

THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE

Journal

The New
Islamophobia
in France

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Dhul-Qadah1439/August 2018

No.11

SG of MWL wins Galileo Int. Award 2018



MWL welcomes truce between Afghani government and Taliban



Letter From the Editor

Misleading allegations refuted by reality

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia exerts strenuous efforts to best serve pilgrims and ensure their stay is safe and comfortable. It has become the epitome of warmth and hospitality, which every Muslim holds dear to his heart.

Pilgrims, visitors and Umrah performers have themselves testified to this fact and experienced first-hand the remarkable achievements, particularly the massive expansion of the Two Holy Mosques and the easy access to the holiest sites in addition to other services helping them perform Hajj and Umrah rites with comfort and ease.

Pilgrims and Umrah performers from all corners of the globe have many times expressed to the Muslim World League their admiration and praise for the wide array of services and facilities the Kingdom renders to the guests of Allah.

Despite the above, some persons with pernicious and ulterior motives claim that the Kingdom banned Syrian pilgrims from performing Hajj this year. In a statement issued Thursday 14 Shawwal 1439 H (28 June 2018), the Muslim World League described these claims as sheer misleading allegations, pointing out that the Kingdom will welcome over 18,000 Syrian pilgrims this Hajj season. This is probably the best refutation to these allegations.

The Muslim World League noted the great efforts made by the Saudi government, under the leadership of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz, to serve pilgrims, visitors and Umrah performers equally and without any form of discrimination. It also hailed the government for completing all necessary arrangements for welcoming Syrian pilgrims and meeting their medical needs in collabo-

ration with Syrian Pilgrims' Affairs Office.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes annually millions of pilgrims, visitors and Umrah performers of different races, nationalities and countries and treats everybody equally and with the same level of care and attention. Never has the Kingdom banned any Muslim from visiting the Grand Mosque and performing religious rituals on the basis of political affiliation or sectarian orientation. However, it does not allow anyone to exploit religion, holy seasons and the crowds of pilgrims in holy sites for political or sectarian reasons.

The statement called on everyone to cooperate with pertinent local authorities and comply with the laws and regulations, which were set in the first place to serve pilgrims, make their Hajj experience more comfortable and improve services rendered to them. Everyone should be fully aware of the lies and false claims spread and fabricated by some persons with pernicious intentions.

Allah says in Surat Al-Baqarah: For Hajj are the months well known. If anyone undertakes that duty therein, let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj. And whatever good you do, (be sure) Allah knows it. And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, O You that is wise) Surat Al-Baqarah, Verse 197

All Muslims must not engage in any action that might disrupt the performance of Hajj, which must be kept out of political differences and conflicts in order for pilgrims to focus on the proper performance of its rituals and make the best of their time while in the holy sites.



The Muslim World League Journal

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Galileo Award Ceremony of the Secretary General of the MWL

Muslim World League Secretary General wins Galileo International Award 2018

Florence - MWL

His Excellency Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL) Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa has received the Galileo International Award 2018 in the Italian City of Florence in recognition of his outstanding Islamic works and accomplishments around the world.

The prestigious award recognizes His Excellency's active role in promoting peace and religious and cultural harmony across the globe. Dr. Al-Issa has promoted human

common values in order to ease the threat of clash of civilization and encourage mutual dialogue, understanding and cooperation across cultures. He has been exerting great efforts to encourage all-inclusive programs, works and initiatives calling for harmony among the followers of different religions and cultures. Because of these continuous efforts, His Excellency received invited by many global religious and cultural organizations and centers to deliver speeches and share his valuable insights.

In his speech delivered at the interna-



Dr. Al-Issa presents a commemorative gift to the award winners

tional award ceremony, Dr. Al-Issa said he was pleased to meet an elite of faith leaders, political figures and thought leaders in the City of Florence, the cradle of the European Renaissance and Europe's gateway to civilization and the birthplace of renowned and creative European iconic figures. It is important to uphold the common human values of peace and harmony despite plurality, diversity and cultural differences, he said.

His Excellency spoke about the importance of exchanging visits and dialogues with different followers of religions and cultures, noting that the visits he made to different followers and the dialogues he had with them revealed a genuine need for more transparent communication, one that reflects sincere intentions and love. Isolation, whether religious, intellectual, cultural, political or other,

is the most dangerous challenge facing human beings.

“As believers in the One and Only God, we should respect the privacy and identity of others as they reflect personal convictions and we should also understand the nature of difference and diversity. Throughout their long historical events, religions, civilizations and nations became weaker because of isolation and rejection of logic under the pretext of preserving their identity. We should realize that the only remedy is healthy positive dialogue,” he said.

His Excellency emphasized the dangers of personal ambitions material and political interests to peace and harmony and their threats to rights and freedoms, adding that they can cause brutal conflicts. In such conflicts, the winner always, as history has proven, loses



The Secretary General of the MWL and Mr. Dario Nardela

at the end of the day. The real triumph can only be achieved through soft power and moral logic, which is based on the pure human instinct and cultural conciliation.

Dr. Al-Issa stressed the fact that whoever has a just cause will ultimately triumph, provided that his triumph should be achieved in a civilized way. In history, the victor faced courageously great losses that threatened his security and stability and sowed hatred in his mind because brutal materialism did not recognize the logic of morality and values. The Nazis, for example, committed horrendous crimes against humanity on their own land.

His Excellency called for commitment and awareness in order to prevent any human barbaric acts to which the International Community fail to respond or in which the

spiritual leaders fail to use their influence or about in which thought leaders fail to speak. He noted the grave threat of the religious, sectarian and partisan extremism and the negative effect of political pragmatism on values, stressing that extremism brings nothing but harm and pain.

His Excellency called for increasing awareness and educating the next generations about the common values at an early age, urging families and school teachers, who both play an important educational role, to carry out this mission.

“We do not exaggerate when we say that family and school constitute the fabric of society. They can build a bright future for our generations, a future which is based on common values and peace,” he said.



The Secretary General shook hands with the Patron of the Ceremony

His Excellency thanked the secretariat general of the award, particularly Mr. Alfonso de Virgils, Mr. Marco Georgetti and the rest of the members, expressing his gratitude for receiving this global award which adds more responsibilities to his current ones.

The Galileo Award was named to Italian mathematician and physicist Galileo Galilei, who was accused by the Inquisition of being a heretic in 1616. In March 2008, the Vatican admitted that Galileo was right and put up a statue of him inside the Vatican walls. In December of the same year, Pope Benedict XVI lauded Galileo's contributions to astronomy during the celebrations of the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first telescope today. Galileo International Award includes more fields such as leadership in thought and works that

promote religious and civilized harmony and peace among peoples of the world. It has also been given to philanthropic work in the field of pediatrics.

The leaders of Muslim community in Italy lauded the MWL Secretary General for serving Islam at this important time which has seen intentional defamation campaigns against Islam and Muslims. These campaigns use terrorism as a pretext either because their organizers know little about Islam or try intentionally to promote an ideology of hatred. Most of the organizers come from the extreme right parties in a number of western countries. The MWL strong voice and position and its global convincing discourse have become the wise voice for dispelling deeply-rooted misconceptions about Islam and Muslims.



Al-Issa discusses promotion of interfaith dialogue and tolerance in Tuscany

Tuscany – MWL

His Excellency Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, met with the religious, political and intellectual leaders and visited notable public figures during his visit to Tuscany, Italy, a region historically known as the cradle of Western civilization and culture and the birthplace of important iconic figures such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo and other pioneering figures of Western Civilization.



Dr. Al-Issa meets in the province of Tuscany varied and included segments of the political, religious and intellectual society.

His Excellency discussed with the leaders and public figures cultural exchange opportunities and the promotion of inter-faith dialogue, initiatives and programs.

Dr. Al-Issa highlighted the issues relevant to the Muslim community in Tuscany, mainly its positive national integration in society and was briefed about the ancient heritage of the Tuscany Region, considered the historical center of thought and intellectual production in Europe and the gate to the modern Renaissance Age of Europe.

His Excellency met with the President of the Council

of Tuscany, Mr. Eugenio Giani in Florence, the capital city of Tuscany, and discussed the initiatives of the Muslim World League seeking to promote dialogue among the followers of religions and cultures and MWL efforts towards helping Muslim communities integrate faster and more positively in the countries they live in. Partnership opportunities between the MWL and the Council of Tuscany were explored as well, with a view to promoting interfaith dialogue and enhancing intercultural interaction among all human beings on the basis of common human values,

while dispelling all groundless fears and prejudgments about religions.

Dr. Al-Issa held also a meeting with Mr. Lorenzo Flaci, the Mayor of Sesto Frentino, Italy, and expressed his appreciation to the Mayor's proposal to hold cultural forums with the Muslim World League.

The Secretary General thanked the Mayor of Sesto Frentino for suggesting an initiative to build a central mosque for the Muslim community in the city, which will be another cultural symbol in the region, in particular and Italy, in general.

His Excellency empha-



Part of the meeting of the Secretary General of the MWL and Mr. Dario Nardela

sized that the MWL is keen that the Islamic community manage its religious affairs independently in cooperation with the local government without external intervention whatsoever, noting that the MWL does not intervene in others' affairs.

"The Muslim community in Italy realizes that we do not intervene. We convinced them that neither the MWL nor others should intervene in the community's own affairs. We believe that such freedom is important," he said, pointing out that non-intervention comes in line with the MWL modern vi-

sion.

Mistakes happen when external parties dictate how a local Muslim community should interact within its own environment and how

to deal with the government and public policies. No one ever can know better in this regard than the community itself because it is the only one that knows the condi-





Dr. Al-Issa and Mayor of Florence in a commemorative snapshot after the meeting

tions and interests of the environment surrounding it.

His Excellency expressed his thanks to the Archdiocese of Florence for approving the proposal submitted

by the City Municipality to construct the mosque on a plot of land with an area of 11,000 square meters, which is a property of the Archdiocese itself. This gesture

reflects the level of national harmony in Italy and respect for religious diversity.

His Excellency met with the Mayor of Florence, Mr. Dario Nardela, and discussed with him a number of issues of common interests including the opportunities for mutual cooperation for the promotion of intercultural interaction. The needs of the Muslim community in the city were discussed with more emphasis on ways to enhance the community's integration in the social fabric and the citizenship values of its members, being Italian citizens.





The Secretary General of the MWL meets the President of the Council of the Region of Tuscany Mr. Ignio Gianni in Florence

Neither the community nor Islam should be blamed for the mistakes of a single member. No religion is extremist by origin; however, all religions have extremists, he said, citing the famous and fair reply of Holiness Pope Francis to a question about a terrorist act. Pope Francis said: “Even in Catholicism, there are extremists who commit crimes in the name of the religion. Religions are not responsible for such crimes.”

His Excellency discussed ways to strengthen trust among followers of religions and cultures and promote peace and religious harmony. Extremists and terrorists

including right-wing parties, want, he said, to undermine this trust and common human values and fuel conflicts.

His Excellency met with the members of the members of “Meeting Association”

in Florence and discussed a number of issues of common interest. Dr. Al-Issa was asked to give a lecture at the next AIMMR global meeting, which is attended annually by over 70,000 people





Al-Issa met with the Archbishop of Florence Church Cardinal Giuseppe Pettori

from around the world.

During his meetings with thought and political leaders in the region, Dr. Al-Issa discussed the MWL initiative to strengthen positive and sustainable integration of diverse religious and cultural minorities. The guidelines of the initiative was adopted by the International Conference on Peace among Followers of Religions organized at the campus of the University of Oxford, the United Kingdom.

His Excellency visited the historic Synagogue in Florence and met both the Chief Rabbi of the city Amidayo Spanuletti and community

leader Ms Daniela Missouri. They both expressed their admiration for the MWL humanitarian initiative denouncing the heinous Nazi crime known as the Holocaust, as well as the letter which Dr. Al-Issa sent to the Director of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in USA. The letter stressed that “The Holocaust is a Nazi crime that deeply shook the humanity and resulted in atrocities no fair, just and peaceful human being can ignore or belittle.”

His Excellency reiterated that Islam protects all innocent people and firmly stands against all crimes, especially racial and ethnic ones, let it

incriminates anyone who kills an innocent person and considers such killing tantamount to killing all human beings.

The meeting highlighted the need for the followers and leaders of religions to intensify efforts towards fighting all forms of violence committed by anyone in the name of their religions under any pretext. The followers should work together to combat all forms of extremism, promote the culture of dialogue, and increase awareness about religious values that reject violence and advocate tolerance and harmony. Diversity, plural-



ity and difference should be viewed from the perspective of the Law of God Almighty.

His Excellency met with His Eminence Cardinal Giuseppe Pettori, the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Florence (Basilica di Sant Maria del Fiore). The meeting was attended by the President of the Florence Institute for Dialogue, Rabbi Joseph Levy, and his deputy, Catholic Rev. Andrea Bellandi, and member of the Institute, Giorgi Angar.

