His Eminence, Metropolitan Emmanuel (Adamakis) of France, the Vice President of the Conference of European Churches.

His Eminence, Metropolitan Emmanuel welcomed and praised the active role of the MWL in creating bridges of constructive interaction in order to achieve world peace and love between Muslims and Christians. He also expressed his admiration of the qualitative move in the activities of the League after His Excellency's accession to the responsibility of running it.

ity of running it.

His Eminence added that he was one of the participants at the Week of Harmony among the followers of religions and cultures in the Austrian capital, Vienna, pointing out that the real coexistence between Islam and Christianity has extended for more than thirty years, and stressed his encouragement for the bilateral dialogues initiative.

The Secretary-General commenting on it said that the MWL represents an umbrella organization for the Muslim people because its seat is in Holy Makah. Furthermore, the MWL is distinguished by its strong and good relations with the leaders of religions in the world. It always organizes conferences, seminars

and meeting so as to create some sort of active cultural interaction among the followers of religions and cultures in many parts of the world. Furthermore, the League is regularly invited to attend a number of activities in its capacity as the representative of the Muslim people and that it shows due keenness to attend, particularly if the activities are far from the impact of political slogans and known stereotypes.

#### **Dr. Al-Issa visits the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris**

Additionally, Dr. Al-Issa visited the Cathedral of Notre Dame in the French capital, Paris, and inspected it while being accompanied by the President of the Cathedral, Patrick Schweift, who

explained to His Excellency in detail the historical heritage the Cathedral occupies throughout the world, expressing his appreciation for this kind visit which gives positive impression that Islam is a religion of cultural and civilizational interaction.

His Excellency Dr. Al-Issa chaired a qualitative seminar on the message of the MWL and its new vision in regard to global cultural and civilizational interaction. Prominent former ministers, ambassadors, intellectuals, academics as well as distinguished media personnel, such as Jean-Pierre Chevenement, former Minister of Interior and former Minister of Defense, and Michel Dekelo, President of the International Diplomatic Academy in Paris, have effectively participated in this elite discussion.

After explaining the said message of the League, Dr. Al-Issa, compared the MWL, which is an international popular organization for Muslim people, with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which is a political organization that represents Islamic governments. He said: "The MWL is now almost 60 years old, and its importance lies in both the type of the work it does as well as in the fact that it is the only Islamic organization whose seat is in the holiest sanctuary of Muslims, Makkah Al-Mukarramah. Furthermore, the voice of the MWL represents that of the Muslim people. Thus, the significance of the League in the international reading of events is due to the importance of this seat in the hearts of Muslim people."

He added: "According to the



*Dr. Al-Issa visits Notre Dame Cathedral*

statistics of the MWL, the Muslim population all over the world is now approximately one billion and eight hundred million; and the League feels the great importance towards them, especially the aspects pertaining to their awareness and conveying to the Muslim people the true message of Islam with its moderate concepts."

Furthermore, he said, "We at the MWL are keen to present a global discourse that is recorded to both the international status of the MWL and the universality of the Islamic message that is to disseminate peace, love as well as respect others' opinion. This is, in fact, the moderate Islamic view that we must present to all and keep on preserving it."

"The provisions of the Articles of the Constitution of the MWL are conspicuous to all, as they allow those in charge to adopt a working methodology that clarifies the truth of the moderate and peace-loving Islam, and help confront extremist and terrorist ideas.

Based on the above two matters, the MWL launches its activities in the world, raising high the banner of Islam, peace and tolerance," he said.

He added: "But there are two particular challenges, which are not strong enough when they are properly and genuinely evaluated. The first is extremism that is falsely and unfairly attributed to Islam. The second is the counter-extremism, Islamophobia. When I say Islamophobia, I mean a single thing – i.e the hatred of Islam as a religion, technically termed Islamophobia. This is interpreted in the case in which an individual says, "I cannot coexist with Islam as a religion, irrespective of its followers, whether they moderate or immoderate" You remark here that Islam is hated as a religion in itself; and that Muslims are hated as followers of Islam, regardless of any consideration as to whether they adopt extremism, militancy or moderation tendencies. The problem with this theory is that it





*The Secretary General visits the Parliament*

has rendered invaluable services to extremism and terrorism because it helped to increase the size

of extremism. Furthermore, ISIS has gained supporters through the escalation and spread of the phe-

nomenon of Islamophobia.”

He indicated that the MWL has faced challenges and difficulties, but it will continue to defeat hatred and extremism. We have the ambition and determination to exert more efforts, conduct relevant studies as well as researches and take appropriate initiatives that are focused on the activity of terrorist extremism. It is not enough for anyone to suffice himself by saying that I am against extremism or terrorism. This is a general clause and that it must have a strong and influential impact.

#### **Dr. Al-Issa visits the National Assembly of France**

Dr. Al-Issa, also met the Chairman of the French-Gulf Friendship Committee at the National As-



*The European Parliament*

sembly of France, Nathalie Goli, Chairman of the French-Saudi Friendship Group, John Batiste Moro, and the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Forces at the National Assembly of France, Christian Cambon, who all welcomed the Secretary General and the delegation, hoping that this new phase led by His Excellency is anticipated to enhance cooperation in all fields, especially in areas relating to religious sciences and Islamic culture.

They all applauded the activities of the MWL, which aim at creating comprehension, tolerance and acceptance among different religions; and this is considered part of the world peace. This was evident to them from the various meetings they held with the representatives of different religions and indicated the spirit of openness and tolerance adopted by the MWL. Recent meetings and visits have confirmed the extent of this openness.

#### **Dr. Al-Issa meets the SG of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs**

Dr. Al-Issa thanked the members of the National Assembly who are heading various committees and expressed appreciation for the efforts they make at their respective Committees in strengthening the relations and friendships between France, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. He also commended their great interest in the efforts of the MWL, signifying that the work of the MWL is based on the subjects that we talked about. The MWL is concerned with spreading moderate



#### ***Dr. Al-Issa meets with the President of the European Parliament***

religious awareness, which respects ethical and human values. The MWL is also aware of its impact and that its presence and voice have their due influence on the Muslim communities in non-Muslim countries and the Muslim world.

In conclusion, he said, "In this

visit, we have met all religious spectrums of the Muslim communities in France, and we have been well received and most welcomed even by those who sometimes disagree with us in regard to our certain moderate messages, but they listen to us with great respect. We at the League also en-



#### ***Dr. Al-Issa meets with the SG of the French Foreign Ministry***





*Dr. Al-Issa talks about the efforts of the MWL in the European Parliament*

sure that this awareness should be based on the respect for the constitution, laws and the culture of the country in which they live. In fact, we are keen to create programs and initiatives for enhancing the national integration of the Muslim communities in all non-Muslim countries, especially European ones (countries), via the transmission of the message on tolerance and the significance of coexistence among all as well as a confrontation of disturbed thoughts and messages that are dispatched to terrorists by extremist circles. Moreover, we are also keen to support the program for training of Imams of Mosques with the support of official institutions authorized by competent

authorities in France and other European countries”.

In extending and strengthening the bridges of cultural and civilizational interaction with the Republic of France, His Excellency Dr. Al-Issa met the Secretary General of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Maurice Gourdault –Montagne at the King’s Hall at the Headquarters of the Ministry in Paris, in the presence of His Excellency the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to France, Dr. Khalid Al-Angari.

His Excellency Mr. Montagne welcomed Dr. Al-Issa and the delegation, while wishing that Dr. Al-Issa’s visit would lead to the establishment of interaction

bonds among Muslims in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the world, in addition to the change of the distorted image of Islam in Europe and the world while raising the awareness of the Muslim community on the proper spread of the culture of integration and national affiliation in all countries in general and in France in particular.

Dr. Al-Issa pointed out that the MWL has Islamic cultural centers. What matters here is what is going on in these centers; and what intellectual and academic materials they offer? Do these centers present Islamic moderation and ideological awareness as well as programs and initiatives of national integration? However,



***Dr. Al-Issa in his speech at the Sorbonne University on religious minorities***

he confirmed that these matters are very crucial to the MWL as we certainly know that many of the problems of extremism and hatred are related to the issue of integration.

**Dr. Al-Issa visits Sorbonne University**

Furthermore, Dr. Al-Issa, paid a visit to the prestigious Sorbonne University in the French capital, Paris, as part of his visit to France, where he delivered a lecture entitled “Religious minorities in Europe: legal and Islamic Perspective”, with the participation of Prof. Stephen Lacora, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science at the University, Professor Louis Blanc, Counselor of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Dr. Philip Petriya, Professor of Middle Eastern History at the University. The lecture was attended by a number of academics and university students. In this lecture H.E. Dr. Al-Issa spoke about

the legal rights and obligations of religious minorities in Europe and all other relevant matters. He specifically said that the members of these minorities must respect the laws and constitutions of the countries where they live. Furthermore, they must respect the country’s culture and particulari-

ties and should not impose any religious practices and rituals that are provocative or those contrary to the laws, rules and regulations of their host countries in which they live.

He also stressed that the members of these minorities should deal with due respect the public culture and national unity as well as respect the democratic values enshrined in the sovereign laws of States hosting them. However, he urged them to observe that certain individual errors should not affect the national law of the country in which they live. Likewise, the host countries should, on their part, grant these minorities their religious particularities in practicing their own (religious) rites and rituals and that the said countries should give these members the right of citizenship and officially recognize their respective religions.

**Dr. Al-Issa meets Ambassadors of the Islamic countries**



***Dr. Al-Issa meets Ambassadors and Representatives of Islamic countries to UNESCO***





*The Secretary General during the meeting with Rev. Adams*

Within the framework of the important and the fundamental work program of the MWL in its global interaction with all international and popular institutions and organizations that is intended to clarify moderation and true tolerance of the Islamic religion, His Excellency Dr. Al-Issa, met the Ambassadors of Islamic countries accredited to Paris and the permanent delegates of the Islamic countries to the UNESCO at its headquarters in the French capital, Paris.

The Chairperson of the Group of Ambassadors of the Islamic Countries and the Ambassador of Cote d'Ivoire to UNESCO, Professor Denis Houphouet, welcomed the Secretary-General of the MWL and stressed the importance of cooperation among Islamic countries in order to spread the culture of understanding and harmony among people, despite the difference in their religions as well as instill these values in the minds of the younger generations

so that we have a community that lives in peace and safety. Furthermore, His Excellency Dr. Ibrahim Al-Balawi, the Kingdom's Ambassador to UNESCO, pointed at the importance of such meetings, which build the bridges of interaction and communication as well as promoting relations among the people in the world.

The Secretary General praised the cultural and heritage efforts of UNESCO on their very noble objective for which it was created and the endeavors of cooperation with all.

Besides, he also met the President of the Federation of the Protestant Church in Paris, Mr. Francois Clavairoly, who applauded the sincere efforts of His Excellency, especially in his recent tour visits, which resulted in helping officials and leaders of different religions, the topmost of whom was the Pope Francesco Francis, to know about the task and objectives of the League in its new vision. This opened the horizons of

interaction and visits with all during its initiatives that aim at disseminating the culture of world peace among religions.

#### **Dr. Al-Issa meets the President of the Federation of the Protestant Church in Paris**

The Secretary-General expressed his happiness at the acceptance, understanding and cooperation shown by the officials of the institutions and churches in France. He pointed out that the MWL is open to the world and is ready to communicate and interact with all in humanitarian common values. Hence, the world today, is in dire need of the support and assistance of religious leaders to all groups, in order to educate people on spreading the culture of love, tolerance, coexistence and acceptance of the other. As leaders of religions, we should always respect, appreciate and support the sagacious opinion and the right direction, away from the political slogan.

He added, "We are visiting this Church, or religious institution, in order to confirm to the world our interaction, communication and friendship. We have visited many religious, ideological, intellectual, diplomatic and social institutions around the world to promote cooperation as well as the goal and message, which the MWL strives to achieve. These focus on the dissemination of peace and harmony among the human beings, elucidation of the reality of the Islamic religion, removal of the impurities raised by certain extremists, who are falsely affiliated to Islam, as extremists have also raised on other religions a lot of impurities."



## MWL condemns the launching of Houthi's Militia of a ballistic missile on Riyadh

Makkah - The Muslim World League (MWL) has strongly condemned in a statement the desperate attempt of the Iran-supported Houthi's Militia in Yemen, and which was represented in their targeting Riyadh with a launch of a ballistic missile, that was effectively intercepted and smashed by the Saudi Royal Air Force without allowing it to cause any damage.

The MWL has indicated in a statement issued by it that this criminal targeting exposes the misleading tendencies in which this coupe d'état junta and their supporters implicated. It emphasized that desperate aggression reveals the level of the Iranian regime's attempts for interference in the region via futile sectarian practices.

The MWL has also stressed that this desperate attempt comes in the context of the series of impetuosity of this kidnapped group, especially at the wake of its successive defeats. It reiterated that this criminal deterioration is anticipated to disappear and to be uprooted so that Yemen enjoys safety, security; and that those who disloyal to its legitimacy and history are overcome.

The MWL has commended the attitude of the governments and international organizations that denounced the futile and random launching of Houth for missiles.

The MWL has made it clear that it is fully confident that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is capable of deterring this criminal futility or wantonness and prevent its evils.





## Fighting corruption is a must to achieve development goals, says MWL chief

Referring to corruption as a “black hole” that hinders the development process of a nation, Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa called for confronting this menace in all ways possible.

Al-Issa, who is a member of the Council of Senior Scholars and Secretary-General of the Muslim World League (MWL), was addressing an event organized by the Saudi Anti-Corruption Commission (Nazaha) to mark International Corruption Day.

He told the audience about the different meanings and kinds of corruption. Al-Issa described the extremists’ skewed interpretation of the religion as intellectual corruption.

“Corruption could also be moral,” he said, adding that financial corruption is often preceded by administrative corruption.

Al-Issa said our world is not programmed; it is a world of choice, test and free interaction. Hence, corruption is present and should be confronted in all ways possible.

He stressed the need to fight corruption to achieve development goals. “Fighting corruption represents a measure of development,” he said.

“That is why, there are competitiveness measures

relating to many factors, many of which are related to fighting corruption, eliminating bureaucracy and enhancing transparency,” Al-Issa added.

He also referred to “compound corruption,” which involves practicing corruption and justifying it.

“There is a masked corruption, which involves calling corruption by other names, like tips, encouragement and special facilities, and the most dangerous type of corruption in this context is money laundering,” said the MWL official.

He noted that serious efforts in fighting corruption from the top had a positive impact on the. The Kingdom followed the way of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in fighting corruption at the top; for the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “I swear by Allah that if Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, should steal, I would have her hand cut off.”

This sends a clear message that no one has immunity, Al-Issa said. “But if fighting corruption starts from the bottom, the elite may think they are immune.”

He stressed that only authorized bodies should talk about corruption cases based on evidence. Al-Issa also praised the Saudi authorities for their efforts in fighting corruption.

## Rabita Roundup



*His Excellency the Secretary-General held a comprehensive dialogue in Riyadh with members of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in the United States of America: with the presence of Dr. Robert Satloff, a number of important topics were discussed.*



*His Excellency the MWL's Secretary-General meets in his office in Riyadh the Norwegian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mr. Øyvind Stokke.*





*His Excellency the Secretary-General of the Muslim World League meets in his office in Riyadh the Ambassador of France to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*



*HE Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa receives at his Riyadh office HE Mr. Geert Criel, Ambassador of Kingdom of Belgium to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia & the accompanying delegation. Joint aspects of cooperation were discussed in the audience.*



*His Excellency the President of Guinea Conakry Professor Alfa Condé receiving HE the SG of the Muslim World League in his residence during his stay in Paris.*



*His Excellency the Secretary-General of the Muslim World League, meets in his office in Riyadh the Ambassador of the Republic of Burundi to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Mr. Issa Moussa Tambuka.*



# Trump's Al-Quds Decision: A Miscalculated Move

**M. Nasir Jawed**

When President Trump unilaterally decided to change the status of Jerusalem, he also did it against the world opinion; he did it against many warnings from European as well as Arab leaders, against UN resolutions to this regard, and against his own promises of clinching a deal between Palestine and Israel to bring about a lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had previously warned of the serious consequences of such an “irresponsible and unwarranted step.”