The participants called for raising awareness, enhancing dialogue, and holding joint meetings as well as forums among the followers of religions and cultures and leaders of thought, including those who write and talk about political and religious issues and focus on fighting extremism and counter-extremism. The participants agreed on the importance of addressing the causes of vio-

lence, hatred and clash of civilization. Everyone should be aware of these menaces, which some political figures exploit to sway public opinion and influence them. The nature of diversity and difference should be promoted while mutual respect, coexistence, cooperation, tolerance and harmonious relationships should be encouraged.

The meeting highlighted the agreements and conventions the MWL concluded with the Florence Institute, the Archdiocese of Florence and others. These were hailed by different political, religious and intellectual leaders in the world and led to historic initiatives, partnerships and alliances.

His Excellency visited the Taqwa Mosque in Florence and met with numerous Islamic leaders in the city and discussed the conditions of the Muslim community.

The Florence-based European University for Postgraduate Studies, an affiliate of EU, hosted Dr. Al-Issa, where he met with the President of the University, Mr. Vincenzo Gracie, and discussed opportunities of scientific and academic cooperation and mutual research. Dr. Al-Issa held a dialogue with the academic faculty and listened to a short introduction about the important heritage of the university and was invited to give lectures on the campus in the foreseeable future.

His Excellency visited the historical library of Laurentiana (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana) in Florence and was received by the Director of the Library Ms. Anna Rita Ventoni, who showed him a number of historical and Islamic documents. Dr. Al-Issa expressed his thanks to the library staff for preserving the Islamic and humankind history. The library contains more than 11 global invaluable manuscripts as well as 100 Holy Qur'an manuscripts dating back to the first Islamic century.

West not plotting against Islam: Sheikh Muhammad Al-Issa

Arab News: It does not take long to realize that there is little of the conventional about Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa — and not just because his words and deeds have raised eyebrows around the world since his appointment in August 2016 as secretary-general of the Muslim World League (MWL).



Many Muslim clerics, for example, prohibit photography, and other forms of art. But within minutes of our meeting last week at an MWL relief center in Jeddah, Arab News photographer Ziyad Alarfaj and I were treated to a sermon on how best to take photos and edit them. Al-Issa, it turns out, is not only a practicing calligrapher but also an avid photographer.

He is a controversial figure, selected to preside over one of the most controversial Islamic organizations. The MWL has had its share of criticism since it was founded in 1962, but the past two years have brought an altogether different kind of controversy. If extremists' words and deeds in the name of religion are a disease that must be treated, then Al-Issa's words and deeds in response are a form of "shock therapy."

Yet while the MWL's new direction continues to anger hard-liners, Al-Issa continues to be received in high places such as the Vatican and the White House. He has also opened previously closed doors with the extreme right, sitting and talking with, for example, the for-

mer French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen (and for a keen photographer, that was a picture truly worth a thousand words).

Al-Issa's appointment has clearly coincided with the implementation of Saudi Arabia's reform program, Vision 2030, by Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman. At a global forum in Riyadh last year, the Crown Prince said he sought to destroy extremists "now and immediately," and spoke of returning Saudi Arabia to "moderate Islam." His words coincided with remarkable decisions, such as limiting the powers of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, ending the de facto ban on women driving, and reopening cinemas.

Because Al-Issa's tolerant and modern approach — a world away from the image of Islam that in many minds is linked to exclusion, militancy and extremism — is very much in line with the vision and statements of the crown prince, some portrayed the Sheikh Muhammad as merely a man to be utilized during this phase of reform.

"Not at all," he responds. "What I said in

Organization to stop creating new 'awareness centers' and focus on spreading moderation via social media

my past, say now and will say in the future reflects my convictions ... deep convictions, because they represent the true Islam that I believe in, and not the result of any phase.”

The Crown Prince’s approach is making a genuine difference in confronting extremism and empowering moderate scholars to create a moderate discourse, Dr. Al-Issa believes. “The difference happening now is in the existence of initiatives and practical programs to implement this discourse.”

Critics of the programs carried out by MWL centers around the world would say they were not noted for the promotion of moderation, but they preceded Dr. Al-Issa’s appointment as secretary-general. “It is not my right and my agenda to talk about the past,” he says. “The past belongs to its owners ... I talk only about myself and my future.” Current programs in MWL centers worldwide focus on moderation and “the explicit call to promote national integration of these communities in their homelands.”

In another indication that he is unconventional in his work, Dr. Al-Issa is not convinced of the effectiveness of these centers in the modern age, and believes the message of moderation can be more effectively delivered on social media platforms.

“My policy is not to open new centers, because ... now is the time for social media,” he said. “New media plays the role of a thousand centers. The message of Islamic moderation,

wisdom and humanity that we send in one tweet is doing the job of dozens of centers.”

In addition to social media, what Dr. Al-Issa relies on in his work is continuous travel and public engagement. Hardly a week passes without a photo of him with a religious or political personality in one country or with Muslim communities in another, or without a speech or lecture in a think tank or conference. And because he believes that the MWL today represents moderate Islam, his frequent trips and public appearances give him a role closer to that of an Islamic “foreign minister” than a secretary-general in the bureaucratic sense.

Perhaps this is why, last week in Florence, Italy, Dr. Al-Issa was awarded the prestigious Galileo Prize in recognition of his work in promoting peace and harmony among civilizations. Such an award, he believes, shows that international institutions are fair in their work, and have no preconceived agendas.

Those who believe otherwise, Al-Issa says, are victims of the conspiracy theory all too common in our part of the world that the West is plotting against Islam.

“Many Muslims have a negative perception that there is a conspiracy against Islam and Muslims. But, my brother, the West gave up its religious state, chose secularism and fought Christianity as a way of life, so why do you think that it is targeting you?” he said.

“We went and had a dialogue with the West and the Far East, and found an appreciation of Islam, a love for Muslims and a desire to cooperate with them when they learned about the truth of Islam.

“Do not blame the extreme right if it becomes suspicious about you because of an (existing) example in front of it that it exploits in a political game. Had it not had such an excuse, it would not have used this extremist speech.”

However, the problem worldwide is the absence of an impression of the Muslim modera-

tion and tolerance that Dr. Al-Issa promotes. So why are there not more sheikhs like him, calling for the same things as he does?

“Some do not realize the seriousness of negative perceptions against Islam, and therefore they do not interfere in correcting them,” he said. “Some fear the reaction of extremism and do not want to engage in debates with extremists. And the religious knowledge of others does not reach the level of correct understanding.”

Al-Issa criticizes those who speak in the name of religion based on “feelings, impressions and religious zeal devoid of any scientific thought or proposal.” His own views, meanwhile, firmly rooted in Muslim theology, are anathema to hard-liners.

An example was when he said that not wearing the hijab did not make a woman an infidel.

“I think no Muslim can call a Muslim woman an infidel or question her values because she has never worn a hijab,” he says. “The Muslim woman, if she does not wear hijab ... is not an infidel and does not depart from Islam.”

In Belgium last year, he preached against the tide of many local community leaders when he said Muslims should respect the laws, culture and customs of the non-Muslim countries in which they live, even if they felt that to do so violated their faith. If they (Muslims) were unable to legally persuade the local authorities to respect their wishes, they should either obey local laws or leave, Dr. Al-Issa advised.

More recently, in Washington DC, Dr. Al-Issa visited the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, criticized Holocaust deniers and condemned this heinous crime — which was deemed remarkable coming from a cleric of his caliber and an organization of MWL’s prominence.

However, it did not pass without drawing

Muslims should let go of conspiracy theories, MWL Secretary General tells Arab News in wide ranging interview

hate speech from extremists who saw it as an attempt to come closer to Israel at the expense of the rights of Palestinians.

Dr. Al-Issa, however, sees no contradiction between opposing the occupation of the Palestinian territories and condemning the Holocaust, which he says “shook humanity to the core.”

“We call for a just peace in accordance with the Arab initiative,” he says. “East Jerusalem (capital of Palestine) and West Jerusalem (capital of Israel), and there is no choice but peace.”

Despite his controversial remarks, Dr. Al-Issa says he is not afraid, although he knows his words may provoke some people. “I speak with logic, and I have right and justice on my side. And he who holds right and justice, God willing, is reassured deep in his heart. But I take my necessary (security) precautions without exaggeration.”

Dr. Al-Issa says the logic of his views has changed people’s minds about Islam. He knows this because of the dozens of private messages he has received from scholars and senior preachers, both inside and outside the Kingdom, whose names he keeps with him. And he says that, despite the critics, he enjoys wide support in the Muslim world because of his openness to everyone, the strength of his views rooted in Islamic theology, and the fact that the MWL speaks from its headquarters in the holiest place for all Muslims: Makkah.



Deputy Governor of Makkah congratulates Sheikh Al-Issa

Makkah - MWL

Deputy Governor of Makkah Region, Prince Abdullah bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz, paid a visit to Secretary General of the Muslim League and Member of the Council of Senior Scholars, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa at his house in Makkah to wish him happy Eid Al-Fitr, praying for God Almighty to accept everyone's fasting and performance of prayers wishing blessings for everyone.



Sheikh Al-Issa expressed his gratitude and appreciation for H.E. Deputy Governor of

Makkah Region for his visit and wished him a blessed on Eid Al-Fitr.

Muslim World League: Kingdom serves all pilgrims equally and without any discrimination

Makkah - MWL

The Muslim World League (MWL) has lauded the Saudi government's continuous efforts towards serving all pilgrims, Umrah performers and visitors of the Two Holy Mosques equally and without any form of discrimination.

In a statement, the MWL stressed that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud leads these efforts, noting that the Kingdom has already completed all the arrangements for receiving around 18,000 Syrian pilgrims who plan to perform Hajj this year.

The MWL also refuted the misleading allegations claiming that the Saudi authorities have banned Syrian citizens from performing Hajj and

Umrah.

The statement pointed out that the Kingdom welcomes annually pilgrims hailing from more than 80 nationalities coming from all parts of the world and treats all of them the same and provides them with excellent services in order to perform the Hajj rituals with comfort and ease.

Syrian pilgrims are no different, as this year around 18,000 of them will arrive from Syria. These facts are enough refutation for the baseless claims, the statement said.

The Kingdom has always served and will continue serving pilgrims and visitors of Umrah, thanks to the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the Crown Prince, may Allah protect them.



MWL welcomes truce between Afghani government and Taliban

Makkah – MWL

The Muslim World League (MWL) praised the wise decision reached between the Afghani government and Taliban who agreed on a truce for the purpose of achieving the higher inter-

ests of the Afghan people. Our Islamic religion orders us to make things right among us and overcome all differences and obstacles. The Afghani people suffered for a long time from these disputes and confrontations that caused more bloodshed, destruction, hostility and rivalry.





In a statement made by Secretary General and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the MWL Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, he said the MWL asserted that the Islamic Shariah (Law) called for adhering firmly to the Rope (i.e. the Covenant of Allah—the Qur’an) of Allah, altogether, and do not be disunited; and remember the favor of Allah upon you as you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together, (Literally: joined “between”) so you have become brethren by His favor. He warned of conflict and division, pointing out that the higher interests of the Afghani people are above everything else.

The MWL’s statement called upon all parties to continue their constructive dialogue and coordination to overcome all their differences. All Afghani parties should consider the supreme interests of the country and their sole goal is to safeguard their country, then Allah will help them achieve this supreme goal due to their true intention toward fulfilling this goal.

The statement confirmed that the Islamic nation should let the voice of reason prevail over blind excess for the purpose of achieving the higher interests of this great nation and overcoming all conflicts, whose losses are more than their ill-gotten gains.

The MWL put spotlight on the statement made by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud who expressed his happiness with this truce and strongly supported it for the purpose of achieving progress and prosperity for the Afghani people.

In conclusion, the statement called upon all concerned parties to continue these arduous efforts in order to achieve further reconciliation, cooperation and coordination to achieve the supreme interests of the Afghani State. The statement also called upon Afghani rivals to let the voice of reason prevail and listen carefully to the great advice made by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to promote unity, progress and reconciliation among all Afghani rivals.



MWL medical program alleviates pain of Moroccan patients suffering from thyroid enlargement

Marrakesh – MWL

Muslim World League (MWL) has completed a one-week specialized medical program for thyroid surgery to end the suffering of many impoverished Moroccans living in the poorest areas and regions of the Kingdom of Morocco.

The International Organization for Relief, Welfare and Development (IORWD), an MWL affiliate, implemented the pro-

gram, aimed to help the patients who could not afford the cost of thyroid surgery.

The Saudi medical team performed 71 successful complex and mild goiters at Al-Salama Hospital in Qal'at Al-Saragnah and Lalah Khadija Hospital in Batamalal.

Governor of Qal'at Al-Saragna province Muhammad Al-Shaiker expressed the appreciation of the Moroccan Ministry of Health's officials for this humanitarian work, which alleviated the suffering of pa-



tients with thyroid enlargement.