The step was indeed an irresponsible and unwarranted as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been illegally forced off their land and displaced, their homes bulldozed, and their houses razed to the ground, not to speak of the casualties that included women and children.

So, why did Trump go about doing harakiri of US foreign policy by going against everyone in the world and enraging millions in the process? Why did he upset a decades-long policy of not stoking the flames of Jerusalem?

The decision in any case is fraught with dangers – danger of derailing the two-state so-

lution, upsetting any possible chance of future peace talks; and dumping Palestinians into an abyss of hopelessness and resentment.

## **A Great Disappointment:**

Saudi Arabia described the whole development as a “great disappointment,”

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman himself had publicly warned Trump days before the announcement that moving the US embassy to Jerusalem was a “dangerous step” that could rile Muslims worldwide.

The Royal Court said: “The Kingdom expresses its denunciation and deep regret that the (Trump) administration has taken this step, as it represents a great bias against the historic and permanent rights of the Palestinian people in Jerusalem, which have been affirmed by the relevant international resolutions and have been recognized and supported by the international community.”

The Royal Court added that while Trump’s move does not weaken the “inalienable and preserved rights of the Palestinian people in Jerusalem and other occupied territories,” it does “exemplify a drastic regression in the efforts to move the peace process forward. This

decision is a shift away from the historically impartial position of the United States with regard to the issue of Jerusalem, which will further complicate the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.”

#### **A Dangerous Step:**

The Muslim World League considered the US decision a dangerous step that “contravenes the historic rights of the Palestinian people in the city and the international resolutions in this regard.”

MWL Secretary-General Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa issued a statement saying “the decision will face great Islamic anger and opens serious repercussions, and that the simplest expression of this step is that it enters the issue of Al-Quds which is of key significance to the conscience of Muslims, thereby creating complex problems that would have an effect on the principle of non-influence on the final status negotiations.

The MWL Secretary-General said that since Al-Quds represents Muslims belief, the can only be handled through a just and fair solution that preserves history and which acknowledges the right to put things in perspective, without any bias or complications.

#### **No Role for US Now:**

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) considered Washington’s decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel as a sign of US withdrawal from its role as a sponsor of Middle East peace.

At a summit held in Istanbul, Turkey, on December 13, the OIC passed resolutions that declared “East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine, and invite all countries

to recognize the State of Palestine and East Jerusalem as its occupied capital.”

The declaration also rejected and condemned the “unlawful” decision of the US president.

It added that it was “not possible to give up on an independent and sovereign Palestine state, with East Jerusalem as its capital.”

“[...Trump’s decision on Jerusalem] is null and void on the basis of history, laws and conscience,” the declaration said.

“We call on the UN, EU and members of the international community to look after UN resolutions on Jerusalem’s status,” it added.

#### **Degrading the UN**

The United States is no United Nations, yet it carries weight on international matters owing to its considerable clout in the matters of world politics, economics and military power.

The UN, on the other hand, is a toothless international body, but it symbolizes legitimacy and a legal world platform to decide on matters of dispute, or any other issue of international concerns.

Therefore, the Dec. 6 decision by Trump to recognize Al-Quds as the capital of Israel brought forth a moot question whether the decades-long dispute — and arguably world’s longest drawn conflict — could be decided unilaterally by a country’s might and influence, or through a legitimate course that passes through the United Nations.

Space constrains me to go into the details of the history of the UN as why it was felt at all by the world leaders to create this world body, but bypassing the UN on matters of world concerns is the breach of a global trust.



# IIROSA makes progress in strengthening its achievements



## Afshan Abdulaziz

The International Islamic Relief Organization, Saudi Arabia (IIROSA), an affiliate of Muslim World League in the past months had firmly established itself among the global organizations that are active in relief operation largely due to the constant support of King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman.

IIROSA is expanding its field in a unique way by working with different international organizations and maintaining a give-and-take relationship that can strengthen capacity for long-term cooperation and collaboration.

The Governor of Hajjah city in Yemen, Abdulkarim Ahmad Al-Sunaini visited IIROSA headquarters and met the Secretary-General of IIROSA. He praised the great efforts exerted by the organization to relieve the people of Yemen during the last few years and helping those victims suffered from crises.

Hassan Shahbar, Secretary-General of IIROSA, welcomed him and said that under the instructions of the Muslim World League (MWL) Secretary-General, Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, IIROSA will continue providing the assistance to the people of Ye-

men and will always be ahead to support the poor and the needy in Yemen.

A number of general issues relating to the means of delivering food stuff and providing more health, social and educational services to the affected areas in Yemen were discussed in the meeting. Particularly, they discussed that the province of Hajjah, which is populated by huge number of citizens are not able to practice their professions that is fishing due to the war.

IIROSA provided 522,114,29 Saudi Riyals for relief and food stuff in Yemen that benefitted thousands of needy people. Moreover, the total amount of budget allocated to health relief from 1432-1438 was around 3 million riyals and during the last three years, IIROSA operated 1250 surgeries in a number of medical specializations in 21 areas in Yemen and distributed medical supplies to those affected by wars.

Besides, the organization sponsored 4820 orphans under the orphan sponsorship program from different areas in Yemen. In addition to this, IIROSA builds a total number of 20 mosques with an amount of 9 mil-

lion riyals, drilled 27 artesian wells and 69 shallow wells with an amount of 3 million riyals.

IIROSA organized an open medical day in Amman with the participation of fourteen Saudi male and female doctors graduated from different Jordanian universities to check 150 widows and orphans. The team advised the mothers regarding dental health, diabetes and eyesight.

Abdulkarim Musa, regional director of IIROSA representative office in Jordan, mentioned that this medical day gave the doctors and the patients' to understand more about IIROSA as they were introduced to different projects of the organization in Jordan and in neighboring countries. It was a successful project and doctors participated in it were honored for their great efforts and IIROSA look forward to more collaboration with them.

The Bureaucratic official of Saudi Cultural Bureau in Jordan, Hassan also expressed his appreciation to IIROSA and stated that they didn't expect that IIROSA had such huge projects in Jordan and that they support Palestinian and Syrian refugees in addition to sponsoring 10,000 orphans in Jordan. "We look forward to a close collaboration between the clubs of Saudi students in Jordan and IIROSA representative office especially in the area of charity works," he added.

Similarly, the Prime Minister of Gambia, Hajj Hussein Darbu praised IIROSA efforts for implementing 400 cataract surgeries in Farafenni, Gambia. Under the directions of IIROSA, a medical team from Saudi Arabia was sent for a week to alleviate the suffering of sick and poor people. "In the framework of IIROSA projects to fight blindness, this was the first medical camp to be implemented in the city of Farafenni," said Shahbar.

The launching ceremony was attended by the city Governor, Muhammad Diva, President of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Amin Tori, the regional director of IIROSA representative office in the Gambia, Mahmoud Fallata along with a number of doctors and high officials. Around 400 patients were checked and 4000 cataract surgeries were operated, 110 eyeglasses and 5000 eye drops were distributed.

The Governor expressed his gratefulness to IIROSA and the medical team as they exerted loads of efforts and struggled to reach the city across the river.

IIROSA has a dental clinic and medical hospital in NemaKunku in the Gambia and it also implement-

ed around 11793 health checkups for about 3 million riyals and conducted 8000 cataract surgeries and 628 lens implants during the year 2008-2016.

Likewise, the organization celebrated the World Sight Day in South Africa. The Minister of Health in South Africa appreciated the collaboration between IIROSA and the Ministry to fight blindness in South Africa and commented that such camps alleviate the sufferings while giving hope to sufferers. The celebration was held by IIROSA in Durban and attended by a number of officials. The Deputy Minister of Health also praised IIROSA's collaboration that resulted in a number of eye surgical camps in South Africa.

The Regional Director of IIROSA, Waleed Al-Saadi welcomed all the officials during the ceremony and thanked the officials for facilitating the medical camp. On the sidelines of the celebration, IIROSA also conducted 50 cataract surgeries in South Africa.

The organization conducted several programs to fight blindness in Africa. From August to September, 25,000 checkups and 27,00 eye surgeries were organized and also IIROSA established an eye medical center in South Africa.

Apart from implementing two surgical camps in collaboration with Sight Savers to fight blindness in Tanzania, IIROSA implemented 50 cardiac catheterization surgeries in Tanzania and provided medical equipment for an amount of 250,000 Saudi Riyals and donated them to JakayaKikwete Cardiac Institute in Tanzania as 30% of the population suffers from heart diseases. Professor Mohammad Janabi, senior doctor and director of this institute appreciated IIROSA efforts and look further to more collaboration. In 2014, around 10,000 people were treated and 600 cataract surgeries were implemented. Whereas, in 2017, 500 cataract surgeries and 4000 checkups were organized, in addition to the distribution of 300 eyeglasses, 260 eye drops, and antibiotics.

IIROSA also concluded its first neurological surgery in Mauritania. A medical team consisting of eight Saudi consultants conducted 60 prostatectomy surgeries that is removal of kidney stones.

Hence, IIROSA is expanding its humanitarian work at a robust pace and projecting itself into the future. In 2017, IIROSA has taken a disciplined humanitarian approach, harmoniously reinforce its presence in countries affected by crises and calamities, in addition to targeting a maximum number of people in need in terms of relief, education and health assistance.



# MWL appreciates kingdom's firm, just efforts towards Al-Quds

The Muslim World League has affirmed that recognition of Al-Quds as the capital of Israel is a dangerous step that contravenes the historic right of the Palestinian people in Al-Quds and the international resolutions in this regard.

Secretary-General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa said in a statement that any such decision will face great Islamic anger and opens serious repercussions, and that the simplest expression of this step is that it enters the issue of Al-Quds which fateful in the Islamic conscience in complexities affecting the principle of non-influence on the final status negotiations.

He hoped that the United States

would push it towards the peace process and forward, and that turning it back would pose more serious repercussions for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

He added that the MWL as an umbrella for the Islamic peoples confirms that Al-Quds represents in the Islamic sense an important issue that accepts only a just and fair solution that preserves history and the right to put things in perspective without any negative bias or serious complication.

On behalf of the MWL, he thanked the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in this issue, especially the recent declaration of a firm and fair stance towards it, translating what must be the voice of the Islamic world.





## Muslim Coalition working with international organizations to fight terror

RIYADH: Leaders of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) believe that it might be the best hub to fight global terror.

IMCTC General Secretary Lt. Gen. Abdullah bin Othman Al-Saleh revealed the nature of the work of the alliance, a platform that aims to open areas of co-operation between member states, taking into consideration integration with supporting states outside the alliance and the relevant organizations interested in fighting terrorism.

Al-Saleh said in a news conference he held with retired Gen. Raheel Sharif, the coalition's military commander, and Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary-General of the Muslim World League, that the defense ministers of the IMCTC, in their first meeting in Riyadh, exchanged information and initiatives which will be presented soon, noting that there are institutional plans and strategies aimed at drying up the sources of terrorism and its finances.

Al-Saleh also stated that participation in the implementation of initiatives would be voluntary for IMCTC member states. He stressed that each plan would be subject to continuous monitoring, follow-up and evaluation to measure the extent of its success and the possibility of developing it to get better results.

Al-Saleh said that working with international organizations is considered to be the bedrock of the coalition. He said there is a project underway to be presented to the ministers, which would monitor open sources all over the world in search of extremist and hate rhetoric.

Al-Issa defined "terrorism" as an organized act which causes fear, concern and property destruction and is operated by organizations and groups with an ideological background. He also stressed that military confrontation is important but does not uproot terrorism because the more important strategy is the intellectual confrontation.





# YEARLY ISLAMIC CALENDAR 1439 A.H.

## The Hijri Calendar - A Defining Episode In Islam

**Dr. Mrs. Fatima Taneem Ruknuddeen**

Millions of people globally from all walks of life welcomed the New Year 2018 of the Gregorian Calendar with pomp and gaiety. This Gregorian Calendar is the ‘de-facto’ or so-called international standard calendar used worldwide for civil and official purposes. Yet there are about 40 other types of calendars still being used by various communities and countries of the world, mainly for their religious and social activities.

Since time immemorial, humans have been utilizing various systems of time-reckoning; with the earliest calendars being based either on the movement of the Sun or the Moon or sometimes both. Thus, these calendars were named Solar, Lunar and Lunisolar. The early calendars were strongly influenced by the be-

liefs, traditions and the geography of varied communities utilizing them. Such calendars provided deeper understanding of the history, culture, scientific development and religion of its followers. Their constant use in everyday affairs streamlined the societies of the past and still continues to impact us in this modern age of digitalization.

A Lunar calendar being widely used by 1.7 billion Muslims across the globe since a thousand odd years is the Hijri or The Islamic Calendar. Muslims have been referring to it mainly for their festivals and religious observances. It is of immense importance to Muslims and plays a vital role in their lives. In September 2017, Muslims ushered in the new Hijri year 1439; though

on a subdued note when compared to the New Year celebrations of the Gregorian Calendar.

An insight into the Hijri Calendar - Pre-Islamic Calendar

The birth of Islam did not give rise to the Islamic Calendar immediately; rather it was introduced much later during the second Caliph - Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA)'s time. Before the arrival of Islam, the Arabs used a lunar and occasionally lunisolar calendar without utilizing the year numbers. Instead they identified the years by important historical events and connected them to their own personal lives. A few of the historical events are stated below:

- The Year of Treason in 461 BCE: This was the year the Banu Yarboos stole goods that some king of Banu Himyar had sent for Kaa'ba.
- The Year of Ma'rib Dam Collapse in Yemen in 120 BCE.
- The Year of Elephant in 571 CE : This was the year when Abraha came to Makkah intending to destroy the Kaa'ba but failed miserably due to Divine help. A few months later, our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born in this year.
- The Year of Reconstruction of the Kaa'ba in 605 CE:

The Pre-Islamic Calendar had 12 lunar months; though there was no standard when it came to numbering their months. Traditionally, the 'Qalammas' from the Banu Kinanah tribe would announce the time of onset of the next Hajj and the 'sacred months'. These sacred months were the 4 months observed in the whole of Arabia since the time of Prophet Ibrahim (AS). But the pagan Arabs used to commonly practice 'al-nasi' i.e., postponing or transposing of the months. This was done in two ways –

1) 1. Whenever it suited their needs of revenge and fighting; the Arabs would declare the 'sacred' month to be ordinary and later make the ordinary month 'sacred' to make up the deficiency. According to the Seerah writers, the Arabs had made one year Muharram ordinary and the next month of 'Safar' sacred.

2. Another way of 'Nasi' was the addition of a month in order to synchronise their lunar year to the solar year to make the Hajj fall in the same season every year to avoid inconveniences caused by the seasonal conditions and to increase trade. The pagan Arabs used to add a month after every 3 years, and for the next 36 years, Hajj was observed on dates other than the actual days of Dhul-Hijja.

After Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him)

migrated to Madina, Muslims started to name the years after its main events. For instance, the first year of Prophet (peace be upon him)'s residence in Madinah was called "The Year of Permission to travel"; the second year was called "The Year of the Command to Fight"; the third year was called "The Year of the Test"; and so on. But later on, the custom of naming the year after the main events was abandoned. After the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) abolished the practice 'of al-nasi' and the 12 lunar months were established.

### Origin Of The Hijri Calendar

The second Caliph Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA) was the first 'settler of dates'. In 638 CE, Caliph Umar (RA) received a letter from his Governor of Basra, Abu Musa Al-Asha'ri (RA) stressing the need for proper dating system so as to obey the Caliph's commands. Umar (RA) consulted his advisors as the vast fund of the expanding Islamic Empire also needed to be updated regularly. Though the Persian and the Jewish systems of tabulation were proposed, the assembly of the notables eventually agreed to utilize a Distinct Islamic Calendar with the Prophet (peace be upon him)'s migration to Madinah, the Hijra, being the Epoch of the Islamic Era. The date of Hijra was known to all those present and did not arouse controversy like did the date of Prophet (peace be upon him)'s birth and the date of first Divine message. The Hijra was the Divinely-ordained migration of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and His Companions (RA) along with their families from Makkah to Madinah to save them from intolerable persecution at the hands of the pagan Arabs. 'Hijra' denoted a stupendous milestone in Islam leading to the foundation of the first Muslim City State of Madinah and the subsequent rise of Islam from thence onwards. Although the actual month of the Prophets (peace be upon him)'s entry into Madinah was Rabi'-al-Awwal; the month of Muaharram was taken as the first month of the Islamic Hijra year; and for all future times, the Islamic Era was counted from it. Thus, 1st Muharram, 1 AH corresponded to July 15th, 622 CE of the Christian calendar, AH being the latinised form "Anno Hegirae" denoting the 'The Year of Hijra'. Therefore, the Islamic Calendar is called the Hijri Calendar and was started 17 years after the actual Hijra and established the Islamic Year Count.

### Months Of The Hijri Calendar



There are 12 months in the Hijri calendar, the names of which have remained unchanged since Pre-Islamic times with the 'sacred' months also being retained, as ordained by Allah and His Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him). Ever since the days of Prophet Ibrahim(AS), the 4 'sacred' months had been observed by the Arabs all over the Arabian Peninsula. During these months, the Arabs would hold their markets such as 'Ukaaz' and they would go on pilgrimage to Makkah knowing that they would be safe on road and at home from raids, plunder and killings as fighting and shedding blood was strictly prohibited.

The names of the Hijri Calendar with their brief description is given below :

**MUHARRAM** – This is the 1st month whose name is derived from the Arabic word 'Harama' meaning 'to be forbidden' and denoted the prohibition of fighting as this month was 'sacred'.

**SAFAR** – This is the 2nd month and has 2 theories behind its name –

1. It is derived from 'Sifr' meaning 'zero or empty' depicting the empty Arab homes as its men returned back to their expeditions and fightings after a 3 month respite period.
2. It's name is derived from 'Sufr' meaning 'yellow' referring to the autumn time wherein leaves turn yellow.

**RABI' AL-AWWAL** – This is the 3rd month and its literal translation is 'first month of spring' derived from the growing of grass in this month. Our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) is believed to have been born as well as died in this month.

**RABI' AT-THANI** – This is the 4th month translated as the 'second month of spring' denoting the spring time.

**JAMADAL-AWWAL** – This is 5th month whose name literally means 'the first freeze' referring to the freezing of water in winter.

**JAMADAT-THANI** – This is the 6th month whose name means the 'second freeze' indicating the winter time.

**RAJAB** – This is the 7th month whose name is derived from the Arabic word 'Rajaba' meaning 'to be respected' indicating the sanctity of this month as it was 'sacred'. During this month the 'lesser pilgrimage' or 'Umrah' was usually undertaken by the Arabs as it was safe to travel.

**SHA'BAN** – This is the 8th month whose name is derived from the Arabic word 'Tashaba' meaning 'to disperse in different directions' referring to the Arabs

leaving their dwellings and going in different directions to search for water or fight their enemies.

**RAMADAN** – This is the 9th month whose name is derived from the Arabic word 'Ramada' meaning 'scorching heat' indicating the hot summer time. In 2nd Hijra, Ramadan was decreed by Allah (SWT) to be the month of fasting with the most Blessed nights of all, the Laylatul-Qadr also occurring in this month.

**SHAWWAL** – This is the 10th month whose name is taken from the Arabic word 'Tashawwala' referring to the 'scarcity of milk in the female camels'.

**DHUL QA'DAH** – This is the 11th month, its name being derived from the Arabic word "Qa'ada" meaning 'to sit' referring to Arabs being at home and avoiding fights as this was a 'sacred' month.

**DHUL HIJJAH** – This is the 12th and the last month of the Hijri Calendar and is named as such since the annual pilgrimage to Makkah or Hajj was performed in this month since Prophet Ibrahim(AS)'s time and still continues to be performed till date; being the 5th pillar of Islam. This is also a 'sacred' month. Eid-ul-Adha is also celebrated in this month.

Therefore, it is noted that all the 12 lunar Islamic months have been named according to the seasons or rituals seen when the calendar was first established and that they were in place much before the birth of Islam.

The important days or month of the Hijri calendar are as follows –

1st Muharram –New Year

10th Muharram –Ashura

Ramadhan –Month of Fasting

1st Shawwal –Eid-ul-Fitr

9th Dhul Hijja –Arafat Day

10th Dhul Hijja –Eid-ul-Adha

11th,12th,&13th Dhul Hijja – Ayyam al-Tashreek

### **Qur'an And The Hijri Calendar**

The Glorious Quran has mentioned time measurement in various Ayaats of its different Surahs, either briefly or in detail. Mentioned below are translations of a few Ayaats or its sections pertaining to the above subject –

•Surah Al Baqarah Verse189... : 'They ask you ( O Muhammed) (SAW) about the new moons, Say : They are signs to mark fixed periods of time for mankind and for the pilgrimage...

•Surah Taubah Verse 36... and 37... : 'Verily the number of months with Allah is 12 months(in a year), so was it ordained by Allah on the Day

when He created the Heavens and the Earth; of them 4 are sacred(1st, 7th, 11th&12th) months of the Islamic Calendar. ‘The postponing (of a sacred month) is indeed an addition to disbelief, thereby the disbelievers are led astray, for they make lawful one year and forbid it another year in order to adjust the number of months forbidden by Allah, and they make lawful what Allah has forbidden...

•Surah Yunus verse 5... : ‘It is He who has made the Sun a shining light and the moon as a derived light and measured out for it stages that you might know the number of years and the reckoning...

•Surah Yaseen verse 39 : ‘And the moon, We have measured for it mansions(to traverse) till it returns like ‘the old, dried, curved date stalk.’

The above mentioned Quranic verses form the basis of the Hijri calendar ever since its establishment .

### **Workings Of The Hijri Calendar**

Being lunar based, the Hijri calendar is tied to the phases of the moon. Each Lunar month is based on the time taken by the moon to complete a single orbit around the Earth and lasts a Full Lunation. This is the time span from one New Moon to the next and takes 29-30 days. Each new lunar month begins only after a Waxing Crescent Moon is sighted; this phase being observed immediately after the New Moon phase. The new day of the Hijri Calendar commences from the sunset or Maghrib time unlike the new day beginning at midnight in Gregorian Calendar. ‘Hilal’ is the Arabic term for the Waxing Crescent Moon and ‘Badr’ is the term for a Full Moon.

The traditional version of the Islamic Calendar requires an authorized person or a committee to make a physical sighting of the Waxing Crescent Moon to determine length of each month. Therefore, the actual length of the Islamic months cannot be predicted in advance. Sometimes, clouds and other adverse atmospheric conditions could otherwise obscure a visible moon thereby causing the new month to begin a day later at a short notice. A new month may also begin on a different day in different places and countries as the time of moonset at a location depends on its longitude.

Presently, to make the timings of the Islamic months and observances easier to predict and also to aid in printing Islamic Calendars in advance, many modified versions of the traditional calendar are used by several countries and communities globally. Some countries also follow the astronomical calculations to

determine the future dates of the calendar and are not dependent on the astronomical observances. Umm-al-Qura Calendar with its multiple reforms is one such calendar used in Saudi Arabia and followed by some of its neighbours. Very recently, UAE’s Unified Hijri Calendar of 1439 was launched in September 2017 and is based on the lunar cycle, astronomical calculations, scientific interactions and the Sharia. But these calendars may have different dates from the calendars based on actual moon sighting. Such date variations of printed Islamic Calendars is mainly due to the use of different visibility criterion for the first moon visibility by various countries and muslim communities in the absence of a single Global criterion. Although attempts have been made to have a uniform single Islamic Calendar that could be used worldwide; with the most recent event being conducted in Turkey in 2016, the International Hijri Calendar Union Congress wherein Islamic scholars and scientists from various countries collaborated and agreed on a single lunar calendar to be used by Muslims all around the world. But, unfortunately, this too did not materialize and the disparity about which day to begin Ramadan and Eid across the globe continues.

The Islamic Calendar consists of 354 or 355 days; being 11 days shorter than the Gregorian Calendar. Thus for each year that passes, Islamic dates fall on earlier dates in the Gregorian Calendar with the important days of the Muslims traveling all around the Gregorian months independent of the seasons. It takes 33 years until the Hijra year has cycled through a full Gregorian Year and given an Islamic date that falls in the same Gregorian month.

The current Hijri year is 1439 and 1st Muharram 1439 AH was observed on 21st September 2017.

In conclusion ,the Hijri Calendar provides innumerable benefits to the muslims. Muslims turn to the Hijri calendar for their acts of worship; be it their annual festivals or rituals or their monthly religious observances. It delineates the Madani phase of the Seerah and the other major Islamic events. It helps the Muslims to connect to their Islamic roots and further broadens their knowledge of Islam and its glorious history. It also serves as a reminder to the present Muslims the sacrifices made by the earliest Muslims for Islam and aspires us to do the same in order to seek Allah’s pleasure. Hence, the Hijri Calendar is of esteemed religious and historical significance for the Muslims of the past, the present and the future.



## Islamic Scholars urges at KUC 2017 Bring mass media into practice to tackle extremism

Osman Muhammad Osman

*Islamic Scholars have been urged to use the concept of moderation in preaching and avoid aggression, which does not symbolize the true nature of Islam as religion.*

*They said that Ulama or the Islamic religious scholars play an important role in explaining true Islamic teachings. They should use the mass media as a tool to counter extremism and prevent Muslims from being influenced by the ideology of terror groups.*

*“Some ulama and other learned ones stay away from the mass media, while the mass media is among the most important channels to disseminate accurate information which can protect the image of Islam”, Speakers added.*





**This conference is an affirmation of the strong brotherly relationship between Saudi Arabia and Malaysia**

Sheikh Dr. Rashid Al-Zahrani from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Saudi Arabia in his speech said that every criticism made by a preacher should be based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

"Let us not define religion with aggression or softness according to our whims ... but we must follow the true teachings of Islam.

"Avoid using aggression as it will lead to conflicts, which subsequently leads to division," he said when presenting his research paper titled "The Efforts of the Contemporary Ulama in Realizing the Concept of Wasatiyyah" at the Asean-level Khayr Ummah Conference 2017 (KUC 2017) .

Sheikh Rashid added that the concept of wasatiyyah (moderation) was based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

He also said that the appreciation of wasatiyyah concept would be able to enlighten and advance the Muslim population, so that they could play various roles in politics, the economy and socially.

The two-day long Khayr Ummah Conference (KUC) 2017 with the theme - 'The Manhaj of the Ahlu As-Sunnah Unites ASEAN', has provided a rare opportunity of meeting and introductory platform amongst other Islamic scholars in the Southeast Asian region to establish close ties for the long run.

The conference was attended by scientific and religious figures from ministers, intellectuals, scholars, preachers, thinkers and university employees, more than 1200 participants from ASEAN countries include Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam, as well as participants from other Asian countries such as Japan, China, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, with virtue Imam and preacher of Al-Haram Al-Makki.

This program looks to motivate the spirit of cooperation and solidarity between organizations and individual Islamic scholars in the Southeast Asian region in terms of scholarship, education, socio-economic, security and welfare.

With the theme 'The Manhaj of the Ahl Al-Sunnah Unites ASEAN', this is a program that receives cooperation from the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia and the Ministry Islamic Affairs, Da'wah and Guidance of Saudi Arabia (KHEIDBAS).

The organizers of the program are the Department of Special Affairs (JASA), Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Ministry, Al-Khaadem Organisation Malaysia (Al-Khaadem), The Malaysian Ilmuan Organization (ILMU), and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UITM) is entrusted with the responsibility as the Program Coordinator.

The conference was jointly sponsored by the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia and the Ministry Islamic Affairs, Da'wah and Guidance of Saudi Arabia (KHEIDBAS).

The conference was held at the Intercontinental Hotel, Kuala Lumpur from 26th until 27th November 2017.

A total of 30 research papers were presented in the conference. The papers were on various themes which has been set from scholars and distinguished thinkers from international sphere. The themes are included Manhaj Wasatiyyah Islam; The Indulgence of Manhaj and the Importance of Implementation; Threats which threatens the sustainability of Wasatiyyah; The Extrem-

ism Groups and its effect in disuniting the Ummah; The Efforts of Islamic Ulama in Implementing Wasatiyyah; Contemporary example in Wasatiyyah Implementation; and the Efforts of States and Islamic Organizations In the Implementation of Wasatiyyah and The Empowerment of the Ummah Solidarity

The research papers were presented in different languages including English, Arabic and Malay.

In the conference, a good number of workshops were held simultaneously with the intellectual discourse in hopes to further enhance the sharing of knowledge as well as contributing to the generation of the conference resolution. The religious and intellectual challenges facing Muslims in ASEAN countries and how to confront them, Muslim women in ASEAN countries and their role in building Khayrummah, Communication and cooperation among the Muslims of ASEAN countries (means and outputs), Skills and etiquette of dialogue with the other and Saudi experience in combating terrorism were the main topics of the workshops.

Exhibition was one of the main attractions of the conference. The conference also features the exhibition participated by various government agencies, departments and institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Exhibitions organizers are included the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Da'wah and Guidance of Saudi Arabia, Department of Special Affairs (JASA), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Al-Khaadem Organization Malaysia (Al-Khaadem), The Malaysian Ilmuan Organization (iLMU). The other participants in the exhibitions were: Abu Bakar Al-Siddiq center (Cambodia), Icheon Islamic centre (South Korea), University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), University Malaya (UM), University Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), University Sultan Zainal Abidin (UNISZA), Institute Wasatiyyah Malaysia, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM), Pejabat Mufti Wilayah Persekutuan, Al-Furqan Academy, Al-Kha'adem Youth, Al-Madinah International University, Amal Hope, Arees University, Bushra Holdings SDN BHD, Dakwah Corner Book Store, Id-rissi International School, Ilmu Salaf Dot Com, Karya Pis, Mkm Ticketing Travel & Tours, Pertubuhankemamusiaan Ensany Malaysia (PKEM), Sekolah Kiblah, Super Thinkers, Tajweed Made Easy Academy Global, Yayasan Dana Kebajikan Muslim Malaysia (YDKMM) and Yayasan Ta'lim.

The targeted audience of the program includes public and private higher education institutions, Islamic studies centers, government agencies, statutory bodies,

## **The importance of spreading the culture of constructive dialogue and peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims citizens and residents**

state Islamic religious council, centers of excellence and even NGOs.

This conference aimed to be a multi-disciplinary knowledge-sharing platform. The organizers hope that this conference is able to provide a clearer overview of the regional community on issues and challenges of Muslims in the present times and also in futures.

### **Why Khayr Ummah?**

1. In response to the great challenges facing the Islamic Ummah today and the aggressive campaigns in the international media and the spread of radical trends and ideas that belong to Islam directly or indirectly as well as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) needs to highlight Wasatiyyah, moderation, and tolerance of Islam.

2. This conference is an affirmation of the strong brotherly relationship between Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, and as a motivation for joint cooperation between the two countries in order to unite Muslims, promoting Wasatiyyah and moderation, strengthen Ahlu Assunnah Wal Jamaah in the face of the major challenges facing Muslims in this age and to strengthen the great role played by countries in the fight against terrorism and extremism.

### **Objectives of the conference:**

**The Conference seeks to achieve the following objectives:**

1. To discuss the development of "Khayr Ummah" in realizing the National Transformation 2050 (TN50) from religious aspects.
2. To provides a meeting platform and to introductions between fellow Islamic missionaries in the South-east Asia region to establish close and beneficial relationships over the long term.
3. To foster the spirit of cooperation and solidarity be-

## The importance of cooperation between the parties concerned with the service of the Prophetic Sunnah and the Prophet's Hadith

tween organizations and individuals of Dua'at in Southeast Asia region in terms of scholarship, education, socio-economic, peace, and welfare.

4. Promote the exchange of ideas and experiences of fellow organizations and individual regional Dua'at in the areas of education, economics, and social of regional Muslims.
5. Nurturing a culture of mutual help helps in goodness and piety by realizing the Islamic teachings that are fused to meet current challenges.
6. Explore the opportunities of cooperation and unity among organizations and individuals Dua'at in various areas that are important to Muslim Southeast Asian regional specialists and throughout the world in general.
7. Produce a new generation of visionary missionaries by maintaining the principle of "wasatiyyah" (simplicity) to ensure that ASEAN countries remain peaceful and harmonious towards the construction of "Khaira Ummah" holistically.