IORWD Secretary General Dr. Abdulaziz Sarhan, said that the program focused on the tribal areas in the Moroccan Sahara where residents suffer from incurable diseases due to lack of specialized services. Health reports indicated that an increasingly number of residents have thyroid diseases and in dire need of surgery.

Most patients are poor

farmers who had suffered from this disease and its complications for many years and had lost hope they would be ever treated. But when the medical team arrived, it gave the patients hope again and brought joy to their life and families.

The medical team came across severe cases with advanced stages. One of them was of a lady who had been suffering from thyroid enlargement for more

than 15 years before the medical team removed one-kilogram tumor from her. Following the surgery, the patient cried out of joy and told her family she was fine, reassuring them after they lost hope she would ever be cured. The family was very poor and could not afford the surgery.

The team rescued another lady who had had glandular pain for over 30 years and constantly complained from shortness of breath. The doctors removed the tumor, which weighed over one kilogram.

Dr. Sarhan said the MWL medical programs focus on performing different types of surgeries around the world. Last month, the MWL implemented a medical program in Cambodia, treating patients with oral and maxillofacial tumors. Over 60 patients were examined and 12 complex surgeries were performed in a matter of six days. It was the first time an Arab medical team travels to Cambodia and performs these surgeries.

The Muslim World League has previously set up five medical camps in Morocco where 95 heart surgeries and 125 catheterization were performed.



Sheikh Dr. Basfar: We have Founded an Association of Digital Qur'anic Recitation Platforms

Interview by: Tawfiq Nasrallah

Sheikh Dr. Abdullah bin Ali Basfar, Secretary General of the International Organization for the Holy Qur'an and Immaculate Sunnah, highlighted the Organization's efforts and activities in different parts of the world. He talked about the Organization's preparations for the Holy Month of Ramadan, the methods used to assess the level of memorisers of the Holy Qur'an and the steps taken to establish the Association of Digital Qur'anic Recitation Platforms, which consists of 16 digital Qur'anic recitation platforms (maqra'a) around the world.



Sheikh Dr. Basfar

In an interview with the Muslim World League (MWL) Journal, Sheikh Dr. Basfar underscored the MWL's efforts towards supporting the Organization's activities, which focus on establishing Qur'anic centers and institutes for qualifying memorizers of the Holy Qur'an and supporting Qur'anic memorization circles and institutions serving the Book of Allah.

The number of male and female students who memorized the Holy Qur'an through the MWL-run Organization over the past years has reached 58,408 hailing from different continents including Africa, Asia and Europe. Over 1995 undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships have been awarded to memorizers of the Holy Qur'an whereas 61 Qur'anic institutes and centers in addition to five colleges have been founded, with total number of students reaching 7,500 today. The Organization sponsors 1,000 Qur'anic circles in Asia and Africa while the number of imams appointed by the MWL has reached 10,995.

Sheikh Dr. Basfar touched upon the Qur'anic conferences, seminars and contests which the Organization has organized as well as upon

its efforts towards encouraging memorizers of the Holy Qur'an and sending imams overseas to lead prayer during the Holy Month of Ramadan. He highlighted the Organization's efforts towards providing Muslim minorities with copies of the Holy Qur'an translated into different languages.

Q. Why has the Organization changed its name lately? Has it been merged with the Commission on Scientific Signs in the Qur'an and Sunnah?

Yes, the Organization has been merged with the Commission and the Global Commission for Introducing the Messenger (may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). The words "Qitab" and "Sunnah" were mentioned in the Prophet's Farewell Sermon.

The Kingdom and its people play a pivotal role in financially supporting the Organization's efforts towards promoting the memorization of the Holy Qur'an and getting the new headquarters ready.

Q. Can you tell us more about this?

All thanks are due to the government and the sponsorship of King Abdullah (may he rest in peace) as well as King

Salman. Prince Khalid Al-Faisal and Prince Mishal bin Majed have supported the Organization all the way and always attend annual events during which memorizers of the Holy Qur'an are honored. The list of major supporters includes King Fahad, Prince Sultan, Prince Naif and Prince Saud Al-Faisal, may they all rest in peace. Saudi businessmen continue to support the Organization. I will never forget the huge support of Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League, who gives special attention and priority to the Organization.

Q. What do you think of the level of the Organization's Holy Qur'an teachers?

The Organization only employs competent teachers, especially graduates of the Holy Qur'an School at the Islamic University of Madinah who hold Ijazah or authorization to teach the Holy Qur'an that traces from one teacher to another back to the Messenger of Allah, may blessings and peace of Allah be upon him. Examples of such competent teachers include Sheikh Dr. Ayman Suwaid, chairman of the Qur'anic committee at the Organiza-

tion, who is licensed to teach the Holy Qur'an by renowned sheikhs who themselves are considered leading figures of Qur'anic recitation in the world. Sheikh Dr. Suwaid is also licensed to teach the six canonical books of Hadith. There are also the proficient students of Sheikh Dr. Ayman Suwaid and a group of other equally qualified teachers. We are satisfied with the level of our teachers because they all have Ijazah.

Q. We heard about the digital recitation platform and the collaboration with a major digital company to help students make the best of this tool. Can you tell us more about it?

The Organization has established a digital Qur'anic recitation platform 'Maqr'a' targeting students all over the world. Today, over 30,000 students in the globe learned the recitation rules through this platform. We have also established an Association of Digital Qur'anic Recitation Platforms, which consists of 16 digital Qur'anic recitation platforms (Maqra'a) around the world. We work constantly to organize the work of the association.

Q. How many people have memorized the Holy Qur'an



through the Organization? Do you award scholarships to persons who want to memorize the Book of Allah?

The Organization has helped 58,408 people from Asia, Africa and Europe memorize the Holy Qur'an, of whom 5,055 have Ijazah. We have awarded 1995 undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships to students who want to study Shariah, science or management. Through these scholarship, we aim to prepare students to play a greater role in their societies and serve their countries better. The number of BA students who have graduated is 1,170 while that of MA is 87 and PhD is 33.

What about the Organization's efforts towards establishing Qur'anic centers and institutes and supporting Qur'anic circles and schools all over the world, especially

in Africa?

The Organization always ensures that students get intensive and excellent lessons and perfect the recitation rules and have well-versed Shariah knowledge. We have founded so far 61 Qur'anic institutes and centers all over the world and five Qur'anic colleges where 7,500 students study. These are located in Asia, Africa and South America. We sponsor 1,000 Qur'anic circles and schools in Asia and Africa.

Q. The Organization continues to build more educational institutions around the world. Would such step affect its work and divert its attention from the main goals, especially in light of the fact that the costs of education have risen?

On the contrary, building more institutions will help

the Organization focus more on setting plans and programs to these institutions and supporting them financially. The Organization used to build institutes and centers, which cost a lot.

Q. Can you talk about the conferences, seminars and contests which the Organization holds to encourage students memorize the Holy Qur'an?

Over the past few years, the Organization has held two conferences serving the Holy Qur'an. The first took place 2011 in Jeddah under the patronage of late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz under the theme of "Qur'anic Teaching... Cooperation and Integration". Over 25 researchers from Islamic countries took part in the event, which was attended by 24 ministers and muftis and 266 Qur'anic sheiks. The second one was held 2014 in the Kingdom of Bahrain under the patronage of King Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa under the theme "Prophet's Method for Teaching the Holy Qur'an". More than 21 renowned Qur'anic researchers partook in the event, attended by 24 ministers and muftis and 229 Qur'anic sheikhs. We have also organized 124 Qur'anic forums and conferences in

Asia, Africa and Europe over the past years in which an elite of scholars and thought leaders participated.

Q. The Organization sends imams overseas to different countries around the world in the Holy Month of Ramadan and provides minorities with copies of the Holy Qur'an in different languages? Can you tell us more about that?

In the past years, the Organization has delegated imams to lead Tarawih and Tahajjud prayers in different countries and deliver lessons and lectures. Over 10,995 imams have been delegated so far - with 5,014 in Asia, 5,346 in Africa and 335 in Europe. Those imams have been helpful to many Muslims. We have also distributed 1,602,217 copies of the Holy Qur'an to institutes and schools around the world.

Some say that the field of the scientific signs of the Holy Qur'an will not be given enough attention since the Commission has been merged with the Organization. Has it become necessary to appoint an assistant Secretary General?

This field involves scientific, technical and financial aspects and these were merged in relevant departments while the department

of research remains independent in order to promote the excellent research conducted on the scientific signs of the Holy Qur'an. An Assistant Secretary General for scientific and educational affairs has been recommended. We wish him the best in his new role.

Q. Will the Journal of Scientific Signs continue to be published?

Certainly. The journal will continue to be published under the approval of Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa, MWL Secretary General, who gives attention and priority to the journal.

Q. What do you think of Ahl Alquran Channel?

It is the only channel covering international Qur'anic contests as well as local contests such as King Abdulaziz International Contest, King Salman Contest, Prince Sultan International Contest for Police Officers, Prince Naif Contest for Security Forces, Prince Sultan bin Salman Contest for Disabled Children and other events. The channel also covers Qur'anic conferences, forums, seminars, lectures and lessons. It has seen major development and continues to serve the Book of Allah.



The New Islamophobia in France

By **Jawzi Belkacem Lardjane**
(Algerian Researcher and Translator)

Muslims in France face a new anti-Islam campaign aiming at gathering signatures of politicians and thought leaders for a petition demanding that Muslims should omit some verses from the Holy Qur'an which - according to them - incite jihad and violence. Launched by the former Director of the Charlie Hebdo magazine, the campaign garnered support of a former French president as well as a famous public figure,

known to have Islamophobic tendencies.

This campaign was described by the Grand Mosque of Paris as "Sheer madness and an unfair trial" against Muslims of France. Mr. Dalil Boubekur, the rector of the Grand Mosque, said in an official statement that French-Muslim citizens fight anti-semitism, racism, and Islamophobia, and work hard to eliminate causes detrimental to national unity.

The Perils of Islamophobia

Islamophobia analysts warn against the consequences of Islamophobia and how cultural and religious diversity is targeted by extreme-right groups who incite racism and Islamophobia.

They noticed that anti-Islam campaigns are not so different from the campaigns of anti-semitism. For example, the Jewish anti-Zionist activist Norman Finkelstein views Islamophobia in the media as a similar version to historical anti-semitism in Europe. Meanwhile, the British orientalist and historian Karen Armstrong believes that Islamophobia pushes Muslim youth into extremism and encourages them to join terrorist organizations by providing Islamophobia as a perfect argument for the war on Islam.

The Power of Media and Knowledge

Modern means of communication can have a negative impact on critical thinking and objective research leading to the loss of scientific honesty and authority on the subject of Islam. Media has become a means for exchanging hate and racism instead of being a vehicle for promoting understanding and positive dialogue. The menace of racism and Islamophobia gets to the worst stage when media becomes the only go-to reference to learn about Islam and Muslims. It also plays a crucial role in encouraging crimes motivated by Islamophobia. These campaigns are a two-edged sword. It can lead to many successes and victories for Muslims if the circumstances are used appropriately to reinforce the innocence of Muslims and the truth about Islam. Some of the politicians use Islamophobia to divert public attention from real issues facing the French society such as the national calls to apologize for the colonial crimes in France's former colonies, and the

calls to change the French national anthem that has often been described as a hymn of war contradicting the French national motto. Those who demand to distort our Revelation ignore the contributions of Islamic civilization to humanity, thanks to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, revealed as mercy and guidance to the universe. They ignore the meanings of the verses they want to remove from the Book of Allah. They do not understand the linguistic, jurisprudential and historical contexts as in the verses about fighting (contemptuously called the verses of the sword) in Surat Al-Baqara and Surat Al-Tawbah. They often quote them to incite hatred against Islam without referring to the preceding and next verses. Allah Almighty said in Surat Al-Baqara:

“Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors” (190) *“and fight them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and fitnah is worse than killing. And do not fight them at Al-Masjid Al-Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then fight them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers”* (191) *“And if they cease, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful”*. (192)

Allah Almighty said in Surat al-Tawbah:

Excepted are those with whom you made a treaty among the polytheists and then they have not been deficient toward you in anything or supported anyone against you; so complete for them their treaty until their term [has ended]. Indeed, Allah loves the righteous [who fear Him].(4) And when the sacred months have passed, then fight the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if



they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.(5) And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah. Then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know.(6)

Islam in the Eyes of the West

Anti-Islam campaigns have dangerous objectives and can affect negatively the image of the West in the world, its relation with Islam, and the dialogue among civilizations. The actions of some racist politicians and intellectuals reflect a sense of desperation in their personal careers and in their attempts to distort the message of the Holy Qur'an, which calls humanity to peaceful coexistence and brotherhood. Allah Almighty said in Surat Al-Hujurat :

“O mankind! Indeed We have created you from a male a female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know each one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the

sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted” Verse 13.