### **Closing Session of the conference:**

The closing session included speeches by the Minister of Islamic Affairs, Da'wa and Guidance in Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Saleh bin Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al-ASheikh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmed Zahid Hamidi. As well as the Director of Al-Khadem Foundation Sheikh Hussein bin Abdullah. The session concluded by announcing the recommendations of the Conference.

His Excellency Sheikh Saleh bin Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Al-Sheikh delivered a speech at the closing session of the conference. He stressed the strong relations between Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. Adding that the cooperation between the two countries included all political, economic and military fields, as well as cooperation in the face of terrorism, which is now a threat to the Islamic Ummah in particular and to humanity in

general.

His Excellency explained that the partnership between the two countries comes from the strengthening of Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jamaah through the promotion of religious concepts of Wasatiyyah. In this regard, the Minister pointed out that the organization of "Khayr Ummah" conference was timely; for many reasons: First; the great challenges facing the Ummah call for clarifying the truth of Islam and responding to the suspicions that try to link Islam and Muslims to terrorism. Second: The conference contributes to strengthening Ahl Al-Sunnah Wal Jamaah who are the majority of the Islamic nation.

In addition, he pointed out that this conference is the first of a series of conferences entitled "Ummatan Wasatan" which will be organized by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Da'wah and Guidance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the ASEAN countries. Adding that Malaysia has been selected as the first and important station for this series of conferences.

Moreover, His Excellency pointed out that the cooperation between the Kingdom and Malaysia reflects the sense of responsibility towards the Islamic Ummah, in particular, and the world in general, by emphasizing all the meanings of good for the benefit of all mankind.

In this regard, His Excellency Sheikh Saleh described Malaysia as the most important country in the Islamic world, because its leaders have the courage and the ability to take important and crucial decisions that support right and good, renounce evil, and reduce everything that might cause conflict between the Ummah or to enable the enemies of the Ummah.

### **Address by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior:**

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Dato' Sri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi delivered a speech of thanks to all those who contributed to organizing the conference, noting the great attendance and active participation in the conference by scholars and academics who came from ASEAN countries and other Arab countries to share their knowledge and experiences. Various disciplines; to provide inputs and enhance the role and contributions of Islam in nation-building, and unify ASEAN in a comprehensive manner.

"We must take the challenges we face today seriously," he said. "We need strategies to overcome them. We cannot move on our own. We must agree, confront and deal with the so-called Islamophobia, and the high image of Islam must come back again, and the humani-



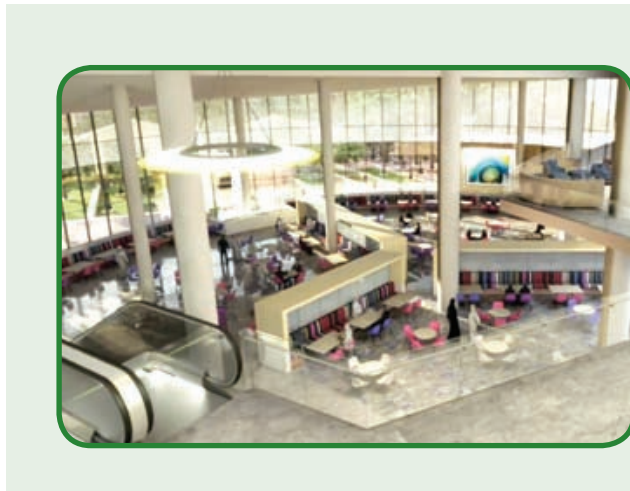
tarian tragedies related to the erroneous perception of Islam must be clarified and corrected.

He added “We need to clarify the reality of the Islamic religion and its correct way, and we also need to highlight the virtue of this nation, and justice in Islam and moderation in the biography of the Prophet peace be upon him and his companions, Yes, it is a great challenge. We have a common approach to terrorism. We must take a common approach in fighting it. We must intensify our efforts to stop the wars in the Middle East. We can not just witness the plight of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, We demand a quick and concrete solution before the situation gets out of hand.

The Deputy Prime Minister continued: “We must tell the world, and we affirm the justice and integrity of Islam, and the manifestations of the scientific and practical legacy of the great Muslim scholars, their rejection of fanaticism, especially the four imams Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi’i, and Ahmad bin Hanbal (may Allah have mercy on them). It is necessary to cooperate in unifying Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jamaah in the ASEAN region and protect them from the deviant sects that intend to tear apart their unity and spread sectarianism and differences between them. This is crucial to controlling the spread of any new form of terrorist groups, and we must also clarify the great deviation in ideas and methods in order to protect the Islamic societies in ASEAN from their dangers, which are committed to the centrality of Islam by rejecting all forms of accusation, extremism, Directed to Islam by the media and others.

He also mentioned that it is important to remember that our success will also depend on our strength, unity, and brotherhood in the coming years. The biggest challenge is to overcome the perception of many in relation to the curriculum of Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jamaah by providing them with the true knowledge of Islam and educating them for a clear and better understanding of the Ummah, stressing that this conference is very important for ASEAN society as a platform for brainstorming among scholars, academics, and thinkers.

He concluded by saying that the Malaysian government supports any effort to build Khayr Ummah, a better Ummah, and avoid extremism. Khayr Ummah conference is the government’s main agenda for building the Ummatan Wasatan according to the Qur’an and Sunnah according to understand of the companions and scholars of the righteous salaf and their followers. As well as establish relations between ASEAN and the Arab countries, paving the way for strengthening ties



between them, (And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; but they will not cease to differ\* Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He created them. But the word of your Lord is to be fulfilled that, “I will surely fill Hell with jinn and men altogether.”) (Surat Hood, Verse 118-119).

At the end of his speech, Dr. Ahmad Zahid Humaidi asked His Excellency Sheikh Saleh Al Al-Sheikh to hold the second session of the Conference in Malaysia.

#### Conference Outcomes:

The participants in the conference denounce the criminal act that took place at Al-Rawda Mosque in Sinai in the Arab Republic of Egypt, which claimed the lives of more than 300 worshipers. They affirm that this disgraceful act is a criminal act, which cannot be justified under any pretext, and that they condemn and denounce it. His executors are firmly and forcefully. The perpetrators must be dealt with firmly and forcefully.

The participants declare their solidarity with their Rohingya Muslim brothers against hostile practices, killings, forced displacement and racial discrimination. They call on the international community to take decisive and immediate measures to protect them and call upon the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASIAN) to do what is necessary to resolve this crisis.

#### Recommendations:

At the end of the conference, the participants announced the most important recommendations:

1. The importance of holding such scientific conferences in Malaysia and other ASEAN countries because

## **We need to clarify the reality of the Islamic religion and its correct way, and we also need to highlight the virtue of this nation**

they have a significant impact on enhancing communication, exchange of experiences, research in solutions to dilemmas and developments and challenges facing Muslims in order to consolidate the approach of Wasatiyyah and moderation and confront the threats of security and stability, warning of extremism, sectarianism, sedition, and difference.

2. Emphasizing the importance of Muslims' ownership of the causes of force to confront the multiple threats to the Islamic world. Among the most important factors of strength are adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah, uniting the Ummah, spreading knowledge and strengthening cooperation among Muslims on righteousness and piety.
3. The importance of spreading tolerance and the culture of managing the difference between Muslims in general, and Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jamaah in particular, and respect for the doctrines of the Muslims, and the imams, including the four imams, may Allah have mercy upon them.
4. The importance of spreading the culture of constructive dialogue and peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims citizens and residents, and the commitment of wisdom and good advice, and that the truth of Islam is the surrender of the heart based on conviction and acceptance, not coercion, as the Almighty said: "There is no compulsion in religion."
5. To emphasize that extremism, terrorism, and violence are a global phenomenon that cannot be linked to religion, religion or country, and the need to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and to counter the ideological and religious extremism that leads to it. The cooperation to protect Muslim youth from misguided suspicions and deviant ideas in various media, especially in social media.

6. Human rights should be considered. Respect for relevant international covenants and treaties, and good dealing with non-Muslims. The Conference also emphasizes the maximization of the greatness of Islamic Shari'ah from the five necessities of religion, soul, mind, money and the honor, and the consequent preservation of nationals and public and private property.
  7. The need to confront the plans and hostilities that aim to divide the people of Ahl Al-Sunnah Wal Jamaah through sectarian and political differences, and beware of the various methods pursued by the deviant sects and extremist and terrorist groups to seduce sympathizers and ignorance and recruit them for sectarian interests and bloodshed and sanctity.
  8. The importance of spreading the science of Shari'ah according to the Qur'an and Sunnah, activating the jurisprudential councils, and the Fatwa departments to achieve a conscious understanding of Islam and the hoped-for Wasatiyyah by keeping up with the latest developments of the times, with the importance of respecting the jurisprudential doctrines considered by the Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jama'a and their followers in their countries and to spread the spirit of brotherhood among them.
  9. The participants appreciate the generous initiative to establish the King Salman Center for World Peace in Malaysia and to support it with all that it needs materially and morally to achieve the great goals for which it was founded.
  10. The participants welcome the initiative of the University of Technology (MAARA), Malaysia to establish a strategic research center to achieve (the best nation) and its desire to cooperate with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Da'wah and Guidance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
  11. The importance of cooperation between the parties concerned with the service of the Prophetic Sunnah and the Prophet's Hadith, including the King Salman Mosque for the Prophetic Hadith and the National Modernization Committee of Malaysia, established by His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister Dato 'Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.
  12. The importance of intensive communication and mutual visits between the authorities and researchers participating in this conference from the ASEAN countries for the work of various programs to achieve the Ummah's charity.
- May Allah bless and bless our Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions.

## PALESTINIAN LOSS OF LAND 1946-2010



## OIC-IPHRC calls for ending long standing Israeli occupation of Palestine

Jeddah (OIC-UNA) - The OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) joins the international community in observing the 'International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people 2017'. On this occasion, the commission underlined the importance and urgency of ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine, which is the root cause of all systematic violations of their basic human rights, including the fundamental rights of life, worship and freedom of movement.

While the world observes this important day, Gaza is still under blockade, and 61 percent of West Bank is under total occupation and marred by Israeli illegal settlements.

During its recently concluded 12th Regular Session (19-23 November), IPHRC extensively discussed the current situation in Palestine and expressed grave concerns on the deteriorating human rights situation due to continued and increased violence at the hands of the Israeli occupation forces, resulting in extra judicial executions, home demolitions and other systematic violations against innocent Palestinians, including women and children.

IPHRC warned against continued Israeli attempts to undermine the sociocultural diversity of occupied Jerusalem, by transforming its physical and demographic landscape to enhance its Jewish character at



the expense of its Muslim and Christian identity.

The Commission stressed the identity of Al-Aqsa Mosque as a uniquely Islamic holy site and recalled all the UNESCO decisions on the Old City of Al-Quds and its Walls, which deny any Israeli sovereignty over Al-Quds; squarely condemn the excavations being carried out by Israel in the occupied city; and declares as illegal any changes caused by the Israeli occupation in Al-Quds and its environs. Based on these well-established pronouncements, the Commission reiterated the absurdity and null and void character of all the illegal texts approved by the Israeli Knesset to unify Al-Quds as the capital of Israel.

To this end, the Commission also condemned the repeated closures of Al-Aqsa Mosque and affirmed that this act was in contravention of relevant international law instruments including the fourth Geneva conventions, with the potential to inflame the religious sentiments of not just Palestinians but Muslims all over the world.

Referring to the latest report on “the legal framework of occupation”, presented by Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Situation in the occupied Palestinian territories Michael Lynk, on 15th November to the UNGA Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which clearly proves that Israel, the occupying power, was in clear breach of its international human rights and humanitarian obligations, the Commission urged the international community to use all appropriate means to force the Israeli Occupation Authorities to end its severe human rights violations. As stated by Lynk, “criticism without consequences is a recipe for drift and inaction.” All stakeholders must, therefore, intensify efforts and seek an advisory opinion from the international court of justice, on how to stop and hold Israel accountable for the range of human rights violations, many of which, including extra judicial killings, etc. are considered war crimes.

IPHRC regretted the inaction of the UN security council to act despite all recent developments, which indicate that the humanitarian, socioeconomic and security conditions in all occupied Palestinian territories continue to worsen under Israel’s blatant disregard of International human rights and humanitarian laws. IPHRC also expressed its disappointment on the recent celebrations held by Britain at the occasion of 100 years after Balfour promise was issued and fully endorsed the OIC council of foreign ministers’ resolution against the Balfour promise celebrations.

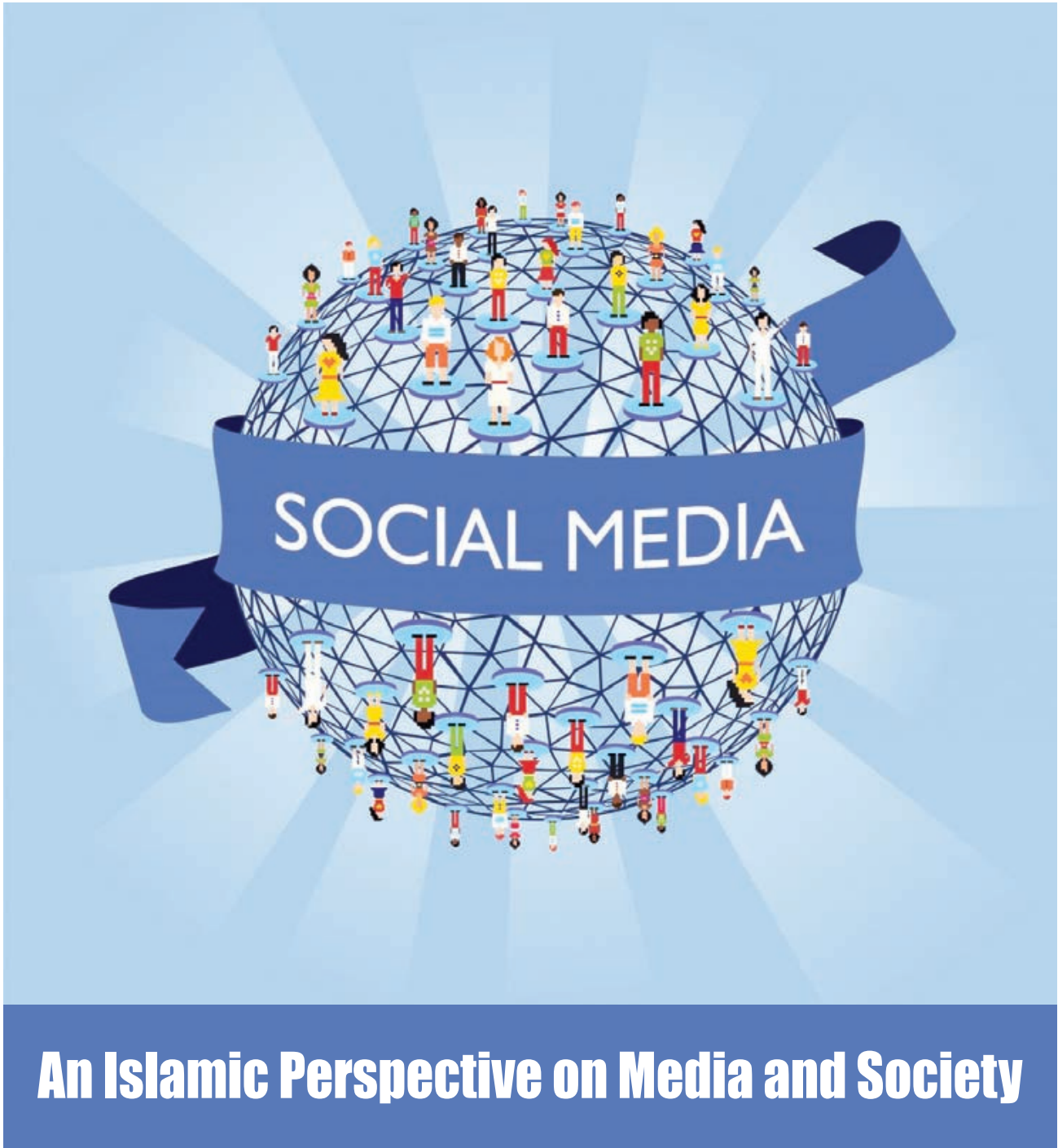
On the other hand, the Commission welcomed the



approval of the draft resolutions approved in the UNGA fourth committee (Special Political and Decolonization) earlier this month, reflecting international consensus on the illegality of Israeli settlement activities, and the importance of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In order to overcome severe funding shortfalls, IPHRC called upon all Member States to explore ways and means to ensure sufficient and predictable funding for UNRWA mandate. IPHRC also welcomed the recent reconciliation agreement between different Palestinian groups and stressed the importance of unity between Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as crucial to strengthening the struggle of Palestinian people against Israeli occupation.

IPHRC reiterated its call on the international community, particularly the UN security council, general assembly and human rights council as well as the Quartet to assume their responsibility and to put an end to the repeated, serious and systematic Israeli violations against people, land and sacred places in Occupied Palestinian Territory. In order to have a comprehensive picture of the ongoing state of human rights violations, the Commission is discussing to undergo another visit to Palestine (both West Bank and Gaza) and to present a factual report to the next OIC council of foreign ministers.

The Commission also urged members states to join the ongoing movement of boycott, disinvestment, and sanctions on products coming from Israeli settlements. It also called OIC member states to take lead in providing political, economic, and diplomatic support, at all levels, to the Palestinian people in their struggle to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination for the establishment of their own independent, viable and contiguous state, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital including their unquestionable right to return to their homes and property, as decided in various UN resolutions, and guaranteed by international law.



**Dr. Osman Abu Zaid**

*(The following is a speech that I delivered at a seminar on ‘An Islamic Perspective on Media and Society’, which was held at the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia.)*

THREE years ago, we observed the 100th year of the advent of a great scholar, His Eminence Sheikh Ahmad Sorkati, in the land of Indonesia.

Sorkati — my compatriot — traveled on foot from his remote, but a quiet and small, village in the northern region of Sudan to its eastern seaport of Sawakin port city lying on the Red Sea coast.

From there he headed for the holy city of Makkah and remained there for almost 15 years receiving education on religion and Islamic history and general knowledge.

Later, he went to Jakarta — a strikingly beautiful city — where he initiated a movement for guidance, reformation, education, and Dawah work all through the vast and scattered islands of Indonesia for the rest of his life.

I sincerely wish I also followed the footprint of the pious sheikh. I am fortunate that I came to Jakarta twice last year and now this year to participate in the 2nd International Islamic Conference on Islamic Media, which was organized last year by the Muslim World League in conjunction with the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the Republic of Indonesia.

This year I am here to participate in the deliberations of the 3rd Conference.

It is a great opportunity for me to meet you all at this prestigious Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University.

First of all, I am extremely glad to extend my profound gratitude to H.E. Prof. Dr. Ezi Amardi, dean of Postgraduate Studies College, and to his dedicated staff for their kind invitation.

I am also indebted to my Sudanese community here in Jakarta for organizing this symposium.

While selecting the theme of this seminar that is ‘Media & Islam—Problems & Solutions’ I understand you wish to tackle relations between media and Islam from the only angle of problems and challenges.

This attitude is acceptable from a methodology point of view as it seems that you follow in your action the method adopted by Huzaifa (may Allah be pleased with him) — the illustrious Companion of the Prophet, who once said, “People used to ask the Holy Prophet about the good deeds but I used to ask him about the bad deeds or evil, fearing that I might commit them”.

You are aware of the significance of media in this age and the opportunities and challenges.

This is exactly what we did two years back when we held the 2nd International Conference of Islamic

Media on “Impact of New Media & Communication Technology on Islamic Media: Opportunities & Challenges”.

We listened attentively to the inaugural but eloquent speech of H.E. Dr. Podeuono, Vice President of the Republic, in which he highlighted several positive aspects of the new media, the topmost of which was the empowerment of civil society, expansion of freedom of expression, including freedom of giving advice and directing constructive criticism to governments.

Let me quote verbatim what His Excellency said, as this is important: “As you may be aware, Indonesians are avid users of social networking media. Indonesians now form the world’s second largest users of Facebook and Twitter after the United States of America. Through Facebook status and chats, pithy tweets and blogs, more and more of our citizens now play increasingly active roles in fighting corruption, pushing for law enforcement, bureaucratic reforms, safeguarding the process of democracy and general elections as well as ensuring good governance. With new media, we are unmistakably moving towards the open government. Social networking media can anywhere promote online business, enhance fundraising for the poor, and bring together donors of rare blood-types and so on. From the perspective of religions, social networking media provide room for the establishment of new religious authorities. The flip side is that it may create fragmentation in religious authority. Islamic scholars, thinkers, and Muslim parents need to pay attention to the possible negative impacts of social networking media, especially on our youth and children, the hopes of future generations”.

The challenge that we confront today in the development of mass media is to explore, cultivate and upgrade individual capabilities.

Besides, we also need to create a congenial social environment if we have to achieve any space in the world of information technology and knowledge community.

The changes that are taking place in media technology globally are set to produce negative results in the matters of culture, thoughts, and persuasions, and which will be reflected on the type of life and daily practice of each individual.

You may notice such a changing attitude in the youths today — their tastes in art, for instance, have turned to foreign singing and music.

When it comes to supporting a football team, we



find that our youths are more interested in the performance of the players of the European football teams than their own local and national teams. The most significant change we find in their general behavior, their cultural views and in the values and norms.

There are certain dangers that can reach the level of social security threats such as the spread of drugs and alcohol, sexual promiscuity and dissemination of the thought of the terrorist groups and those who uphold the principle of charging people with disbelief.

The means of social networking have become a dominant feature of today's society.

Once I wrote on the subject and described in details people's pre-occupation with such means

I said: "When it is time for the meal at our modern houses, you can watch the members of the family taking their meal separately. You can see the 15-year-old boy holding tenaciously the stick that moves the board of visual plays while rapidly inaugurating a morsel between an electronic flash and the other. Besides him sits the 20-year-old girl deeply and firmly cradling her laptop on her lap navigating the other worlds and sites that interest her most. Her little 4-year-old sister requests you to read for her the story of the girl, Barbi, that ornamented herself to go out with her friend to attend a birthday party after receiving a gift from him which was a small dog. You can also spot a small boy who is holding his cell phone and his hands never cease to play with it".

The remaining members of the family are in the living room. Despite the fact that they sit together, we find they never speak to each other, because they are attached to



the TV screen.

Gone are the days of laying down the table or stretching on the ground a rough folding carpet that used to gather at least twice a day the members of the family at an intimate meeting to take their meal together. No longer are the chatting days we used to spend under the very bright light of the moon. To no return at all, have gone the fascinatingly attractive imaginative stories of grandmothers, which used to fill our soul as well as our mind with due warmth and emotion, such as the Arabic stories of the brave robust intelligent hero Hassan and his terribly beautiful sister, Fatima, which we have replaced now with the images of (Mario), the hero of visual plays video which transmit a an astonishingly unique message that read "Kill your adversary, other he will kill you. You are alone in this world and depend upon no one except yourself".

We accept this bitter fact or not, but our old world is vanishing fast. Our homes have virtually become hotels and that our roads lose their natural significance and have

**Under the framework of the new media means, the cultural relations are no longer founded on hegemony and subjugation**

changed into mere sites for parking cars in symmetric rows.

This world, whose main strings are linked to optic fibers networks makes us near neighbors with people living on sites that are far from us a thousand miles away whereas the nearby neighbor is unknown to us and that we do not even speak to him.

Do our homes, streets and an-



**Do our homes, streets and another thing we possess change alone, or does even man himself change in terms of his thinking, perception, and culture?**

other thing we possess change alone, or does even a human himself change in terms of his thinking, perception, and culture?

The latest health theories that I have been following since a few days, discuss that if a child remains for long hours in front of the TV, this will lead to the sluggishness of his ability to accept the others and to be in harmony with them. Other

scientific theories indicate that children mind commence developing at the pre-kindergarten stage, at which begins the instigation of mind for assimilation of information. Furthermore, experts underline the significance of this stage, especially in relation to the development the child's social abilities and comprehension of ethical principles. If he lacks such matters, his thinking will be confined only to himself and not to others. Our children spend most part of this stage of age in exposure to foreign cartoon films and entertainment films.

No society is devoid of such impacts, which are attributed to the cultural dominance, imposition of advanced countries for their media control with a view to serving their interests and those of their regimes. We are politically exposed to a type of neo-colonization. After we saw the colonizing countries exited the colonized ones from the main gate, we see them coming to us from the window via highly indispensable sophisticated equipment, which is represented in the

mobiles (cell phones) and "remote control" systems.

The cultural challenge in international conflicts in term of new fashions, haircuts and food types may seem less dangerous when compared with the suspicions and ridiculing of religions and creeds which have now become common practice, as well as the alarming widespread wave of atheism and abandoning of people of the religions they brought up according to it.

In fact, it is a single battle, and that the cultural and ideological infiltration is seen as nothing but a preliminary effort for the direct military invasion.

The world has been exposed from time to time rapid and sudden fluctuations that are similar to cyclones that cover the whole parts of the world with a single rate because the means that carry them are the same; from birds influenza to swine influenza, to the international financial crisis etc.

Burhan Ghuliyoun says, "The western culture grows and prospers at the expense of the marginalized cultures that attempt to address this situation by becoming part of the movement of new history, and not to remain isolated from greater changes similar to the incidence of Arabic culture when it interacted with the western civilization at the beginning and consequent surrender to inability and imitation of the conqueror colonizer in his motto, attire, customs and other conditions".

Certain people explain this situation by saying, "Under the framework of the new media means, the cultural relations are no longer founded on hegemony and subjugation; and the vivid example is that UNESCO gives good tiding

of promotion of “cultural Dignity” in its project of cultural convergence. They may further think that the technological development in media is a neutral one which embodies no conspiracy for vacuuming the cultural currents of their contents and elements but it does not only intend to promote and complement these elements but to preserve them as well, provided that such elements are healthy and safe.”

Furthermore, it may be said that under these new media means the competition field is no longer confined only to advanced communities but it expands to comprise all communities which can now be able to play the game the superpower and may even overcome them if they better use effectively this equipment in this world.

Let us assume for the sake of argument that the new mass media is a force in the interest of all and serves to equally secure knowledge to all so that no one can be able to monopoly knowledge for himself. This indicates that we can all complement each other by free interaction and exchange of information and knowledge in order to enjoy the fruits of collective intelligence.

Irrespective of the great aura of glory that surrounds the contemporary technological advancement, announcing its capabilities in improving the world dialogue and communication among people, we conspicuously remark the impact of interactive nature of these means. Additionally, we find that this nature gives the opportunity for the assimilation of the cultural and social diversity at a type of the collective meaning industry and consequent similarity of thinking methods. In fact, there is a noticeable change that largely affects the way of thinking and works in the fields of management, education, law, politics and even military activity. Furthermore, the world seeks to stereotype thoughts towards religion, customs, and traditions.

Many examples can be quoted in this regard. These include the prevalent spirit that is deeply rooted in our local culture in most Muslim countries and tends to occupy itself with problems that are not created from our own nature but from the problems that are imposed on society with the unavoidable drive of the dominant international culture. Likewise, groups may face disturbing obstacles in building their independent thought that can effectively solve such problems that are due to the unfortunate and acute dichotomy in the cultural values between those who want genuine solutions and those who want to follow suit of the west



in politics, economy and thinking techniques.

Is there truth for what we say regarding such acute and political dichotomy we, unfortunately, a witness inside our countries and in many neighboring ones (countries)?

Thus, media and knowledge — a twin force to cultivate individual ability and a mean for social advancement — may, however, turn harmful and become a means of destruction, exploitation, and monopoly, if not restrained or checked.

This is, in a nutshell, diagnosing the problems and challenges facing the Muslim community; and also what practical and viable solutions could there be.

The recommendations adopted by the 3rd International Conference for Islamic Media emphasized some significant aspects that offered a roadmap to the Muslim empowerment in world media.

It is worthwhile here to quote briefly from the resolutions that were unanimously passed in the Jakarta conference:

- To observe mutual relations between media and society, consider mass media as partner institutions in society and work in complementarity with other institutions and have a joined responsibility, which requires the coordination and integration of efforts.



**Highlight the social role of the various mass media, which is represented in projecting the social schemes that are undertaken by civil society organizations, and encourage individuals in Muslim countries and communities to give greater attention to social schemes.**

- To reject simulation and imitation for media practice models at non-Islamic regimes as such models are considered unsuitable for neither the environments nor the countries that witness political change or suffer from internal or regional disputes; and call for the application of the peace press model which is considered appropriate for Muslim communities that witness religious, ethnic or political conflicts or at which happened tremendous changes as a result of the political movement at the recent period.
- To elevate the role of religious, social and vocational values in media performance so as to contribute in the enhancement of the culture of dialogue and Shoura as well as the establishment of a political movement founded on transparency and disclosure of facts as well as standing to corruption and excessiveness, and exploitation of influence and power.
- To reaffirm the significance and promotion of Dawah institutions that continuously need improvement regarding content, style and reproduction of their materials; and require the organization of periodical meetings for meetings for those in charge at the level of countries, continents and world so as to achieve effective communication among them

with a view to exchanging thoughts, experiments and experiences.

- Highlight the social role of the various mass media, which is represented in projecting the social schemes that are undertaken by civil society organizations, and encourage individuals in Muslim countries and communities to give greater attention to social schemes.
- To disseminate media education and awakening among society members; approve the teaching of media education subject or course at schools and universities and develop it according to study stage and age bracket, establish centers and support institutions for the provision of required training and assistance to the pioneering project as the media education is considered to have a substantial contribution to the formation education of a generation that observe its values and is aware of the problems of electronic media, especially in regards to a security question, privacy and informatics crimes.
- To draw the attention to the numerous great challenges which the Muslim communities confront in media; and the Conference recommends the individuals of Muslim minorities to give due attention to their role in media so that they can have their influence in the countries in which they and communicate with their respective citizens for the presentation of the principles of the Islamic religion which was revealed by Allah Almighty for all mankind.
- To call upon the Islamic organizations to encourage communication among their members, promote the spirit of introduction and dialogue via utilization of the opportunities of (interlocking) and interaction, exchange of information via social networking, particularly among Muslim youth who are close, practically and effectively linked to these networks.

These practical and viable solutions have been presented in fact as a result of impregnation of thoughts among media students, specialists, experts and officials who met in the city of Jakarta to ponder over the problems of communication and media; and who called for further media cooperation and for the exchange of programs, experiences and studies as well as the conduct of joint symposiums and establishment of training centers as well as increase rendering financial support to these activities in a manner that serves media march in the Muslim world.

# Palestine Expo: Biggest Palestine Event in Europe

## Palestine is Still the Issue, says John Pilger

Dr. Mozammel Haque

*“Palestine is still the issue,” said John Pilger, an award-winning journalist and documentary film-maker, having won an Emmy and a BAFTA for his films. Pilger said, “When I first went to Palestine as a young reporter in the 1960s, I stayed on a kibbutz. The people I met were hard-working, spirited and called themselves socialists. I liked them. One evening at dinner, I asked about the silhouettes of people in the far distance, beyond our perimeter. “Arabs”, they said, “nomads”. The words were almost spat out. Israel, they said, meaning Palestine, had been mostly wasteland and one of the great feats of the Zionist enterprise was to turn the desert green. They gave as an example their crop of Jaffa oranges, which was exported to the rest of the world. What a triumph against the odds of nature and humanity’s neglect.”*



“It was the first lie. Most of the orange groves and vineyards belonged to Palestinians who had been tilling the soil and exporting oranges and grapes to Europe since the eighteenth century. The former Palestinian town of Jaffa was known by its previous inhabitants as “the place of sad oranges,” John Pilger said at the Two-Day Palestine Expo, held at Queen Elizabeth II Conference Hall, London, on Saturday and Sunday, 8th and 9th July 2017 respectively.