Corrupted people intentionally attack the Holy Qur'an, the core of Islam, with the intention to cause turmoil amongst Muslims and undermine the reasons of their existence, unity and duty to convey the message of Islam. Nevertheless, they can never obliterate the beauty of Islam because Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) foretold us in a hadith : ‘Islam came as a stranger, and will return as a stranger.’ Even the leaders and the wise of the West admit the fact that Islam is the only solution and alternative to the human beings as it was speculated by Sir George Bernard Shaw a century ago.

The false notions prevalent today about Islam in the West are totally different from true Islam followed by around 1.6 billion Muslims. Islamophobia distorted the meaning of important Islamic concepts such as Jihad (literal meaning struggling or striving) into holy war and killing, the meaning of Islam into subjugation and slavery, and the meaning of

hijab into oppression of women. They also invented new concepts such as Islamism or political Islam, radical Islam, Islamic terrorism, Wahhabism, etc.

These distortions have always aimed at driving Muslims away from their spiritual and material heritage, and to obliterate the milestones and teachings of Islam which are founded on the Holy Qur'an, Sunnah, and Al-Salaf Salih (early Muslim generations) whose humanity and legacy embodied in heroism, justice, peace, mercy, tolerance, and generosity still continue to impress non-Muslims from the east to the west.

Orientalist Joseph Van Hammer said in his introduction to the German translation of the meanings of the Qur'an :

“The Qur'an is not only the legislation of Islam, but it is the pinnacle of Arabic literature. Its amazing style attests that it is a Revelation from God. Muhammad (peace be upon him) spread his power by the miraculous speech of the Qur'an. It is not possible for the Qur'an to be mere product of a human skill”.

Goethe, father of German literature and orientalism, said :

“I don't question whether the Qur'an is of eternity; it is the book of books. Qur'an is not a human speech; if we deny it is a Divine Revelation, it means Muhammad is himself a deity”

He further attested:

“Muhammad is a Prophet and not a poet and therefore the Qur'an is to be seen as a divine law and not as a book of a human creation made for entertainment”

French historian and physician Gustav Lebon describes the civilization of Islam:

“From the verses of the Qur'an we previously mentioned, we find that Muhammad's forgiveness towards the Jews and the Chris-

tians was ultimately phenomenal; and such tolerance was unprecedented by the founders of other religions such as Judaism and Christianity in particular. We shall also see how his successors followed in his footsteps...”

“The world has not known more merciful conquerors than the Muslims, and a more tolerant religion than their religion. Force was not a factor for spreading Islam.

Muslims were not blinded by their victories and did not behave with arrogance like conquerors in usual. They neither oppressed the conquered countries nor forced them to convert to their religion or to give up their belongings”

Former French Foreign Minister Gabriel Hanotaux attested:

“There is not a place on earth where Islam has not crossed its borders and spread. It is the only religion that people tend strongly to choose more than any other religion”

Napoleon Beaunaparte, the founder of the French Empire and its first emperor said about the Holy Qur'an:

“I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of Qur'an which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness.”

Dawah to face Islamophobia

Early generations of Muslims were fewer in number than Muslims today and suffered more than them in entire history, but those tribulations did not affect them negatively. Because of the Qur'anic principle of moderation in Islam or the Middle Way, they succeeded to snatch humanity from darkness. This principle enabled the Ummah to be the dominant and most humanitarian superpower



for more than ten centuries. Fighting Islamophobia begins by dispelling misconceptions about Islam and promoting knowledge and learning for both Muslims and non-Muslims. This has to be done through the noble ethics of Islam such as kindness, patience, and communication with wisdom. The Middle Way prescribed in the Qur'an for the ideal Ummah can save both Muslims and non-Muslims from falling into the two sides of darkness: sectarianism and atheism.

Allah said in Surat Al-Imran:

“You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them. Among

them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient.” Verse 110.

Islamophobia is a disease and its medicine is Dawah to Allah the Almighty. Dawah is an obligation to convey to the world the truth about the Holy Qur'an, Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the virtues of Tawhid (oneness of Allah), the greatness of Islam, its history and civilization. This has to be done with a good character and a noble behavior to facilitate the reception and the understanding of the message of Islam. Such ethics were the silent words of the early generations of Muslims wherever they went. For example, speaking with gentleness, smiling with sincerity, removing evils from the roads...etc. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said :

“Faith consists of sixty to seventy branches, the best of which is to declare there is no god worthy of worship except Allah and the least of which is to remove something harmful from the road, and modesty is a branch of faith.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

True Jihad in Islam

Whoever reads the works of Tafseer (exegesis of the Holy Qur'an) and Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) will find that true Jihad (which literally means striving or struggling) has many meanings in the Book of Allah. One of its most important meanings is the self-struggling against the evilness of the self. In other words, there is a spiritual or psychological jihad and there is a physical jihad. It was reported that the companions of the Prophet - may Allah be pleased with them- said in their return from the expedition of Tabuk : “We went for a lesser jihad and we returned for a greater jihad” The former refers to physical jihad, and the latter to jihad of the self, ego, heart, and desires.

Historically since the start of Islam, scholars classified jihad into four categories : Jihad of the self, jihad against



hypocrites, jihad for defense against invaders, and jihad of justice.

There is no doubt that greater jihad or al-jihad Al-Akbar is an obligation upon all Muslims or Fardh 'Ain (obligatory and collective duty) that leads to personal and social reforms by preserving the five faculties in Islamic legislation (faith, being, intellect, progeny, and property). Greater Jihad is one of the most discussed topics in Islamic literature and history. Lesser jihad is agreed by all scholars to be Fardh Kifaya (optional and individual duty) and that it is one of the topics related to Fiqh Al-Nawazil or the jurisprudence of contemporary issues which require an Ijtihad by a council of scholars to issue a related fatwa (legal verdict) depending on the circumstances and in accordance with the verse

revealed by Allah Almighty in Surat Al-Nissa: "O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result." Verse 59. Lesser jihad has many conditions and criteria established and agreed by the consensus of scholars since centuries. Scholars unanimously agree that these conditions are not realizable nowadays. They all endorse that this era is an era of greater jihad because this era requires patience, kindness, and wise dialogue as preached by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in numerous hadiths about patience, kindness, and dawah:

"There are indeed ahead of

you days that require patience." (Sunan Abu Dawud) "You must be kind. Verily, kindness is not found in anything except that it beautifies it, and it is not removed from anything except that it disgraces it." (Musnad Ahmad) And He advised his wife Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, after she scorned a Jew who insulted Him: "O Aisha, Allah is kind and He loves kindness in all matters. He rewards for it what is not granted for harshness and He does not reward anything else like it." (Sahih Muslim).

This greater struggle has been preached by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its rulers, and scholars since its foundation. Former Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Baaz (may Allah have mercy on his soul) used to say (source: Compilation of Fatwa and Articles, volume 8 page 375):

"This era is an era of kindness, patience, and wise dialogue, and not an era of harshness. Most of people are in ignorance, and in neglect of their religion for the sake of the worldly affairs. There must be softness and kindness for Dawah to reach them, in order to convey to them and to teach them (the teachings of Islam). We ask Allah to guide us all". Ameen.

A Muslim scientist develops a method to detect non-halal contents in food and beverages

By Qais Bajaeifir

An Indonesian Muslim scientist has developed an electronic portable nose that can detect lard and alcohol content rapidly and with the highest accuracy in food and beverages as well as non-Halal substances in cosmetics and other consumer goods used by Muslims all over the world.



Professor Irwandi Jaswir, who is the deputy dean of the International Institute for Halal Research and Training at the International Islamic University Malaysia, has dedicated his entire life to conducting Halal research and promoting Halal science. This valuable device is the result of long years of research and can help millions of Muslims everywhere detect non-Halal compound in many consumer goods.

A significant invention

The device is important, especially following fake Halal logo and certification cases



that have been reported in the past years and continue to be reported in several countries. Halal regulators have found that some Halal food producers used dubious source of ingredients in their products in order to maximize commercial profits.

The volume of Halal food market was estimated at USD 0.58 trillion in 2005 while today's estimates for the market volume indicate that it will reach USD 2.55 trillion by 2024 as a result of the rising demand for the consumption of Halal food. These enormous figures explain the fierce competition going on among some food producers who tend to use adulterated material, claiming it to be Halal in order to expedite the Halal food production processes and sell the largest quantity possible in a short time, making huge profits.

Fake Halal logo cases have made Muslims around the world increasingly concerned about the dubious ingredients contained in Halal products, which could include pork substitution or any prohibited materials

Muslims are not permitted to eat. Food fraud indeed poses a major risk for Muslims living in non-Muslim countries.

The electronic portable nose can monitor Halal labelled products, help Muslims double-check their authenticity and make informed choices about a product before purchasing it. Mitigating the concerns of Muslims about dubious ingredients was one of the reasons why Professor Jaswir invented this device.

King Faisal Prize

Professor Jaswir realized these concerns among Muslims and wanted to alleviate them by giving his fellow Muslims a device helping them identify non-Halal substance in food products quickly and easily. He felt it was his duty as a Muslim researcher to come up with a practical solution for this problem and do something that serves Islam and Muslims all over the globe. His genuine efforts and long years of research were recognized earlier this year when the presti-

gious King Faisal Prize in Service to Islam was awarded to him.

The prize was launched by King Faisal Foundation and awarded for the first time in 1979. It recognizes the outstanding and exceptional works of individuals and institutions in five major categories: Service to Islam, Islamic Studies, Arabic Language and Literature, Medicine, and Science. The prize aims to benefit Muslims in their present and future, enrich human knowledge and develop humankind.

Other reasons for granting the prize to Professor Jaswir included his valuable contribution to and eclectic role in establishing and developing Halal science through various publications and research studies. Professor Jaswir, who is also the Secretary of Council of Professors at IIUM, exerted strenuous efforts in leading the International Institute for Halal Research at IIUM.

The institute has become today, thanks to him, a renowned center for research and services related to Halal food and consumer goods. He focuses in his studies and research on developing new methods for analyzing substances used for manufacturing Halal food alternatives and practical procedures for producing Halal gelatin from Halal (non-porcine) sources, such as camel and fish.

Works and awards

Professor Jaswir published over 120 peer reviewed articles in scientific journals and accomplished over 30 research studies. His publications include articles titled “Identification and verification of porcine DNA in commercial gelatin and gelatin containing processed foods”, “IIUM-Fabricated Portable Electronic Nose for Halal Authentication in Beverages”, and “Formulation Develop-

ment and Systematic Optimization of Production Fish Gelatin Nanoparticles as New Resource for Drug Delivery”. His work has been recognized by over 60 awards and honors including the 2013 HABIBIE award and the Islamic Product Innovation award in 2016 by Malaysian Innovation Agency for the Lard Detector using E-nose.

Academic career

Professor Jaswir, who was born on 20 December 1970 in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia, earned Bachelor’s Degree in Food Technology and Human Nutrition in 1993 from Bogor Agriculture University (IPB) in Indonesia, Master of Science in Food Science and Biotechnology in 1996, as well as PhD in Food Chemistry and Biochemistry in 2000 from the Universiti Putra in Malaysia. He has assumed many academic and administrative positions during his productive career.

Advice

Professor Jaswir urges fellow Muslim scientists and scholars to always maintain the same strong passion for scientific research and remember that the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah are full of scientific concepts that had inspired Muslim scholars in the past and spurred them to contribute to improving humankind life and civilization. Young researchers should always be patient and have passion and work hard to solve social problems Muslims suffer from.

His message to all young researchers: Remember that the future of your country is in your hands; conduct your research seriously and always work to help your fellow Muslims and make their life easier.



Technology Sets Serious Challenges to the West

Foreign Policy Magazine

In a world where technological progress promises large benefits, the capacity to supply the necessary conditions may determine which economies are positioned for success, and which are bound to go the way of the Spanish, Portuguese, or Ottoman Empires. That should worry today's West more than it worries China.

In many dimensions, today's West is not at its best, according to a comprehensive study run by western researchers. Many people are challenging the values of liberal democracy (individual rights and majority rule) and even

those of the Enlightenment (reason, science, and truth). Populist parties are channeling such sentiments with considerable electoral success, capitalizing on economic malaise, widening inequality, and rising immigration.

3 Forms of Knowledge

Technology is often blamed for the social ills underpinning the populist surge. But what about the causal arrow that runs in the opposite direction, from society to technology?

To ascertain what technology wants re-

quires understanding what it is and how it grows. Technology is really three forms of knowledge: embodied knowledge in tools and materials, codified knowledge in recipes, protocols, and how-to manuals, and tacit knowledge or know how in brains. We can have more tools and gadgets, more books and manuals, or more documents at our disposal on the web, but we do not have the capacity at the individual level to cram more stuff into our brains. For technology to grow, it needs to imprint different bits of know how in different brains. According to the study which was published in *Foreign Policy* magazine, societies become more knowledgeable not because individuals know more but because they know different things.