I met journalist John Pilger, who was awarded, in 2003, the prestigious Sophie Prize for ‘30 years of exposing injustice and promoting human rights’ and in 2009, was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize, at the Palestine Expo, the biggest Palestine event in Europe, held at Queen Elizabeth II Centre, London, where he was speaking at the third session on the subject – Palestine is still the issue.

Before I narrate what he said, I would like to talk about Palestine Expo and the proceedings of the two-day event.

### **Welcome to Palestine Expo**

Ismail Patel, Chair of Friends of Al-Aqsa welcomed to Palestine Expo by saying: “This year marks a significant point in the history of Palestine and Palestinians. 2017 marks the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, 50 years of the occupation of Masjid Al-Aqsa and 10 years of the Gaza blockade. Through the passage of time, and the irreversible damage caused by the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the Free Palestine Movement remains at the centre of political debate around the globe. This is also echoed in Britain, where millions are becoming aware of the on-going Israeli aggressions, and a cycle of violence which has ensued.”

He also said, “This year is also significant to Friends of Al-Aqsa as we mark our 20th anniversary. Over the years, we have been involved in campaigns, awareness events and political lobbying to bring attention to the daily sufferings of Palestinian life under occupation. We are indebted to all those who have supported us and assisted in bringing attention to this important human rights issue. However, despite our united efforts, the occupation of Palestinian territories continues and with it, the violation of the rights of the Palestinian people.”

### **Proceedings of the Palestine Expo First Day Saturday 8th of July 2017**

There were so many panels simultaneously running in different floors of the Queen Elizabeth II Centre,

London which has four floors. On the first day, Saturday, the 8th of July, 2017, in the Churchill Room at the Ground Floor, there were six panels such as Panel one was on From Balfour to Apartheid under the chairmanship of Hugh Lanning; the speakers were Virginia Tilley, Mariam Barghouti, Ben Jamal, Ghada Karmi. Panel Two was on Why is Palestine still the issue? The speaker was Ilan Pape. Panel Three was on Palestine is Still the issue; the speaker was John Pilger. Panel Four was on 50 years of occupation; the speakers were Mike Peled, Mariam Barghouti and Iyad Burnat. Panel Five was on Democratic Engagement and Justice for Palestinians; the speakers were Tariq Ramadan and Andy Slaughter MP.

On the same day, Saturday, 8th of July 2017, in the Abbey Room at 4th Floor, there were four Panels – Panel One was on Make Music Work for Palestine; the speakers were Maya Khaldi, Wissam Boustany, Lucie Caswell and Ruth Daniel. Panel Two was on intersection of Disadvantage Faced by Palestinian Refugees: What is the Role of Humanitarian Agencies; the speakers were Anani Kibrit, Mohammad Ataweel, Annie Shalan and Olga Cera. Panel Three was on Breaking Taboos – What Israel does not want you to hear; the speakers were Jonathan Rosenhead and Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi and Panel Four was on Artists Speak Out for Boycott, the speakers were Mojisola Adebayo, David Calder, Taghrid Choucair-Vizoso and Rachel Holmes.

On the same day, Saturday, 8th of July 2017, in the Westminster Room at 4th Floor, there were four Panels: Panel One was on The Origins of Zionism chaired by Sayed Al-Kadiri; the speakers were Miko Peled and Sai Englert. Panel Two was on Palestine Activism: Student Momentum; the speakers were Malia Bouttia and Malaka Muhammad. Panel Three was on Palestine and the Student Movement (FAQ’s), the speaker was Abdulaziz Sulaiman. Panel Four was on Activism: How? The speaker was Ilyas Nagdee.

On the same day, Saturday, 8th of July 2017, in the St. James Room, at 4th Floor, there were four Panels, Panel One was on Film: 5 Broken Cameras followed by Questions and Answers. Panel Two was on Three 10 min Films: 1/Oceans of Injustice; 2/ Nightmare in Gaza, 3/Today They Took My son: followed by Questions and Answers. Panel Three was on Palestine – The Story Behind the Media Headlines; the speakers were Farah Nabulsi, Rawan Damen, Emad Burnat and Khaled Jarrar. Panel Four was on Film: Balfour followed by Questions and Answers.



MOORE 4th Floor. Panel One was on 50 shades of Occupation; speakers were Ronie Barkan; Yvonne Ridley, Soheir Assaad and Inas Abbad. Panel Two was on 100 years of Balfour: Britain's Legacy in Palestine; speakers were Tariq Ramadan and Lina Hadid, Panel Three was on Importance of Solidarity and Action; the speakers were Lindsey German, Ben Jamal, Ismail Patel and Adeeb Ziadh. Panel Four was on What Do FOA Do? The speakers were FOA Volunteers.

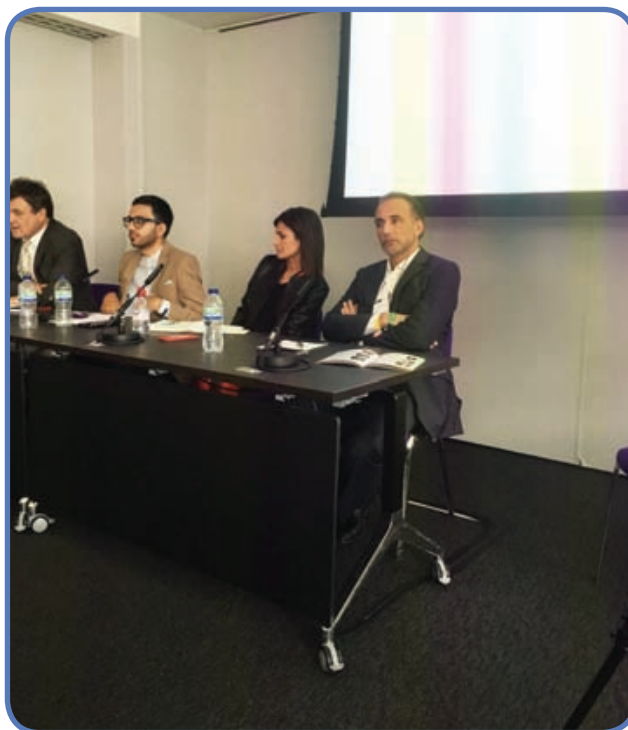
### **Second Day, 9th July, 2017**

Room Abbey, 4th Floor, Panel One was on Why Jews for Justice for Palestinians? Speakers were Judith Cravitz, Glyn Sacker and Arthur Goodman. Panel Two was on Brokering Occupation: United Kingdom and United States; Speakers were David Miller, Sarah Marouk and Asa Winstanley. Panel Three was on Jerusalem – Securing its Freedom to the Three Faiths; speakers were Chris Rose and Shaykh Ebrahim Bham. Panel Four was on Women of Occupation; the speakers were Dr. Inas Abbad, Dalal Lafi, Rihab Abeideyeh and Hayat Amous Sughaier. Panel Five was on Hundred Years After Balfour: The Role of British Parliament and the speakers were Tommy Sheppard and Paula Sherriff.

In Room Westminster at 4th Floor, there were three Panels, Panel One was on Palestine and the Student Movement (FAO's) and the speaker was Ben White. Panel Two was on Gaza: 10 Years of Israeli Siege and the speakers were Malaka Mohammed, Soheir Asad and Mariam Barghouti. Panel Three was on Student and Campus Activism and the speakers were students and campus activities, Ilyas Nagdee.

In St. James Room, There were two Panels; Panel One was on Music and Film as a tool of political Expression and the speaker was David Randall. Panel Two was on Social Media: The Power of Social Movements and the speakers were Farah Azam and Ashley Chin.

In MOORE 4th Floor, There were five Panels. Panel One was on Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Colonialism/Racism and the speaker was Salman Sayyid. Panel Two was on Colonial Fabrications: Palestine and the Arab-Jewish "Eternal Enmity" Revisited and the speaker was Santiago Slabodsky. Panel Three was on Palestine: It is something colonial and the speaker was Hatem Bazian. Panel Four was on The Zanj and the Decolonial imagination and the speaker was Tajul Islam. Panel Five was on The Gen-



dered Dimension of Islamophobia and the speaker was Amina Easat Daas.

### **John Pilger**

Speaking about colonised world and the true sovereignty of the indigenous people, Pilger said: "All over the colonised world, the true sovereignty of indigenous people is feared by those who can never quite cover the fact, and the crime, that they live on stolen land. Denying people's humanity is the next step - as the Jewish people know only too well. Defiling people's dignity and culture and pride follows as logically as violence."

"In Ramallah, following an invasion of the West Bank by the late Ariel Sharon in 2002, I walked through streets of crushed cars and demolished houses, to the Palestinian Cultural Centre. Until that morning, Israeli soldiers had camped there. I was met by the centre's director, the novelist, Liana Badr, whose original manuscripts lay scattered and torn across the floor. The hard-drive containing her fiction, and a library of plays and poetry had been taken by Israeli soldiers. Almost everything was smashed, and defiled. Not a single book survived with all its pages; not a single master tape from one of the best collections of Palestinian cinema," he mentioned.

### **Victim's refusal to comply**



Speaking about the oppressor's occupation and colonisation and the victims' refusal to comply, Pilger mentioned, "The soldiers had urinated and defecated on the floors, on desks, on embroideries and works of art. They had smeared faeces on children's paintings and written - in shit - "Born to kill". Liana Badr had tears in her eyes, but she was unbowed. She said, "We will make it right again." What enrages those who colonise and occupy, steal and oppress, vandalise and defile is the victims' refusal to comply. And this is the tribute we all should pay the Palestinians. They refuse to comply. They go on. They wait - until they fight again. And they do so even when those governing them collaborate with their oppressors."

#### **2014 Israeli Bombardment of Gaza**

Speaking about the 2014 Israeli bombardment of Gaza and Muhammad Omar's reporting, Pilger mentioned, "In the midst of the 2014 Israeli bombardment of Gaza, the Palestinian journalist Muhammad Omar never stopped reporting. He and his family were stricken; he queued for food and water and carried it through the rubble. When I phoned him, I could hear the bombs outside his door. He refused to comply. Muhammad's reports, illustrated by his graphic photographs, were a model of professional journalism that shamed the compliant and craven reporting of the so-called mainstream in Britain and the United

States. The BBC notion of objectivity - amplifying the myths and lies of authority, a practice of which it is proud - is shamed every day by the likes of Muhammad Omer."

#### **Palestinians who refused to comply**

Pilger mentioned about those who have stood up to this, without weapons, those who have refused to comply, are among Palestinians he has been privileged to come across and know. He mentioned, "My friend, the late Mohammed Jarella, who toiled for the United Nations agency UNRWA, in 1967 showed me a Palestinian refugee camp for the first time. It was a bitter winter's day and schoolchildren shook with the cold. "One day ..." he would say. "One day ..."

Pilger also mentioned about Mustafa Barghouti. He said, "Mustafa Barghouti, whose eloquence remains undimmed, who described the tolerance that existed in Palestine among Jews, Muslims and Christians until, as he told me, "the Zionists wanted a state at the expense of the Palestinians."

He also mentioned about Dr. Mona Al-Farra. "Dr. Mona Al-Farra, a physician in Gaza, whose passion was raising money for plastic surgery for children disfigured by Israeli bullets and shrapnel. Her hospital was flattened by Israeli bombs in 2014. Dr. Khaled Dahlan, a psychiatrist, whose clinics for children in Gaza - children sent almost mad by Israeli violence - were oases of civilization."

#### **Stories of Fatima and Nasser**

Pilger specially mentioned about the pathetic story of Fatima and Nasser. He said, "Fatima and Nasser are a couple whose home stood in a village near Jerusalem designated "Zone A and B", meaning that the land was declared for Jews only. Their parents had lived there; their grandparents had lived there. Today, the bulldozers are laying roads for Jews only, protected by laws for Jews only."

"It was past midnight when Fatima went into labour with their second child. The baby was premature; and when they arrived at a checkpoint with the hospital in view, the young Israeli soldier said they needed another document. Fatima was bleeding badly. The soldier laughed and imitated her moans and told them, "Go home". The baby was born there in a truck. It was blue with cold and soon, without care, died from exposure. The baby's name was Sultan," he mentioned.

Pilger, who was awarded in 2003 the prestigious

Sophie Prize for '30 years of exposing injustice and promoting human rights' said and enquired, "For Palestinians, these will be familiar stories. The question is: why are they not familiar in London and Washington, Brussels and Sydney?"

### **Palestine the greatest moral issue of Our time – Nelson Mandela**

Pilger enquired why "the longest occupation and resistance in modern times is not recognized. When the United Nations suddenly stirs and defines Israel as an apartheid state, as it did this year, there is outrage - not against a state whose "core purpose" is racism but against a UN commission that dared break the silence," he mentioned and quoted Nelson Mandela: "Palestine," said Nelson Mandela, "is the greatest moral issue of our time." Why is this truth suppressed, day after day, month after month, year after year?"

"In Israel - the apartheid state, guilty of a crime against humanity and of more international law-breaking than any other - the silence persists among those who know and whose job it is to keep the record straight," he mentioned.

### **There is an epic injustice**

Journalist and film-maker Pilger mentioned, "There is no conflict, no two narratives, with their moral fulcrum. There is a military occupation enforced by a nuclear-armed power backed by the greatest military power on earth; and there is an epic injustice. The word "occupation" may be banned, deleted from the dictionary. But the memory of historical truth cannot be banned: of the systemic expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland. "Plan D" the Israelis called it in 1948."

### **Democracy Human Rights**

Speaking about democracy human rights, Pilger mentioned, "Take a term often used by the guardians of civil society - "human rights". Like another noble concept, "democracy", "human rights" has been all but emptied of its meaning and purpose. Like "peace process" and "road map", human rights in Palestine have been hijacked by Western governments and the corporate NGOs they fund and which claim a quixotic moral authority. So when Israel is called upon by governments and NGOs to "respect human rights" in Palestine, nothing happens, because they all know there is nothing to fear; nothing will change."

### **European Union and the UN Commission**

Speaking about European Union and the UN Commission, Pilger said, "Mark the silence of the European Union, which accommodates Israel while refusing to maintain its commitments to the people of Gaza - such as keeping the lifeline of the Rafah border crossing open: a measure it agreed to as part of its role in the cessation of fighting in 2014. A seaport for Gaza - agreed by Brussels in 2014 - has been abandoned.

"The UN commission I have referred to - its full name is the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia - described Israel as, and I quote, "designed for the core purpose" of racial discrimination. Millions understand this. What the governments in London, Washington, Brussels and Tel Aviv cannot control is that humanity at street level is changing perhaps as never before," Pilger mentioned.

### **Our Freedom is incomplete without The freedom of Palestine - Mandela**

Speaking about the young people's awareness and rejection of colonialism, Pilger again quoted Nelson Mandela. He said, "Among young people, internationalism has found a vast new audience. Look at the support for Jeremy Corbyn and the reception the G20 circus in Hamburg received. By understanding the truth and imperatives of internationalism, and rejecting colonialism, we understand the struggle of Palestine."

"Mandela put it this way: "We know only too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians." At the heart of the Middle East is the historic injustice in Palestine. Until that is resolved, and Palestinians have their freedom and homeland, and Israelis are Palestinians equality before the law, there will be no peace in the region, or perhaps anywhere.