Polymaths and Renaissance Men

But after storing different bits of know how in different brains, using know how requires bringing those disparate brains back together again. No wonder, then, that there are fewer polymaths and Renaissance Men today, and that the number of authors per scientific papers or per patent has been growing fast .

One trick that technology uses in order to grow is modularization. If a product's components can be compartmentalized in such a way that different teams are good at different modules and a few are good at putting those modules together, each team may need to know less, even as the whole can know more.

Consider the following example: Chile is the world's largest producer of lithium and Japan's Panasonic is the largest manufacturer of lithium-ion batteries, but it is China's BAIC that is the largest electronic vehicle (EV) manufacturer. While America's Tesla is an admirable company, by 2025 Europe and China are expected to have over ten times

more EVs than the US, which also lags far behind in the number of charging stations to support them.

Connecting Manufacturers

This example illustrates two points. First, each module in the value chain benefits from connecting to other modules in the world. Modularity creates a logic that is somewhat different from simple economies of scale. EVs benefit from innovations in mining and in battery manufacturing, wherever they occur. Whoever achieves those innovations will want to connect to the places that use them.

A jumbo aircraft literally requires millions of parts, and innovations in any component can have important implications for the plane's overall design and efficiency. For example, 3-D printing may radically lower the number of parts required by turbine engines and thus significantly reduce their weight (and thus their fuel consumption). To exploit these possibilities, innovating companies need to be able to connect to manufacturers elsewhere in a secure manner.

This is exactly the opposite of what a sunset clause in the North American Free Trade Agreement would accomplish. And it is why Airbus recently warned that Brexit will have severe negative consequences for the United Kingdom's aerospace industry. Modularization requires the ability to tap talent anywhere in the world. In Silicon Valley, over half the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) workers are foreign-born, and fewer than a fifth were born in California, a state that, with 40 million residents, would rank 36th among the world's countries. With US President Donald Trump's clampdown on immigration, the neighbor to the north put billboards in Silicon Valley that read "HIB Visa problem?"



Social Decision

But implementing many technologies also requires ingredients that can be provided only through non-market mechanisms, and here governments play a critical role. Consider high-speed rail. Without government authorization and cooperation, no private company can build a rail line. Western Europe has more than 14,000 kilometers (8,700 miles) of high-speed rail, and China has over 25,000. The United States claims to have 56 kilometers, in a short stretch that covers less than 8% of the distance between Boston and Washington, DC. The reason is obvious: this is a technology that, like the electric car, requires a social decision and a government that enables that choice.

In short, technology requires a society that connects to the world, both through trade and openness to talent, in order to exploit the gains from modularization. It also requires a

society that is able to develop a shared sense of purpose, one that is deep and powerful enough to direct the government to provide the public goods that new technologies require. The first requirement is facilitated by a society having a broader and more inclusive sense of who is a member. The second is facilitated by a deeper and more meaningful sense of membership.

Developing these attitudes is not easy. It requires a civic rather than an ethnic sense of nationhood. This is why the stakes in today's policy debates in the West are not just about values. In a competitive world, societies pay dearly for being unable – or unwilling – to deliver what technology wants.

Today's populist forces may disregard what technology wants and impose their vision on the world. But they will inadvertently leave their societies, just like the US rail system, on a very slow track.

Community Leaders Denounce Arson at Edson's Mosque



Press Agencies & Internet

Evidence from the fire set on June 16 can still be seen on the white door and siding at the Edson Mosque two days later.

Community leaders in Edson denounced the recent arson attack on the town's mosque and offered their support on Monday to members of the Islamic Society of Edson.

Society board members described an outpouring of local and international support that followed news of the fire set Saturday night.

"We've been overwhelmed by the great support that we've had," said Tufik Baterdouk, the society's vice-president.

Standing outside the mosque on Monday, Edson's mayor, Kevin Zahara, said he was shocked the attack occurred but proud of the community's response.

"I'm really honoured to be the mayor of this community when I see those people com-

ing together and supporting the mosque and the membership here," he told CBC News.

Reverend Kimberly Roy of Edson United Church also visited the mosque on Monday. Members of the congregation at the united church were "deeply saddened" by news of the fire, she said.

The two communities of faith have broken bread together, prayed together and visited each other's places of worship in the past, she added.

"It's hit our families and our communities hard."

Islamic Society of Edson board member Jocelyn Pettitt said she was surprised by the arson and she had not observed any instances of tension between Muslim and non-Muslim residents in town.

The mosque opened in 2013, Baterdouk said, but Muslim families were living in Edson long before that. He's lived there for 26

years.

“We are in the fabric of this town,” Pettitt said.

Neither board member said they thought the incident would discourage people from going to the mosque.

“Everything will continue as normal,” she said, adding that the incident has prompted the society to learn more about security and safety measures.

RCMP are still investigating the fire and have asked for the public’s assistance in identifying a possible suspect.

“The RCMP takes these offenses very seriously and will continue to search for the suspect(s) responsible for this crime,” read a Monday news release.

Canadian mosque targeted in ‘brazen’ arson attack: ‘How do we explain this to our children?’

Police say a mosque has been set on fire in Alberta, Canada, in what Muslim community representatives are calling a “brazen attack”.

CCTV images supplied to Canadian media by officials at the Edson Mosque appeared to show a hooded figure walking away from the building carrying a red bag or jerry can.

Three worshippers were in the car park of the mosque at the time and saw flames rising above an entrance. The fire service was called and successfully tackled the blaze before it could cause extensive damage.

But in a post on Facebook, Edson Mosque organisers said they were “gravely concerned about this attack”, the first of its kind in the five years since the building was constructed with flame-retardant materials in 2013.

Two stabbed to death in ‘brutal’ attack on mosque in South Africa

More than 350 mosques urge Tories to launch Islamophobia inquiry

At least 17 killed as bomb in Afghan mosque targets election planning

Two men hit by car outside Birmingham mosque.

The Quebec City Mosque killer says Justin Trudeau triggered the attack. The incident took place at around 11pm on Saturday night, “on a day of celebration for Muslims around the world as they celebrate an end of Ramadan”, mosque officials said.

Jocelyn Pettitt, a board member of the Islamic Society of Edson, described the incident as “disappointing”.

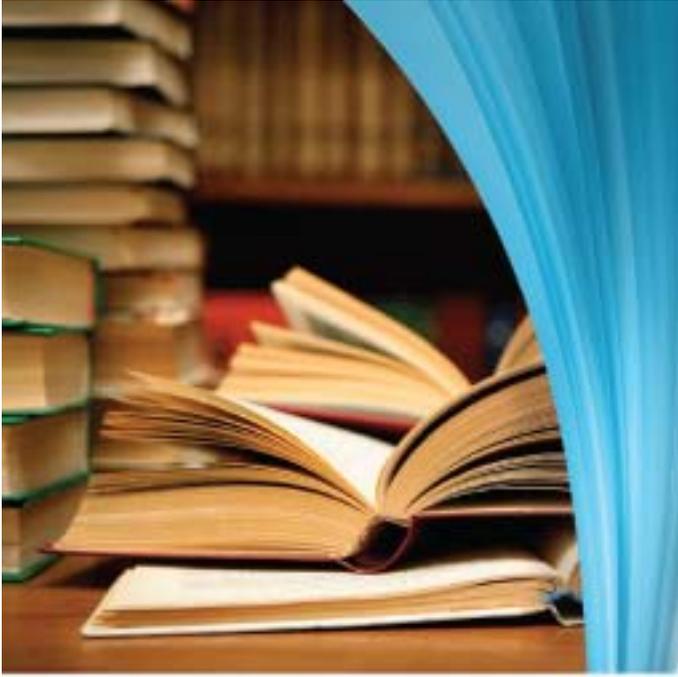
“We’re shocked... it’s concerning that someone came to damage our place of worship,” she told the Edmonton Journal.

She said the mosque serves 15 Muslim families in the area as well as lots of travellers stopping on their way to and from Jasper National Park. Edson itself is a small town with only around 8,500 residents. “The action of this one person isn’t representative of the town of Edson,” she said. “We consider this our home, and we’ve felt accepted since day one.”

Tufik Baterdouk, vice president of the Islamic Society of Edson, told CBC it was “a little bit more scary” that the arson took place while there were three worshippers on the premises.

“It was quite brazen,” he said. “Typically you would think that someone who wants to commit arson or vandalism, if they see people ... they probably would change their mind. But this individual, it does not seem to be a concern for him.

“This is something that we will have to explain to our children ... that kind of weighs on your mind,” he added. “Probably the hardest thing is having to try to explain to children why something like this could have happened.”



New book highlights critical role of mothers as nurturers and caregivers

Yusef Salam

“Paradise is Under Mother’s Feet” by H.Y. BabalWaiz, a native of Ghana, West Africa, portrays the life-giving roles of mothers in society, the reward for honoring them, and the penalty for dishonoring them. The author stresses that mothers constitute the foundation of civilization and possess innate qualities of motherhood such as love, care, compassion, sympathy and empathy for children. They have the awesome responsibility of being the first teacher and role model for children, who are the future of the world. However, the status of mothers, the author writes, has been dangerously lowered in many places around the world.

BabalWaiz writes that many sons and daughters put their mothers in nursing homes and seldom visit them, and in some cases they do not visit at all. Laws applicable in some parts of the world permit a son or daughter to gain authority over their parents and even threaten to call the police or child protection agencies on their parents, even if parents have not engaged in any abusive practices.

The author mentions numerous verses of the Holy Qur’an as well as texts of the Hadith, and quotations of secular and religious figures to remind readers of the stellar position of mothers.

BabalWaiz discusses how a moth-

er's womb guards and protects a fetus and how mothers act like guardians of their babies. "The fetus I protected in the mother's womb like a king in a castle."

The fetus is secure and well-protected inside the womb and its development relies heavily on his mother's body until it comes to this world. The author writes "During the nine-month ordeal... mothers suffer physically, physiologically and psychologically due to hormonal changes, leading to nausea, vomiting, fatigue, bloating, flatulence (passing gas), frequent urination and mood swings."

A man approached Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and asked him three times whom of the parents should be honored. The Prophet, answered "your mother" three times to highlight the importance of mothers over fathers. He said "your father" once.

BabalWaiz highlights the importance of breastfeeding, describing it as the richest source of nutrition, which is better for infants than cow's milk or any baby formula.

Breastfeeding mothers want the best for their newborn. Moreover, it is mothers who nurse their children and husbands when they are sick. Mothers won't have peace of mind until they see their children and husbands feeling well.

The writer reminds us that no love can match a mother's love. No matter how loving a wife is to her husband or vice versa, no husband or child will be able to give mothers or wives the same quality of love.

BabalWaiz offers this quote by Abraham Lincoln to accentuate the significant role of mothers: "I am indebted with all that she provided to me and I vow to dedicate all that I achieve to my mother exclusively."

Vernon Jordan, the advisor to various U.S. Presidents, declares: "There will never be a pillow in this world more comfortable and convenient than the lap of mothers". Elizabeth Stone's comment is soul-stirring: "Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside of your body."

"Paradise is under Mother's Feet" should be welcomed by all. It is priceless at a time when the moral stock index in the world has plummeted; a time when human values threaten to stoop to the the lowest levels. And in innumerable cases, they already have. BabalWaiz's book is a call for us to return to our true nature.

Islam's Journey into Latin America

By M. Nasir Jawed

This article focuses on the history and geographical presence of Islam in Latin America, the gradual growth of Muslim population, the prevailing prejudice against Islam and the lack of support from the Muslim community.



Introduction

Latin America is as far as some 12,000 kilometers from Makkah, the birthplace of Islam. The continent is home to over 600 million people, with Muslims accounting for less than 6 million, or nearly 1% of the total population.

Nonetheless, Muslims played an important part in discovering Americas in the 12th century, as also in inhabiting the region. This we can understand this way: in the Middle Ages, Muslims were far more advanced, they ruled Spain and Sicily and wrote history's some remarkable chapters. It was the time when European universities were modeled on the famous madrassas (Islamic seminaries) of Spain, like that of Al-Hamra, and Muslims were teaching the world how to acquire knowledge.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Muslim astronomers and mariners played a significant role in discovering the New World in the 15th century. For instance, the Muslims, whom In fact have made contact with the New World even before Columbus, had perfected the astronomical tools and maps, which Columbus used.

For his voyages into India, Vasco de Gama too consulted with Ahmad bin Majid, an as-

tronomer, and a map created by a navigator and cartographer, Piri Muhyi Al-Din Reis (d.1554).

This suggests that it could only have been made through the first-hand experience in the Americas.

According to Syed A. Ah-sani, an authority on medieval history, Portuguese and Spanish discovery missions "were led by Muslim mariners, then known as Moriscos," or Spanish Muslims.

The early Muslims

Latin America is generally defined as a continent that consists of the whole of South America in addition to Mexico, Central America, and the islands of the Caribbean whose inhabitants speak a Roman language. Besides the conquerors, many laborers were brought from Africa and they settled down in countries like Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, some Caribbean islands, and majorities of them were Muslims.

Islam Reborn

Sylviane A. Diouf in his book, *Servants of Allah: Enslaved in the Americas*, 1998, wrote that with the passage of time, Islam was reborn as a result of new waves of Muslim migrants.

At the end of the 16th

century, after the liberation of slaves and the return of many of them to these lands, together with immigration from India, Pakistan and Indonesia, new concentrations of Muslims appeared. They settled down in countries like Suriname, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. Both Guyana and Suriname are today members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Between CE1850 and CE1860, a massive immigration of Arab Muslims to American lands took place. The majority came from

Syria and Lebanon, and settled in countries like Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia and Paraguay, together with immigrants from Palestine, Bangladesh and Pakistan. This immigration was very intense.

The new immigrants integrated well with the local cultures, and earned respect for their hard work as also their love for their host countries. Many of them joined hands to create Islamic societies, centers, mosques, etc. in order to worship freely.

The Largest Mosque

There is said to be a mosque in the capital city of every nation of the continent. In some cities, there are 3 or 4 and in



some, there is only one.

Islam's firm ground in the continent is reflected in the majestic and arguably the largest King Fahd Mosque located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Named after the 5th King of Saudi Arabia, the mosque is run by the Islamic Cultural Center. Notably, Argentine President Carlos Menem granted a huge piece of land in the Palermo section of Buenos Aires to the mosque in 1995. There are several other mosques in the country.

The population

There is great variation while denoting the actual number of Muslim population in the continent, but it is generally believed that they range anywhere between 5 and 6 million out of Latin America's total population of approximately 625 million. The rapid growth of Islam in Latin America is attributed to the high rate of conversions, which indicates possibly a higher number of Muslims.

Brazil is home to around 1.5 million Muslims, less than 1% of the nation's population. "The majority of Muslims hail from Lebanon

next come the Syrians and the Palestinians."

In Argentina, as of the year 2000, nearly 700,000 Muslims lived there, about 1.3% of the total population. This percentage has not changed since 1980, says Ahsani. Most of the Muslims here are of Syrian descent. Argentina actually had a two-term president (1989-1999), named Carlos Saul Menem, who was originally a Muslim from a Syrian family.

Chile, on the other hand, had only 2,000 Muslims in 1980. Similarly, Columbia has approximately 5,000

Muslims, far less than 1% of its total population of 46 million and Ecuador has very few Muslims.

Guyana, on the other hand, has over 90,000 Muslims, about 12% of the total population. What makes Guyana unique is that these Muslims are not of Middle Eastern origin. Rather, they are mostly of South Asian origin, namely India. In fact, the majority of the total population of Guyana (51%) is of South Asian descent. African labors brought Islam to Guyana in the 16th and 17th centuries. Islam was reintroduced “with the arrival of South Asian Muslims in the year 1838.” (Chickrie) From 1835 to 1917, over 240,000 East Indians immigrated to Guyana.

Paraguay, although it is listed as having no Muslims in the current internet Muslim population lists, is known to have a fairly significant population of Muslims. Peru, like the other Andean nations, boasts a very small population of Muslims. In 1980, about 5,000 Muslims lived in Peru, mostly in Lima. Like other Latin American countries, they are mostly of Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese origin.

Surinam is home to over 80,000 Muslims, nearly 20%

of the total population. This is largely due to the fact that many of them came to work from India and Indonesia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Uruguay has an unknown number of Muslims, likely a very miniscule number.

Finally, Venezuela is home to approximately 90,000 Muslims, about 35% of the total population. Islam was not reintroduced in Venezuela until the early part of the 20th century by Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian immigrants.

As Central America is considered to be a part of Latin America, a brief look at the Islamic presence in these countries is necessary. Of these countries, Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua have only a small, relatively unknown population of Muslims. Honduras has about 130,000 Muslims (2% of total population) and Panama has more than 150,000 Muslims (5% of total population). Mexico, home to over 107 million residents, has only about 1,000 Muslims. About 500 Muslims live in Mexico City, where they congregate at the Islamic Cultural Center. Dozens of Mexicans are reported to have been converted to Islam since the

center opened. Finally, of the Caribbean islands, only Trinidad and Tobago has a significant number of Muslims. About 110,000 Muslims live here, approximately 8% of the total population. Most of them are originally from the Indian subcontinent. In 1984, there were 70 mosques with Qur’anic schools. Several schools have been set up.

New Muslims

By the end of the 1990s, people – particularly youth and women – developed a keen interest in studying and understanding Islam.

This resulted in a huge number of conversions. A large number of neo-Muslims – mostly students – converted to Islam while studying in Europe and the United States and who now live in Mexico, Haiti, Cuba and Ecuador. Interestingly, these new Muslims have been much more sincere in their faith and active in Islamic mission than immigrants.

Reasons for Latin Americans embracing Islam could be many, but basically they may not be much different from those that are attracting non-Muslims worldwide and at a fast rate.

What is of significance here is that Islam continues to attract more people. Many of the converts are convinced



that Islam is a religion of peace, love, affection and friendship, based on the generous hospitality and warm welcome they receive from the Muslim friends in their new social milieu.

Sources suggest that converts account for approximately 1% of all the Muslims in Latin America. There is a lack of Islamic literature in Spanish and there must be special efforts made to complement this need.

Practice of Islam

Things have changed with the Arab diplomatic envoys coming to the region, as also many of the Latin American Muslims traveling to the Arab countries for studies and, more importantly, visiting Saudi Arabia for pilgrimages.

Needs attention

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. However, in Latin America, this is not the case. Why? Maria Moreira, a Brazilian convert who teaches at the State Uni-

versity of Rio de Janeiro, examined the history and current state of the Muslim community in Latin America's largest country. She found two main reasons for the low conversion rate.

The first is the lack of trust and understanding by Brazil's Arab-Muslim community. The new converts get very little support from Muslims to adapt to a new Islamic environment. The feeling of isolation leads some to abandon Islam after a while. The second reason is the shortage of good books and other resources about Islam in the Portuguese language.

Conclusion

The Muslims of Latin America, though small in number, have a rich history. Theirs is an important chapter in the history of Islam. Kudos to the early Muslims who remained bonded to the faith that ultimately paved the way for the later Muslims to settle down and spread the message of Islam. What is important is that those Muslims went there in individual capacity as laborers and nonetheless kept their faith the first and the foremost.

Today Muslims have established successful businesses there and enjoy a respectable social status. They

have their conspicuous presence in politics with many being members of parliament in countries like Venezuela. Ecuador and Argentina have had a Muslim president too.

Yet, the Muslims in South America needs attention, they needs proper Islamic education, training, and infrastructure and they need an all-encompassing plan.

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Baghdad (The City of Peace): Recalling the Lost Glory

Mohammad Dawood Sofi

The city of Baghdad, known as Dār Al-Salām (the City of Peace) represents the glorious past of the Muslims. The remarkable contributions of Caliphs Harūn Al-Rashīd and Mamūn Al-Rashīd; the rich libraries of this great city, which were the largest in the world; the

giant philosophers such as Al-Kindī, Al-Rāzī, and Al-Farābī; the great Islamic scholar of all time, Imām Abu Hanīfah; and the Bayt Al-Hikmah made Baghdad in the medieval period one of the greatest cities of knowledge and learning. There is a very deep connec-



tion between Baghdad and the spread and strength of Islamic civilization during the medieval period and its grandeur and striking transformations was considered to be ideal. However, unfortunately, what befell the City of Peace following the Mongol invasion in 1258 was painful to all those who had witnessed its glory and grandeur. The sufferings and the memories of pain even after the passing of more than seven hundred years are still fresh. Zāhīr Al-Dīn Ibn Al-Kāzarūnī (1214–9128), a historian, mathematician, and jurist, experienced both glory of Baghdad and the onslaught of the Mongols. His works on history and literature highlight the beauty of this cosmopolitan city, its culture, and learning. These works also reconnect the Muslims to the the great memories of the Islamic civilization developed in Baghdad by the Abbasid caliphs. Despite devastation, even in the current times, Baghdad represents the history, identity, and consciousness of Muslims.

Named as Dār al-Salām or Abode of Peace, Baghdad was established 1300 years ago by the first Abbasid caliph. It was founded, according to Ali A. Allawi, “specifically to be the capital of a universal empire, smack in the middle of trade routes that converged on it from all points of the azimuth.” Although the roots of Baghdad date back to ancient Babylon; however, its fame as a center for commerce and scholarship began in the 8th century CE. During that period a number of small villages were present in that area and one of those small villages was known by the name Baghdad and this name in the later period became the name of this glorious city. For the next five centuries, the city became the global center of education and culture. The grandeur and splendor of this city can be memorial-



ized from the classical tale, 1001 Arabian Nights. These stories and tales are actually a reflection of Baghdad’s striking beauty and the height of its glory during the reign of Harūn al-Rashīd. The words of Sayyid Husayn Nasr about the importance of Baghdad and its place in the history recapture our vision about our lost glory. He emphasizes that Baghdad has the honor where “Islam became heir to the intellectual heritage of all the major civilizations before it save that of the Far East, and it became a haven within which various intellectual traditions found a new lease upon life.”

The major role in making Baghdad as the center of wisdom, knowledge, and learning was because of the presence of a renowned institution Bayt al-Hikmah (House of Wisdom). It was a famous literary place for the scholars to meet together and discuss ideas and opinions. As Caliph Mamūn him-



self was a learned scholar; therefore, he used to supervise and actively participate in the scholarly discourses and discussions about various subjects. In addition to this, it was also a famous research institute where different books and manuscripts from very far-off places like China, India, and Greece were brought in, discussed, and debated.

At Bayt Al-Hikmah, translators, scientists, men of letters, writers, authors, and others used to meet every day for a wide variety of highly productive exercises that included translation, reading, writing, scribing,

discourse, dialogue and discussion. A number of manuscripts and books written in different languages and covering a number of scientific topics and philosophical concepts and ideas were translated at Bayt Al-Hikmah. As a matter of fact, many of the Western classics reached the West through the translation work done during the eighth and ninth centuries at Bayt Al-Hikmah. Different languages were spoken, read and written there that included, among others, Arabic (as the lingua franca), Farsi, Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin. Moreover, occasionally, Sanskrit was also used

in order to translate the old Indian manuscripts about astronomy and mathematics. This all shows that Bayt al-Hikmah was home to a number of famous scholars who were masters in their respective fields.

The immense literary work done in the city of Baghdad, in fact, establishes that this place was the main link of transmission between Graeco-Alexandrian knowledge and the present day West. For instance, Hippocrates, known in Arabic as Buqrat, is still a household name frequently used in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu cultures. It is Baghdad where

Muslims built the first hospital and this place also has the honor to establish the Office of the Chief Justice for the first time in the history. Thus, under the Abbasid rule, Baghdad came to be globally known as the city of museums, hospitals, libraries, and mosques. In the history, this period of the Muslim glory is known as the “Golden Age” of Islamic civilization. It showcased the unprecedented contributions of the Muslims in both the sciences and humanities: medicine, physics, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, literature, philosophy, and much more. While Europe was in Dark Ages, Baghdad, on the other hand, was representing a picture of a vibrant and productive civilization. That is the main reason why it was known as the world’s richest and most intellectual city of the time.

However, unfortunately, the City slowly began to lose its glory and relevance; as a result a beautiful and a vibrant civilization finally ended with the invasion of Mongols in 1258, ending the great era of Abbasids. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is said to have run red with the blood of thousands of scholars (a reported 100,000 of Baghdad’s mil-



lion residents were massacred). Many of the libraries and other priceless historical treasures were looted and forever ruined by the Mongols. The destruction of Baghdad by Mongols was a loss not just for Muslims, but for the entire world. Baghdad never regained its height of scholarship and dynamism after the Mongol attacks and because of this the world lost an important intellectual and cultural center.

Following the Mongol invasion, the city became host to numerous wars, latest being the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The modern Baghdad showed the signs of economic prosperity in the 20th century; however, the frequent wars not only

led the city to political uncertainty and vandalized much of its cultural heritage but also prevented it to regain to a certain degree the past glory.

One can find the echo of Baghdad’s civilization, as well as its destruction, throughout the literature of the Muslim world, recounting the events that led to the emergence of Baghdad as the city of culture and learning or the intellectual city; showing the nature of the urbanization of Baghdad and the major steps taken by the Caliphs necessary for intellectual, technological, and social development; and highlighting the various causes that led to destruction of both Baghdad and the Muslim glory.



Japan opening up for Halal tourism

Aftab Husain Kola

Japan, whose visitor numbers are skyrocketing every year, is rolling out the red carpet to visitors from Muslim countries, with providing Halal food, prayer-friendly accommodations, prayer rooms being sign posted in airports and commercial complexes, thereby creating Muslim-friendly environments, WRITES AFTAB HUSAIN KOLA.