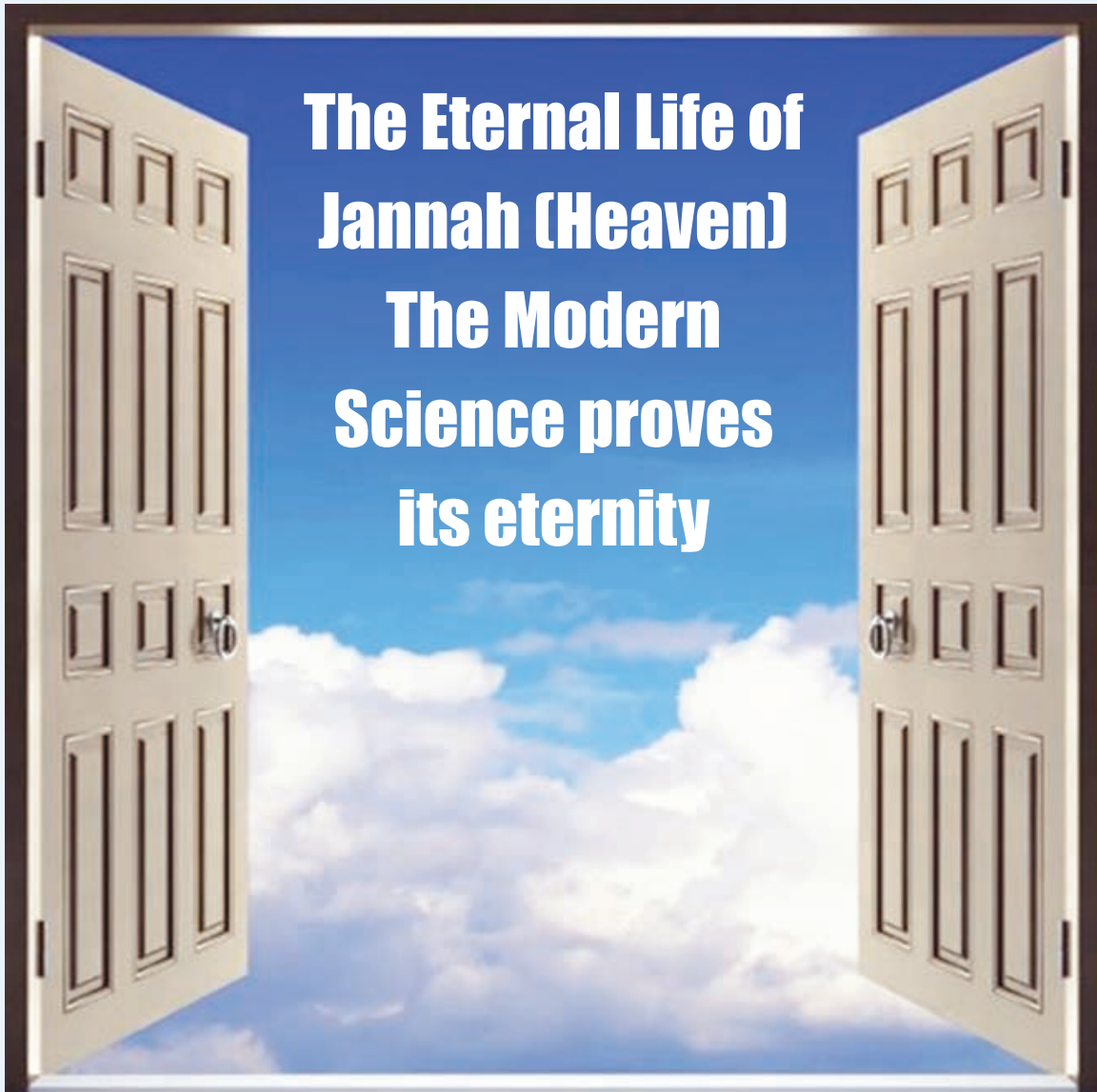
### **Historic injustice in Palestine**

Pilger said, "What Mandela was saying is that freedom itself is precarious while powerful governments can deny justice to others, terrorise others, imprison and kill others, in our name. Israel certainly understands the threat that one day it might have to be normal."

Pilger also said, "These are not straws in the wind. When the Palestinians rise again, as they will, they may not succeed at first - but they will eventually if we understand that they are us, and we are them."

This is an abridged version of John Pilger's address to the Palestinian Expo 2017 in London.





**Ahmad Wahaj Al-Siddiqui**

*Many renegades denied that how the life of the Heaven can be eternal while human life is faced with various complexities. As a matter of fact they do not know, the life of Heaven (Jannah) will be quite different from this worldly life. To throw light what is there in Jannah, I refer to some traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) so that the readers may know about the life of Jannah referring modern science proving its eternity. .*

Allah said: *And give them glad tidings (O Muhammad) Unto them who believe and do good works That for them are gardens (Jannah) beneath which, rivers flow The more they are endowed with fruits. They say: That is that which was given us afore time And shall be conferred upon with things con-similar There for them are pure wives And they shall abide therein forever.* (Surat Al-Baqarah, Verse 25)

Glad tidings are given to those who are steadfast on the deeds guided by the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him)

- a) Abdullah bin Omar said: Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) was asked about Jannah (the Heaven), He said: Every living who entered the Heaven will never die. Will be blessed with eternal comforts, his garments will never wear out, and his youth will never decay. When asked about its buildings he said: They are made of a brick of gold and a brick of silver in mortar with odor of Musk and its gravel are pearls and rubies and its soil (smells) saffron. (Al-Tabrani/ Bin Mardawiyah)
- b) The Prophet (peace be upon him) said; The soil of the Heaven is white, its fields have camphor rocks with sand of Musk. It has ever flowing rivers. All the people of the Heaven, the foremost and the last ones will assemble for a general introduction with each other. Allah will send an air of mercy smelling musk over them, The man will go back from the assembly to his wife. She will find him more elegant and good looking. She will say to him, you left me adoring; now I am taken aback by your splendid grandeur. (Al-Dur Al-Manthur from Abu Hurairah)
- c) The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) said: Allah has fenced the Heaven with a brick of gold and a brick of silver and gushed forth in the rivers and planted trees. When the angels saw its beauty they said: Blessed

for you dwellers kings palaces. (Al-Dur Al-Manthur from Al-Khudri)

- d) The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) said: The rivers of the heaven gush forth from mountains of musk. (Al-Dur Al-Manthur from Abu Hurairah)
- e) With regard to the verse: 'There for them are the pure wives and they shall abide therein forever'. Abu Hurairah narrated the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) said: The faces of the first group who enter heaven will shine like full moon. They won't spit; won't blow nose, won't excrete, their combs will be of gold and silver, their perfumes will be aloes wood and musk. Every one of them will have two wives, they will be so excelling in beauty that he will see their bone marrow through their flesh, never there will be any opposition between them and their heart will never have any animosity but their heart will beat together. They will glorify Allah at the break of Day and fall of night (Agreed tradition).
- f) A man came to the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) and said O! Abu Al-Qasim you say that the people of Heaven will eat and drink. He replied by the One who owns my life. Every man will be given the strength of hundred men in eating, drinking copulation and passion, he will feel to emaciate but the Jannah is free from defiling and harmful matter. The Apostle of Allah continued: His emaciation will be through sweat smelling musk, that will be the emaciation for his belly (Al-Nasai, Al-Munzir, Bin Abi Hatim)
- g) Abu Umamah said: Aman asked the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) Will the people of the Heaven copulate? He said they shall copulate but there is no male or female semen. (Al-Tabrani)

I will discuss some facts from modern science that how the life of Jannah will be eternal

Health means to enjoy the comforts of life with a sound mind in a sound body. Disease means the impairment of health or normal functioning of an organ or the failure of an organism to respond adaptively to its environment. Now we shall see the exogenous and endogenous causes of the diseases and go through the Qur'an and Sunnah if they are eliminated from the Heaven.

Among the exogenous causes are burn, fracture or dislocation of a limb etc. The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) said: The vigorous in faith are for the Heaven (Jannah) Verily here is no danger whatsoever in the Heaven (Al-Baihaqi from Usama bin Zaid

A major causative agent for a large number of diseases is bacteria or micro-organism. Let us see if this if this organism is found in the Heaven:

A similitude of the Jannah which the righteous are promised

There are rivers of water not contaminating, and rivers of milk Of unchanging taste, and rivers of wine delicious to the drinkers. And rivers of honey pure and clear, therein for them is every kind of fruit with pardon from their Lord.

We know scientifically that existence of bacteria pollutes water but the Quran tells that the Heaven has rivers of water not contaminating . It means there is no existence of micro-organism in the Heaven. Similarly we know that the taste of milk changes due to the presence of lactic acid bacilli. But in the Heaven are rivers of milk of unchanging taste, it indicates that the Heaven is free from water borne, and milk borne diseases. Further the Qur'an said that the wine in Heaven: *'No aching of the head, therefore they get nor they will suffer any intoxication'* (Surat Al-Waqi'ah Verse 19)

These facts negate alcoholic diseases in the Heaven. As for honey it provides wonderful food and it is used as preserver of medicines among

Arab physicians. And it is used in the treatment of quite few diseases. Allah mentioned its curing quality saying:

*Wherein is healing for mankind.* (Surat Al-Nahl Verse 69)

Moreover soil of Heaven is quite different from soil of earth. It smells saffron, its field have camphor rock and sand dunes of musk.

All the above facts make it crystal clear that no room is left for any organism or microbes to have their existence in the Heaven.

The change in human body in the Jannah will be due to heavenly diet as we observe in the bee when it takes juice of flowers its emaciation is honey.

Quite few diseases are caused due to radiation or severe cold but Heaven is not a place for radiation and severe cold. Allah said:

It said: that several dusts that have local action on respiratory tract and cause pulmonary disease but the soil of heaven has no dust of earth, it smells saffron and full of greenery. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: A rider can't cover in Heaven a shade of tree in hundred years, if you wish you recite 'And spreading shade' (Al-Bukhari) The deepening shades with flowering beauty runs hundred of miles in the Heaven.

We know that Ginger is digestive and used in the treatment of Flatulence and Colic. That is to say that the people of Heaven will be given digestive drinks.

'And He created that, which ye do not know. (Quran-16/8)

The invention of microscope in the 17th century did make us to observe the tiny organism called microbes.

This denies the Jewish and Christian scholars who claimed that the Qur'an is written by Muhammad, he could never know the modern science. Hence this is the Book of Allah Omniscient of all knowledge.



# Can Islamic Banking become a reality in India?

**Aftab Husain Kola**

In 2016 the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had proposed the opening of an 'Islamic window' in conventional banks to 'gradually' introduce Sharia-compliant banking in India. It was said that Islamic finance system would lead to trillions of dollars from Gulf nations getting invested in India.

But the BJP-led Union government did a u-turn when it said in November 2017 that it has no intention to consider introducing Islamic banking in India.

Replying to a Right To Information query, the RBI said the decision was taken after considering "the wider and equal opportunities"

available to all citizens to access banking and financial services. It did not further elaborate.

Both the Central Government and RBI took some interest in 2016 exploring the possibility of the introduction of Islamic banking for long to ensure financial inclusion of those sections of the society that remain excluded due to religious reasons. The sudden change of mind has shattered the hope of lakhs of Muslims as well as non-Muslims who were looking forward to the interest-free banking.

"Introduction of full-fledged Islamic banking with profit-loss sharing complex products may be considered at a later stage on the basis





of experience gained in course of time,” the RBI had then told Finance Ministry in a letter.

In a report submitted to the government in 2008, a committee headed by Raghuram Rajan (who subsequently went on to become RBI Governor) had, without naming Shari’ah banking, suggested the need to have interest-free banking in India.

According to Dr. Rahmatullah Ahad, Chief Promoter and Hon. Managing Director of Janseva Cooperative Credit Society Ltd, “the RBI’s message in rejecting Islamic banking is disturbing. It is disturbing because the message is against its own recommendation submitted to the competent authority of the Union Government to permit Islamic banking windows on a selective basis in public sector banks. Remark of the 11th Finance Commission that the National Mission of Financial Inclusion can better be achieved through introduction of Islamic banking on account of its inherent potential for furthering the cause of socio-economic justice seems to be mother of this move. Taking cue from the Finance Committee report, the Finance Ministry asked the RBI to look into the matter for which it took help of an inter-departmental committee to finalise and submit its report and hence the said recommendation.

### **Decision is more political**

“The RBI’s decision seems to be more political rather than economic. Its reasoning that the recently announced government welfare schemes leave no scope for Islamic banking is hollow. Those welfare schemes are no substitute for the banking business. Therefore, space for Islamic banking remains unfilled.”

Says an expert in Islamic finance, “The government should believe that Islamic banking and conventional banks can complement one another’s strengths and work together across national and religious boundaries for the mutual benefit of institutions and individuals in

both systems.”

H Abdur Raqeeb, General Secretary of the Indian Center for Islamic Finance, had stated, “If Japan has an Islamic Bank, London has it, and many non-Muslim countries have it, why not India? The World Bank has lauded Islamic banking for being an effective tool for financing development globally and that it had the potential to address the problems of poverty and boost shared prosperity. The global lender acknowledged that, in fact, the Islamic banking system is not only about avoiding paying or receiving interest, but also about equitability, helping the economically weak and disadvantaged and giving an opportunity to small enterprises by encouraging and supporting their endeavours through risk-sharing financing. Across the world, the Islamic finance and banking sector is flourishing with the active support of the World Bank and the IMF.”

### **Demand for Islamic banking is strong**

The experience of the past 30 years has indicated that the demand for Islamic banking is strong, but that the institutions themselves, and international cooperation among them, must be strengthened if the system is to reach its full potential. But the Indian government, reasons better known only to them, seems to believe that anything Islamic is not secular.

The about-turn of RBI, without offering a substantial and financially sound logic to dropping the proposal that would have brought in billions of dollars worth investment and remittance into the mainstream, significantly boosting India’s ailing economy, is a plain and simple political decision, said Poulomi Ghosh in an article.

Only a change in government at the Center might revive some hope that one day Islamic banking will become a reality in the country.

# 21st Century Western Scholarship on the Prophet's Seerah: Some Positive Glimpses

**Dr Tauseef Ahmad Parray**

INTRODUCTION: The Noble Qur'an is the Book of Allah, and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the 'Person/ Persona' through whom that Divine Book came to humanity, and his words and deeds (Ahadith & Sunnah) are the first and most important commentary and explanation (Tafsir) on it. From classical to contemporary eras, numerous works have been writ-

ten, exclusively, on the life/biography (Seerah) of the Last Prophet (peace be upon him), which is one of the most prominent genres in the Islamic literary tradition. A plethora of literature, on this specific genre, exists in all Islamic languages in prose and poetry. Also, interest has been recently increased, in the West, about the popular as well as scholarly Seerah works as well. Among





the recent scholarship on this theme, a good number have been written by Western (Muslim & non-Muslims alike) scholars. Most of the Western non-Muslim scholarship on Prophet's Seerah has been presented in a highly distorted, biased, bigoted, negative, and offensive form. However, this is just one side of the coin; the other side shows that there have been many instances and examples which show the positive 'perception' of some Westerners, i.e., the perception of the image of Prophet (SAAS) in an unbiased, positive, and balanced way. Here, in this write-up, views of some of these scholars/ writers, falling in the latter category, are presented with the major objective to show the developments as well as perception of Prophet (SAAS) in the 21st century West.

### **20th Century Western Perceptions on Prophet's (peace be upon him) Seerah: Some Examples**

Alphonse Lamartine, a French historian, in his *Histoire de la Turquie*, pays tribute to Prophet (peace be upon him) in these words: On the basis of a Book [Noble Qur'an], every letter of which has become law, he Prophet (peace be upon him) created a spiritual nationality which has blended together peoples of every tongue and of every race. He has left to us the indelible characteristic of this Muslim nationality, the hatred of false gods, and the passion for the One and immaterial Allah. It was Prophet's (peace be upon him) conviction, he continues, which gave him the power to restore a creed, a two-fold creed: Allah's Unity and the immateriality of Allah. Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas; founder of one spiritual state, that is Muhammad (peace be upon him). As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask: Is there any man greater than he?

Calling Prophet (peace be upon him) the Savior of Humanity, George Bernard Shaw (in 'The Genuine Islam') put forth that the present world needs leaders like Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for the general peace and comfort. I have always held, Shaw states, the religion of Muhammad peace be upon him in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion, which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence, which can make itself appeal to every age. Shaw also believes that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would

bring it the much needed peace and happiness.

Prophet (peace be upon him), as a leader and as the political head of the City-State of Madinah, never led the life of a king: he was a King without kingly pretension. He had no arms, no standing army, no body guard, and no palace. Bosworth Smith, in his well-known book *Muhammad and Muhammadanism*, describes this in these words: Head of the State as well as of the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without Pope's pretensions, Caesar without the legion of Caesar: without a standing army, without a body-guard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue; if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by the right divine, it was Muhammad [peace be upon him], for he had all the power without its instructions and without its supports.