The global tourism landscape has undergone a tremendous transformation because of several factors in the past few years. Foremost is the demand among Muslims for leisure and business travel that is growing concurrently with the burgeoning Muslim

population worldwide. The importance of the Muslim Travel market segment is already being realized, and numerous countries across the world are cashing in on the pent-up demand of Muslim travelers for Halal tourism. And Japan, despite having marginal Muslim residents, is one of them.

Muslim visitors in Japan

The number of Muslim visitors to Japan is steadily going up and likely to cross the one million mark in 2018. The jump in Muslim travelers to Japan has been attributed to the country's cautious absorption of Halal prod-

ucts in many domains notwithstanding the fact its culture is different from the Muslims. Japan's attractions from cherry blossoms and autumn colors to tea ceremonies have lured Muslim travelers, especially from Malaysia and Indonesia, to visit Japan.

As the country gears up to welcome the world to the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020, Japan tourism authorities are trying its best to promote Halal tourism to bring on board Muslim travelers.

The year 2017 marked tripling of number of total visitors in the past five years with as many as 28.7 million foreign tourists entered Japan in 2017 - it was aimed at a massive promotional drive ahead of the Olympics in 2020. And Muslims are not left in these efforts to get them to visit Japan. According to the data released by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), nearly 271,000 Indonesians travelers came to Japan in 2016 alone, a figure that touched 63,000 in 2009. Similarly, more than 394,000 Malaysians arrived last year, up from 89,000 seven years ago.

This sharp increase in the number of Muslims traveling to Japan from Southeast Asia is partly due to the fact that Japanese government lowered the requirements to get visa into the country, the growth in low-cost airlines coming into Japan and a growing middle class with a larger disposable income, according to the JNTO.

Also, another factor contributing to this increase has been the ease and rate with which the Muslim travelers have their specific needs met within the country.

The latest Halal Travel Frontier 2018 report from Crescent Rating that focuses on this year's key travel trends, stated that Asia is set to take the spotlight in Halal travel. Driven by innovation, Asia will progress even fur-



ther in Halal tourism while aiming to attract the Muslim Travel market." It further said, "This year, several top travel destinations in Asia such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan will choose to focus on upgrading the level of Halal tourism and invest their resources to move towards significant improvement."

Muslim arrivals to Japan increased from around 150,000 in 2004 to 700,000 in 2016. It is projected to surpass one million by 2018 and reach 1.4 million by 2020. Around 60% of the Muslim visitor arrivals currently are from ASEAN, with Indonesia representing 27% of the arrivals.

Gearing to embrace the Halal industry

Established in January 2014, Halal Media Japan (<https://www.halalmedia.jp/>), an information portal for Muslims in Japan where one can find Halal restaurants, mosques, prayer spaces and tourist attractions in Japan, sees Muslim tourists as an opportunity to boost its economy. It also provides information on Halal-related news in English to the global Muslim community. Its mission is to realize the multicultural symbiosis, in which everyone as well as Muslims can comfortably live in Japan. The Japanese tourism industry has begun to recognize the importance of Halal tourism. Since relatively few Muslims live in Japan, Islam and Halal requirements are some what unfamiliar concepts in the country. However, several tour-

ist agents and companies have begun to promote Halal tourism actively by developing a tourist-friendly Halal environment.

Private consultants play a key role in developing such an environment by facilitating cooperation between public administrators and the private sector. The Japanese tourism industry has also begun to introduce various Halal products, services, and infrastructure based on Halal standards provided by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), and Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS).

'Halal In Japan' is an information website highlighting all types of Halal and Muslim-friendly places and businesses in Japan. Its website is packed with extensive information about businesses catering to the growing needs of Muslims residing in Japan as well as visitors from abroad, besides also providing general tourism information.

For food, the Halal Gourmet Japan is the most popular gourmet finder for Muslims in Japan with 785 restaurants on the list. There are estimated 30 or so entities that can issue recognized Halal certificates in Japan. A small start-up called Travelience now offers a one-day Tokyo Tour for Muslim Tourists.

The Japanese tourism industry has been focusing on Muslim tourists from Southeast Asian countries since 2012 and have met with reasonable success. The Japan Tourism Agency (JTA) and the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) have drafted policies to attract Muslim tourists, and local administrative agencies and private companies have been trying to create a favorable environment for visitors in this category.

Prayer facilities have been made available in many public areas such as hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, and airports. The JTA,

in association with Halal consultants, is active in Japan and working towards providing a comfortable environment for Southeast Asian tourists such as those from Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, (especially Muslim tourists from these countries) by removing all deterrents that might hamper their travel.

Some consultants have begun to concentrate on the need for human resources in the form of mediators with professional knowledge of and experience with Halal tourism and Muslim tourists in Japan. To cultivate these human resources, the Halal consultants have designed educational systems and curricula for Halal tourism and share their knowledge through training courses, international exhibitions, seminars, and conferences.

The annual Japan Halal Expo offers a platform to exchange information, but also develops stronger partnership among industries in order to meet Muslim tourist needs and/or facilitate inbound in Japan. The theme for the 2017 edition was 'GO HALAL, GO GLOBAL'.

Focus also on ME

Middle East is also on the Japan tourism radar. Unlike other Asian destinations like Malaysia, Thailand and South Korea, Japan is still a new destination for Arab travelers. In a determined bid to attract more Middle East tourists, the Japanese government eased visa restrictions to citizens of many countries.

However, Muslim considering visiting Japan are hardly aware of such Halal products and services and it is highly recommended that the travel consultants offering Muslim-friendly tours to carry out marketing campaigns in their source countries, especially via social media marketing and marketing videos.



Qira'at – The Preserved Legacies Of Qur'anic Recitation

Dr. Mrs. Fatima Taneem

Ever since the dawn of Qur'anic revelation, its canonical recitation has been as taught and approved by Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to his Sahabahs 'Prophet's Companions' (may Allah be pleased with them). The Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them) recited the Qur'anic verses in a beautiful way exalting the Book of Allah. The Glorious Qur'an states in Surah Al-Muzzammil, verse 4, '... And recite the Qur'an in a slow, melodious voice.' Also in

an authentic Hadith narrated by both Imam Muslim and Imam Al-Bukhari, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated, 'Verily the one who recited the Qur'an beautifully, smoothly and precisely he will be in the company of noble and obedient angels..' In another Hadith narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated, 'One who is proficient in the Qur'an is associated with the noble, upright, recording angels; so beautify the Qur'an with your voices.'

Thus, the different methods of the Qur'anic recitation (Qira'at) have been taught and preserved in Qur'anic schools since a millennium. As the transmission of the Qur'an is a Mutawaatir transmission, i.e, there is a large number of narrators on each level of the unbroken chain, so too its Qira'at Mutawaatir transmission; being based on memorization of knowledge and its transmission from heart to heart. Only in the later centuries had the tradition of compiling and gathering the different "Qira'at" in script started and evolved into a distinct branch of Qur'anic study - "The Science of Qira'at".

Although, the word "Qira'at" literally means 'to read' or 'to recite'; but in the Qur'anic context, Qira'at denotes 'a special manner and method of reciting the Qur'an according to that which was recited by an Imam of Qira'at.' There are 10 (Asharah) Qira'at which are generally considered authentic and universally acceptable with seven of them (Sabah Qira'at) being more acclaimed than the rest of them. All these ten Qira'at have been authentically linked to the Prophet (peace be upon him) through Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them). These Qira'at have an integral relationship with the 'Sabah (7) Ahruf' revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). However, these 'Sabah Ahruf' aren't synonymous with the famous "Sabah Qira'at". Rather the Sabah Ahruf are directly revealed by Allah the Almighty to the Prophet (peace be upon him) as evidenced from various authentic Ahadith.

SABAH AHRUF

The word 'Ahruf' is the plural form of 'harf' which linguistically has several meanings and includes-

- 1) A letter or a word
 - 2) The border, or edge of something
- But the exact meaning of the word 'Ah-

ruf' in the context of the Qur'anic revelation had not been defined either by the Prophet (peace be upon him) or his Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them) or their students (Tabioon). Therefore, for centuries, the scholars of Qur'an have debated and explained differently this term based on their examination of evidences and their personal reasoning (IJTIHAAD). The most preferred view, according to many established Qur'anic scholars states that the term 'Sabah (7) Ahruf' refers to the '7 different categories of differences that can be found in the entire Qur'an and around which the differences of Qira'at revolve'. Imam Al - Qurtube (died 671 AH) said, "Every variation of the word in the Qur'an is said to be a 'harf'. For example, when we say the 'harf' of Ibn Masood; it means the way that Ibn Masood used to recite that verse or word."

The revelation of the Qur'an in the 'Sabah Ahruf' was done to render its recitation, understanding and memorization easier for the different Arab tribes prevailing during the Prophet's time and all of whom spoke varied Arabic dialects. The dialects of the seven Arab tribes generally mentioned are Quraysh, Hudhayl, Thaqif, Hawazin, Kinanah, Tamim and Yemen. The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to teach the Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them) the Qur'an as it was revealed, choosing the different Ahruf for different Sahabahs; opting a particular 'harf' which was easier for an individual Sahabah (may Allah be pleased with him) to comprehend and memorize, Also, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not teach all the 'Ahruf' to all his Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them) as evidenced in their 'confusions' and 'disputes' in authentic Ahadith. A few Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them) were found to recite the Qur'an in more than one 'harf'. These 'Sabah Ahruf' have been re-

vealed after the migration of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to Madinah.

Regarding the preservation of these ‘Sahab Ahruf’ still in the Qur’an, there are mainly three opinions - the strongest being that of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ash-Shatibee, Ar-Raazi, Ibn Katheer and Ibn Al-Jazaree. They say that when Caliph Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) was compiling the Qur’an, he told Zaid ibn Thabit (may Allah be pleased with him) who was heading the compilation to record it without vowelation and consonants to accommodate the different ‘Ahruf’ and at places or points where the ‘Ahruf’ differed greatly; the Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them) were ordered to record it according to the Quraysh dialect.

Hence, it is seen that the different Qira’at are components that make up the ‘Ahruf’ and all of the established Qira’at conform to the Uthmani Qur’anic text.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF QIRA’AT

It is known that many of the Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them) learned the Glorious Qur’an directly from our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him). Yet, there were many more Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them) who learned greater portions of the Qur’an from each other; their knowledge of Qur’an not being at the same level. Among the Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them), Ubay ibn Ka’ab, Zayd bin Thabit, Ali bin Talib, Abdullah bin Masood, Abu Al-Dardaa and Abu Musa al Asharee (may Allah be pleased with them) were considered to be Masters of Recitation. Most of the other Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them), learned the Qur’anic recitation from these Masters. For instance, Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him), the master commentator of the Qur’an, learned from

both Ubay ibn Ka’ab (may Allah be pleased with him) and Zayd ibn Thabit (may Allah be pleased with him).

After the demise of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the conquest and the subsequent expansion of the Islamic Empire dispersed the Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them) to the neighboring conquered lands. Here, the Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them) continued to recite the Qur’an in the manner they had earlier learned and they in turn taught it verbatim to Tabioon and the new Muslims. Thus, the narration of the Qur’an with different Qira’at began in various lands, such as, the Syrians followed Ubay ibn Ka’ab (may Allah be pleased with him), the Kufian followed Abdullah ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him) and the people of Basra followed Abu Musa Al-Asharee (may Allah be pleased with him). Similarly, their students, the Tabioons too passed on their knowledge of Islam and the Qur’an to their students. But unfortunately, as time passed, people began to narrate unreliable Qur’anic variations along with the acceptable ones in almost all the centers of Qur’anic recitations. However, soon dedicated Qur’anic scholars emerged that sifted and filtered the authentic Qur’anic recitations from the rest and compiled them and taught these judiciously to their students in the major Qur’anic recitations located in Makkah, Al-Madinah, Basra and Syria.

All these centers, by the 2nd century Hijra had outstanding Qur’anic scholars as leaders called Imaams, each of whom were renowned specialists in Qur’anic recitations with the Qira’at they taught being named after them.

Most of these Qur’anic centers narrated their respective Qira’at which were considered acceptable and correct by other scholars of Islam. These scholars of Islam formulated

three conditions to consider any Qira'at authentic and to be a part of the Qur'an –

1) It should coincide with the grammar rules of the Arabic language.

2) It should match the orthography (script) of one of the Qur'an copies prepared in the era of Caliph Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him).

3) It should be narrated through numerous unbroken chains of narrators, all of whom should be vouched for their righteousness (i.e., should be Mutawaatir).

If any of these conditions were not met then such a Qira'at was classified as SHADHDH (unusual) and generally discarded. Likewise, all those Qira'at conforming to the above three conditions were deemed 'acceptable' and many Qur'anic scholars singled them out and rejected the rest and only these Qira'at continued to be narrated orally from one generation to the next.