### **21st Century Western Perceptions on Prophet's (peace be upon him) Seerah: Some Positive Glimpses**

The legacy has continued in the present times as well. Though in the wake of the events of 9/11 (Sep 2001), Islam, its Divine Book (Noble Qur'an) and the Last Messenger (Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him) were presented and perceived in a highly negative way; however as the saying goes "something good comes out from something bad" how, same was true with the Western Scholarship on Islam, and its diverse aspects. One major area in which numerous works were produced is the Seerah of the Last Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). The below passages reveal very clearly what and how the Western Academicians perceive the Personality of the Prophet. Here are some glimpses of same.

Professor Carl W. Ernst (Professor of North Carolina Chappell Hill, USA), in his *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*, writes: "While the Qur'an as divine revelation may be the most important resource of the Islamic tradition, we would not have it in its present form without the Prophet Muhammad [peace be upon him]. He [peace be upon him] has served as an ongoing model for ethics, law, family life, politics, and spirituality in ways that were not anticipated 1,400 years ago. There are few people in history who have had a greater impact on humanity, and it is through the historical elaboration of tradition that we must seek to understand that impact".

Professor Gerhard Bowering (Yale University,

USA) in an article entitled “Muhammad (570-632)”, in his Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought, is of this opinion when he presents Prophet (peace be upon him) as a political leader: “That one man could achieve so much in such a short time is astounding. [He (peace be upon him)] made a global impact over more than a millennium and whose cause continues to exert a worldwide attraction today. His message has stood the test of time for more than a thousand years, and his community has grown steadily over the centuries.

Professor Tamara Sonn (Professor in the History of Islam at Georgetown University, USA) in her *Islam: A Brief History*, also admits that Prophet’s [peace be upon him] role extends beyond the task of delivering revelation, for his life is a model for humanity of how to live every moment, and make every choice, in accordance with God’s will. The way he lived his life is described by the Qur’an as the best example of Islam; and together with the Qur’an, his example (Sunnah) comprise the guidance [and direction] Muslims need in their collective responsibility to establish justice.

Professor John L. Esposito (Professor of Religion & International Affairs and of Islamic Studies at Georgetown University, USA) in his *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* writes: In contrast to the often spiritualized Christian view of Jesus Prophet Issa (may Allah be bless on him), Muslims look upon Muhammad (peace be upon him) as both a prophet and a very human figure, one who had great political as well as spiritual insights. Thus Muslims look to Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) example for guidance in all aspects of life: how to treat friends as well as enemies, what to eat and drink, how to mourn and celebrate. [Prophet] Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) life translated the guidance revealed in the Qur’an into action; he lived the revelation, giving concrete form to the laws that God revealed for the various conditions of ordinary human life. For Islam, no aspect of life is outside the realm of religion”. In his *The Future of Islam*, Esposito writes as: “Muhammad [peace be upon him] is one of the great figures of world history. Few have had more of a global religious and political impact; yet no prophet has been more vilified throughout history. ... In his lifetime, throughout Muslim history, and today, the Prophet Muhammad [peace be upon him] is seen as the ‘living Qur’an’, the embodiment of God’s will in his behavior and words”.

Karen Armstrong, British author and commentator of Irish Catholic descent (who is well known for her books on comparative religions as well as Islam), in her *Islam: A Short History* writes about Prophet (peace be upon him) in these words: Muhammad [peace be upon him] did not think that he was founding a new religion, but that he was merely bringing the old faith in the One God to the Arabs, who had never had a prophet before. Single-handedly, Muhammad [peace be upon him; in a brief period of 23 years] had brought peace to war-torn Arabia. Muhammad [peace be upon him] became the archetypal example of that perfect submission to the divine, and Muslims would attempt to conform to this standard in their spiritual and social lives. Muhammad was never venerated as a divine figure, but he was held to be the Perfect Man. His surrender to God had been so complete that he had transformed society and enabled the Arabs to live together in harmony.

These are some of the glimpses of the unbiased, positive, and balanced approach adopted by western scholars on Prophet’s Seerah. However, this is just one side of the coin; the other side shows that there have been many attempts when the image of Prophet (peace be upon him) was presented in a highly distorted form. An extensively researched and remarkable work, refuting the orientalist attacks, was authored by Muhammad Mohar Ali, *Sirat Al-Nabi and the Orientalists* (published from Madina in 1997).

In 2010, Dr Abdulwahab Al-Affendi (a Sudanese Islamic political scientist based in UK’s University of Westminster) published, as an anthological collection of *Western Writings on the Prophet Muhammad [peace be upon him]: From the 18th Century to the Present*, ‘About Muhammad: The Other Western Perspective on the Prophet of Islam (Legacy Publishing, UK, 2010). It is a vital compilation of extracts, each by Western writers, which provides a well informed and beautiful insight into the mission, heritage and legacy of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, and contains essays/ extracts from the works of the Western scholars like George Sale, Thomas Carlyle, Alphonse Marie Louis de Lamartine, Tor Andrae, W. Montgomery Watt, John L. Esposito, Annemarie Schimmel, Clinton Bennett, Barnaby Rogerson, Karen Armstrong, & Bayard Taylor, on varied aspects of Prophet’s (SAAS) life and mission. This Western legacy on Prophet’s Seerah, of both positive & negative perceptions, is a continuous, constant, and unceasing effort.



**Happy new year**

## **Why Nigerian Muslims Should Not Celebrate The Gregorian New Year ( January 1st )**

By Dr. K.K. Busari.

*Every year, a large number of Muslims celebrate New Year's day i.e January 1st . They get into the festive spirit holding New Year's Eve parties forgetting that they also have their own festivals which are Eid-al-fitr and Eid-al-Kabeer. Many Muslims in Nigeria have forgotten or are totally ignorant of Suratulkafirun in the Holy Quran (Q 109) which ends thus: "For you is your religion, and for me is my religion"*

*But is this is a harmless cultural practice with no faith based significance or a step in the wrong direction? I opine that it is the latter.*



### **Origin of the Gregorian Calendar.**

The Gregorian calendar was set by Pope Gregory 13th and he also officially fixed the first day of the year for Christian Europe as January 1st in 1582.

January is named after Janus, the Roman god of doors and gateways. He was commonly depicted in statues, carvings and paintings as a two headed man with one head and facing forward and the other head facing backwards. In 46BC Julius Ceasar chose January 1st as the first day of the New Year as Janus symbolically represented the door to New Year. Wild Parties and orgies were held on the night before the New Year's Day as a re-enactment of the chaos which Roman mythology depicted as preceding the cosmos or the ordered world whose organization was set by the gods. Furthermore, by that time, Janus had become, in practice, the highest god receiving the ritual sacrifice of roman worshippers before the other gods, including the chief god, Jupiter.

### **Here are 4 reasons why I believe that Muslims should not celebrate the New Year.**

#### **1. What exactly is there to celebrate?**

Any celebration by Muslims needs to be put into context of the local and global situation of our human beings. The two Eids amply do so by encouraging prayers, duaa for those suffering and alms to the needy. However, celebrating the New Year does no such thing.

It is a celebration that is cut off from reality of the rest of the Ummah. The starvation in Somalia, the murder in Syria, the imprisonment of Gaza, the ethnic cleansing of Burma, intrusion into Al Masjid Al- Aqsa in Jerusalem- celebrating the New year is pretty much exactly the opposite of “fever and wakefulness” that the Prophet spoke about when he said we were like one body.

Salahuddin Ayyubi was once asked why he hardly ever smiled even though this was a sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He replied, “How can I smile when I know that Masjid Al Aqsa is being defiled and the Muslims are suffering?!” That attitude, dear brothers and sisters, is why he achieved what he did and why we’re still debating on whether or not it is acceptable to send “Happy New Year” messages.

#### **2.It is technically inaccurate and pagan**

As Muslims, we have our own calendar that has been in constant use for 1439 years. Even though we may end up using the Gregorian calendar due to cir-



cumstances beyond our control, we know for a fact that Allah has ordained the use of the lunar calendar for us in our worship.

According to our Hijri calendar (initiated by the great Sahaaba) , the new year actually begins on first of Muharram.

The Gregorian calendar (so called because it was developed by Pope Gregory) decided on the 1st of January as New Year to celebrate the circumcision of Jesus. Its origin like so many modern-day holidays lies in the pagan Roman festivals associated with Janus, the two headed diety who symbolized change.

#### **3. They may involve un-islamic practices.**

Let's be honest. When you picture New Year's Eve celebration, you don't picture people sitting in a gathering that could take place in a mosque or with the local Imam around. Instead, they are (and I know this is a generalization) usually events that mirror the celebration of where this holiday originated from. It is usually an Islam free zone, which is not entire surprising given that it has no basis or relationship to Islam.

#### **4. It is against the spirit of Islam.**



It is well recognized that there is a difference of opinion on this matter between scholars, and I respect that. However, there are a few points on that:

Firstly, the number of scholars who condone the celebration of the New Year are in the minority.

Secondly, the scholars who do condone it almost never actually celebrate the New Year themselves or with families at least not in public showing that even though they may believe it is acceptable but not preferable.

Thirdly, many of them predicate their views based on a number of caveats that it is no longer a pagan or Christian ritual, that it is good dawah to non-muslims and that it does not involve any Islamic element. Most of these caveats are difficult to satisfy adequately.

This is meant to be a gentle reminder and not a harsh rebuke. It would be against the spirit of Islam not to show kindness and respect to non-muslims. We are encouraged to be warm and welcoming, not least because it will attract others to our faith, culture and heritage.

There are many ways to showcase our manners and act as ambassadors for our faith without having to adopt the celebration of others. By adopting the celebrations of others, we may be harmlessly saying

a few words or just enjoying ourselves. Equally, we may be opening the door to other evils and heresies which are not part of our religion.

The issue occupied the minds of greater people than us, Uthman, Ali and many other of greatest Sahaaba. When the great assemblage of the companions of the Prophet had discussed this issue at length, the matter was brought to a close by the wise word of Caliph Omar that are as relevant today as they were then. He said,

“The Hijrah has separated truth from falsehood, therefore, let it become the epoch of era.”

### Conclusion.

Thus, in its essence, the celebrations of the New Year on January 1st and New Year’s Eve, the night before, are a part and parcel of pagan religious rituals based on idolatrous beliefs in false gods. Consequently, it is completely Haram (sinful and forbidden) for Muslims to participate in or adopt any of its related rituals, customs and symbols.

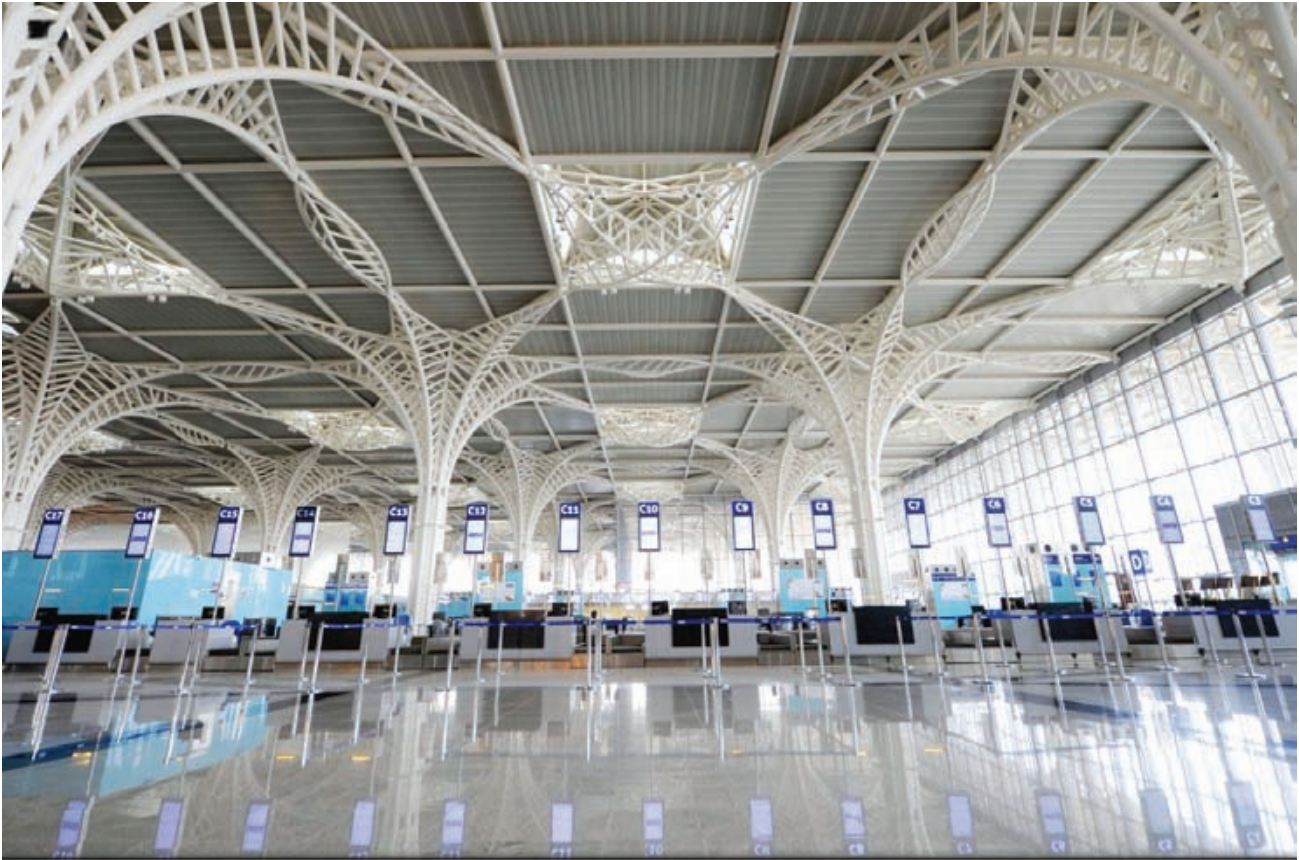
If a non-Muslim greets a Muslim, “Happy New Year”, the Muslim is not allowed to respond in a similar manner or say, “Same to you”. Instead, in order not to offend or hurt the feelings of non-Muslims friends or acquaintances one may say “Happy Holiday.”

As for celebrating the New Year according to the Islamic calendar which begins with the month of Muharram, this is also not permissible from a number of perspectives. First and foremost, if one does so believing that it is pleasing to Allah to do so, thereby transforming into an act of worship, it becomes a Bid’ah or cursed innovation in the religion about which the Prophet (PBUH) said, “Every innovation in religion is misguidance and all misguidance leads to the Hellfire”. If one does so merely as a custom, it is still impermissible as it falls under the prohibition of imitation of pagan customs about which the Prophet (PBUH) said, “Whoever imitates a people becomes one of them.”

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## Jeddah International Airport to open in May 2018

Jeddah, (UNA-OIC) - The head of the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) Abdul Hakim Al-Tamimi has announced that the initial opening and pilot operations of the new King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah will be in May 2018.

The announcement came on the sidelines of the Makkah Region Reconstruction Conference.

“Air transport is the preferred method for the Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, both from inside and outside the Kingdom. The number of Hajj pilgrims arriving by air in 2017 reached 1,648,906, while the number of Umrah pilgrims arriving by air in 2017 reached 5,664,208,” Al-Tamimi said.

He said that the King Abdulaziz International Airport was a mega project as it “includes 810,000 square meters of terminals. It also includes 200 counters designed for completion of travel procedures and 80 self-service counters as well. The number of aircraft that can be received simultane-

ously is 70 connected to the terminal as well as 28 aircraft on the tarmac.”

During his speech, the GACA president stressed the importance of the new Taif International Airport, which will support the King Abdul Aziz International Airport in Jeddah.

“The GACA has assigned the new Taif (International) Airport to the private sector. The new airport will provide convenience for visitors, and Umrah and Hajj pilgrims. The airport is expected to open in December 2020,” Al-Tamimi said.

He also referred to the GACA agreement with the new developer of Taif International Airport to develop the existing terminals to accommodate Hajj and Umrah pilgrims.

“The coming season will see a larger number of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims coming to the Kingdom through Taif International Airport,” Al-Tamimi said.