Thus, the study of the Qur'anic recitation Qira'at as an independent science of Qur'an emerged with it being initially narrated and preserved through oral transmission and only later books were written on the different Qira'at; more commonly from 3rd century Hijri onwards. Many of the scholars of the 3rd century Hijri began the practice of designating a set number of individual scholars of the previous era as being most noteworthy and accurate; with various scholars compiling Qira'at with different counts – some compiled 5, whilst others had 7, 8, 10, 14 and 25. Among these scholars of Qur'an, the work of Imam Abu Bakr Ibn Mujahid (died 325 AH) stands out as he was considered to be the highest authority on Qira'at in his era with his book 'KITAB-US-SABAH-FIL-QIRA'AT'(Book of Seven Qira'at) gaining widespread popularity and acceptance throughout the Muslim world. He was also the first scholar to limit

the number of authentic Qur'anic reciters to seven. Many other scholars of Qur'an followed him and books only on these "Seven Qira'at" were widely written and a trend of narrating only these "Sabah (7) Qira'at" emerged; despite the presence of many other acceptable and authentic Qira'at; with some of them being considered more greater than these seven. Yet, the works of the Seven Qira'at and their Imams soared to such great heights that some Qur'anic scholars rigidly held on them and discarded the other Qira'at as unreliable and unacceptable. Thus, the "Sabah Qira'at" were acclaimed and held in high esteem since the beginning of the 4th century Hijri.

SABAH QIRA'AT

Imam Ibn Mujahid coined the term "Sabah Qira'at". He took the seven systems of Qur'anic recitation prevailing in various districts of the Muslim world. He included one from Makkah, Al-Madinah, Damascus, Basra and three from Kufa. The seven Imams whose Qira'at gained extensive fame and acceptance are the following:

- 1) Imam Nafi' ibn Abdur-Rahman Al-Laithi Al-Madini (died 169 AH)
- 2) Imam Abdullah ibn Katheer Al-Daari Al-Makki (died 120 AH)
- 3) Imam Abu 'Amr Zabaan ibn-Al-Ala ibn Ammar Al-Basri (died 154 AH)
- 4) Imam Abdullah ibn Amir Al-Yahsabee Al-Shaami (died 118 AH)
- 5) Imam 'Asim ibn Abi-Al-Najud Al-Asadi Al-Kufi (died 128 AH)
- 6) Imam Hamza ibn Habib Al-Zayyat al-Kufi (died 156 AH)
- 7) Imam Ali ibn Hamza ibn Abdullah Al-Kisai (died 189 AH)

The Qira'at of these Imams were initially popularized in the cities and provinces where they had established their respective schools.

Therefore, in the 2nd century Hijri, Basra was reciting the Qira'at of Imam Abu 'Amr, Kufa was using Imam Hamza's and Imam Asim's Qira'at and likewise Makkah had Ibn Katheer's Qira'at and Al-Madinah had Nafi's Qira'at.

But later on, these Qira'at were widely acknowledged and accepted; not only due to Imam ibn Mujahid's work but also because of the fact that each of these Imams were reputed for their dedication and devotion to the works of Qur'an and each one were highly acclaimed for their Qira'at knowledge. Their respective students sincerely preserved and narrated their teachers' (Imams) Qira'at. The narrators of these Qira'at were at times direct students of the Imams and at other times, these narrators narrated through the means of students of the Imams. The students of a particular Imam would differ in their Qur'anic readings with respect to certain Qur'anic variants; due to these being specially taught by the Imams only to specific students and not to en masse. This resulted in many narrators (Raawi) for each of these individual Qira'a. To facilitate and streamline the system, the scholars chose only two different narrators for each Qira'a; these narrators being the best representation of their Imam's Qira'a encompassing all the other students' readings. Thus, these "Sabah Qira'at" have a total of 14 narrations or 'Riwaya' and these are as follows –

- 1) Imam Warsh and Iman Qalun are the two narrators of Imam Nafi's Qira'a.
- 2) Imam Al-Buzzi and Imam Qunbul are the two narrators of Imam Ibn Katheer's Qira'a.
- 3) Imam Hisham and Iman Ibn Dhakwan are the two narrators of Iman Ibn Amir's Qira'a.
- 4) Imam Ad-Duri and Imam Al-Suzee are the two narrators of Imam Abu Amr's

Qira'a.

5) Imam Hafs and Iman Shu'ba are the two narrators of Imam Asim's Qira'a.

6) Imam Khalaf and Imam Khallad are the two narrators of Imaam Hamza's Qira'a.

7) Imam Ad-Duri and Iman Al-Layth are the two narrators of Imaan Al-Kisai's Qira'a.

In some instances, the narrators became more widely known and famous than their teachers, the Imams, like Imam Warsh and Imam Hafs.

ISNAAD OF QIRA'AT

The chain of narrators (Isnaad) of the Sabah Qira'at have been painstakingly preserved with reliable narrators, with each of these Qira'a being traced back to the Prophet (peace be upon him) through his Sahabahs (may Allah be pleased with them). Given below are two such examples:

QIRA'A OF IMAAM NAFI

Imam Nafi ibn Abi Naim (Abu Abdur Rahman Nafi Ibn Abdur Rahman) reported from Abu Jafer Yazid ibn Al-Qa'qa and Abdur Rahman ibn Hurmuz Al-Araj and Muslim Ibn Jundub Al-Hudhali and Yazid ibn Roman and Shaybah ibn Nisa.

All of them reported from Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) and Abdullah Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) and Abdullah Ibn Ayyash Ibn Abi Rabi'ah Al-Makhzumi.

The last three reported from Ubay ibn Ka'ab (may Allah be pleased with him) who reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him)

QIRA'A OF IMAM 'ASIM

Imam Asim Ibn Abi-an-Najud (Asim Ibn Bahdalah Ibn Abi An-Najud) reported from Abu Abdur Rahman Abdullah Ibn Habib as-

Solammi and Zirr Ibn Hubaysh.

Abu Abdur Rahman as-Solammi reported from Uthman bin Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him), Ubay ibn Ka'ab and Zayd ibn Thabit (may Allah be pleased with him).

Zirr reported from Abdullah Ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him).

All the above Sahabaha (may Allah be pleased with him) reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him).

ASHARAH QIRA'AT

As the fame of the Sabah Qira'at grew, these seven Qira'at came to be taught, learned and narrated widely throughout the Muslim world. However, there were other Qira'at existing around this time which were equally 'acceptable' and 'authentic' but were not as famous as the 'Sabah Qira'at'. And these other Qira'at were being exclusively learned and preserved in some places; at times overlooking the 'Sabah Qira'at'. Among them, three Qira'at continued to be authentically narrated through unbroken chains deeming them to be considered 'Acceptable Qira'at'. These were known as the "THALATHA QIRA'AT" and they were the Qira'a of the following Imams-

- 1) Imam Abu Jafer Yazid ibn Qa'qa Al-Madani (died 130AH)
- 2) Imam Yaqub ibn Ishaq Al-Hadrami al-Basri (died 205AH)
- 3) Imam Khalaf ibn Hisham Al-Baghdadi (died 229AH)

These "Thalatha Qira'at" were compiled together with the "Sabah Qira'at" and became the well-known "ASHARAH QIRA'AT".

The term 'Asharah Qira'at' was coined in mid 4th Century Hijri by Imam Abu Bakr Ibn Mahran (died 381 AH). But the 'Sabah Qira'at' remained more popular than the

'Asharah Qira'at' as more literature about the former was easily available, unlike the latter which was rarely written about. Only in the later centuries, from 9th century Hijri onwards books were written; for example, Imam Ibn Jazri (died 833 AH) compiled books on the Thalatha Qira'at or the Asharah Qira'at with his most famous book being 'Al-Nashr fil Qira'at Al-Ashr' which is considered a standard book for students of Qira'at. More recent books on the 'Asharah Qira'at' include the famous "Al-Qira'at Al-Asharah Al-Mutawatir" compiled by Sheikh Mohamed Karim Rajih.

Besides, these ten Qira'at; there existed a few more Qira'at that were famous and reliable to a large extent. Since they were not accepted and learned by enough people in their respective cities; they were not much popular. Four of such Qira'at are known and these together with the above ten Qira'at make up the known Fourteen "Arba-Asharah Qira'at". However, these four Qira'at are not considered as a part of the Qur'an and are used for Tafseer and Fiqh studies.

But, for most of the later centuries, the Qur'anic scholars usually based their Qira'at compilations on either the seven or ten Qira'at. These Qira'at were learned by most scholars of Qur'an till a few centuries ago. Few famous Imams who followed this are as follows –

- 1) Imam Malik recited in the Qira'a of Imam Nafi.
- 2) Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal recited in both the Qira'at of Imam Nafi and Imam Asim.
- 3) Imam Shafi recited in the Qira'a of Ibn Katheer.
- 4) Imam Al-Bukhari recited in the Qira'a of Ibn Ishaq Al-Hadrami

QIRA'AT IN THE WORLD TODAY

For centuries, the above mentioned Qira'at

were a crucial part of the Muslim Ummah and different Muslim lands recited a particular Qira'at following their regional Imams. Eventually, however, most of the Qira'at faded or were replaced by others, like for instance, Egypt was following Imam Warsh narration until the arrival of the Turks. Thenceforth, Imam Hafs narration became more popular as it was the recitation which the Turks followed. Presently, vast majority of the Muslim world (95%) recites the Imam Hafs reading. Three percent of world's Muslims in Algeria, Morocco, parts of Tunisia, West Africa and Sudan recite Imam Warsh's reading. Marginal population of the world's Muslims follow other Qira'at such as Muslims of Libya, Tunisia and parts of Qatar follow Imam Qaloon's reading and Imam Ad-Duri's reading is followed in Sudan and West Africa. These Qira'at today as a whole, are memorized in specialized institutions of higher learning throughout the Muslim lands or privately learned by the Qaarias, the reciters of Qur'an.

All of these different Qira'at exist in the printed editions of the Qur'an and there are slight variations in these Qur'anic texts. They differ in their basic letters, diacritical dots, vowels and also in accents and pronunciations. Within each of these different Qur'anic texts, the rules of pronunciation of that Riwaya or Qira'at (TAJWEED) as well as the chain of narrations (ISNAD) are mentioned either in the beginning or at the end. This enables the Qur'anic readers to recite the Qur'an easily and accurately.

The Qira'at in the Qur'an text of early Hijri centuries portrays the level of precision and care the early Qur'anic scholars took to preserve this esteemed legacy. It also testifies to the literary tradition associated with the science of Qira'at. The above Qira'at are a part of the eloquence of the Qur'an

adding depth and meaning to the Qur'anic verses where variations occur; testifying to the miraculously versatile nature of the Glorious Qur'an. Even in the modern times, many Qaaris (reciters) have learned all the "Asharah Qira'at" with a lot of them reciting these Qira'at in congregational prayers on daily basis.

Hence, in conclusion, it is noted that the variations of the different Qira'at are the differences which do not have any great effect on the meaning and broader concepts in the Qur'an and the message of the Qur'an remains essentially the same. Thus, a Muslim reciting any Qur'an; be it a Hafs or Warsh or Qaloon or any other Riwaya or Qira'at; will in reality be reciting the same Qur'an which is the Glorious Book revealed by Allah to our Beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) more than 1400 years ago.



Halal marketplace is fastest growing globally: Report

Sydney (UNA-OIC) - The halal food industry will become a major market force in the near future based on four prevalent trends, according to economists.

The halal marketplace is emerging as one of the fastest growing segments of the world food business today. The global halal food market is now worth an estimated \$667 billion, representing close to 20 percent of the entire global food industry. It is anticipated to reach \$2.55 trillion by 2024.

The four common trends are: Firstly, Islam is now the fastest growing religion in the world thus fueling global demand for halal products.

The annual growth in consumption of halal food is estimated at 16 percent. Muslims represent an estimated 23 percent of the global population or about 1.8 billion consumers with an average growth rate of 3 percent per annum. If this growth trend continues, Muslims are expected to make up about 26 percent of the world's total projected population of 2.2 billion in 2030.

Secondly, the increasing trend of consuming halal food products for ethical and safety reasons by non-Muslim consumers. Halal products are gaining wider recognition not only due to meeting Shariah requirements, but also hygiene, sanitation, and safety aspects.

The third is the rising halal consumer power as a market force in tandem with the growth of the Muslim population and their increasing disposable income. Finally, there is greater awareness among Muslims on the need and necessity to consume only halal food.

The Middle East and GCC halal market

The Middle East imports about 90 percent of the beef and lamb it consumes. The total imports of this red meat and red meat products were estimated at \$5.1 billion. In tandem with the expected rise in the region's population by 40 percent by 2030, the consumption of food in the Middle East may well reach 51 million tons by 2020 to record annual average growth of 4.6 percent.

The GCC's halal sector is now worth \$50 billion. The region's annual food imports are expected to double from \$25.8 billion in 2010 to \$53 billion in 2020 with total imports of halal meat exceeding 1 million metric tons on an annual basis. The UAE alone has a Dh69 billion halal food industry.

