

Sri Lanka International Conference: Taking On Terror

Interfaith Outreach and Interfaith Aid

SPECIAL FEATURE: The Hajj – A Pilgrimage of Spirit

The Empowerment of Saudi Women Around the World

A Historical Recollection of Islamic Art

AUGUST 2019

VOL 48 | NO 8 | DUL QADAH



SOLIDARITY & ISLAM

Cooperation in the Face of Divisiveness

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*True Muslims
seek harmony
with everyone,
regardless
of religion or
nationality.*

— His Excellency Sheikh
Dr. Mohammad bin
Abdulkarim Al-Issa

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HAJJ REFLECTIONS 2019



"Religion has never been a threat to humanity ... Our duty as leaders, references and religious figures is to confront this false claim."



"This conference is here to assert the solidarity of goodwill with steadfastness and perpetuity. However, we mustn't deny our lack of resolve in allowing the evolution of the primary material of violent extremism and terrorism under the guise of the hegemony of religious and ethnic ideology."



"The world is in dire need of national intellectual awareness -- awareness that leads to bolstering harmony and stability. This will give rise to the respect of constitutions, laws and cultures of the countries where we live, in addition to the respect of religious and cultural dominance that expresses the opinion of the majority in each country, and also considering their feelings."

--H.E. Dr. Al-Issa

MWL in August

Highlights of the Month in Review

JULY 31

The "National Conference for Peace, Harmony and Co-Existence" opened in Colombo, Sri Lanka, with representatives from that nation's Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Christian populations, attracting over 2000 guests. Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa was the guest of honor and addressed the distinguished gathering in an in-depth speech focused upon the "dire need" for raised intellectual awareness among nations to the power of cultural sentiment and the common cause of inter-faith religious dialogue. The conference took place close to four months after the Easter Massacre terror attacks in Colombo on April 21, 2019.

JULY 31

In Moscow, Dr. Al-Issa was recognized for his work building bridges between the Islamic world and Russia, receiving an honorary doctorate presented to him in a formal ceremony by the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. H.E. Dr. Al-Issa expressed his pride at being recognized by one of the most prestigious academic institutions in the world. The 200 year-old institute is renowned for its distinguished, impartial and fair studies of Islam. Dr. Al-Issa also praised

the Russian Federation's respect for and interest in the Arab and Islamic cultures and its consistent efforts to communicate with the Muslim world.

AUGUST 1

Dr. Al-Issa met with His Eminence Cardinal Albert Malcolm Rajinth of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka. He is the ninth Archbishop of Colombo, serving since 2009 and was elevated to the cardinalate in 2010. There are an estimated 700,000 Catholics and 1.96 million Muslims in the country. Buddhists and Hindus make up the majority population.

“If we work off just 10% of the common values that we share, we would be strong enough to bring peace to the whole world.”

— H.E. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa receiving honors at the National Conference for Peace, Harmony and Co-Existence from Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena. H.E. Dr. Al-Issa presented a donation of \$5 million to the victims of the country's "Easter Massacre" earlier this year.



AUGUST 1

H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa met with the leader of the National Alliance of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and the 16th Leader of the Opposition (Parliament), Mr. Rathman Sampathan. Mr. Sampathan expressed his appreciation for the efforts by the Makkah-based organization to enhance intercultural communication among Tamil Muslims.

AUGUST 1

While in Colombo, Dr. Al-Issa received the Key to the City from the mayor of that capital, Ms. Bernadine Rosy Senanyake. Ms. Senanyake is also the Spokesperson for Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe and Deputy Head of the Prime Minister's Office. Sheikh Dr. Hidayat Nur Wahid, Vice Chairman of the Sharia Council of Indonesia and member of the Muslim World League's Supreme Council, also met with H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa.

AUGUST 2

Keeping in the spirit of the international environmental programs supported by the Muslim World League, H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa joined Sri Lankan dignitaries in planting a tree in the Sri Lankan capital.

AUGUST 2

In offering condolences to the Sri Lankan community and its families most deeply impacted by the terrorist attacks in Colombo earlier this year, the Muslim World League donated \$5,000,000 to support victims of those attacks.

H.E. Dr. Al-Issa receives an honorary doctorate from Prof. Vitaly Naumkin, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

H.E. Dr. Al-Issa walking with the Mayor of Colombo, Rosy Senanayake.

“ We must protect our children from every aspect of extremist indoctrination...We must teach them that no religion whatsoever preaches violence and fanaticism.”

— H.E. Dr. Al-Issa, Sri Lanka

AUGUST 9

The Holy Pilgrimage to Makkah, or “Hajj,” began today. For the occasion, the Muslim World League hosted more than 500 scholars from around the world. The organization also sponsored the journeys of more than 100 faithful from New Zealand. Approximately two and a half million Muslims gathered in Makkah to take part in the Holy Pilgrimage.

AUGUST 9

The MWL and Arab News partnered with the latest “Hajj app,” an updated version featuring a pilgrim tracker enabling users to share their location and allowing loved ones to follow in real time.

AUGUST 10

This day is known as the Day of Arafat, the second day of Hajj, when Muslims gather at the sacred hill of Mount Arafat in Saudi Arabia for a day of worship and reflection. Please see the “Hajj 2019” section of this issue for more detail on this fascinating tradition.

AUGUST 11

Eid Mubarak! Eid Al Adha 2019. The Eid al-Adha began on Saturday August 10th and ended the evening of August 11. Also known as the “Festival of the Sacrifice,” it is the second of two Islamic holidays celebrated worldwide each year and is considered the holier of the two. Please see the “Hajj 2019” section of this issue for a more in-depth look at this observance.

AUGUST 13

The MWL increased its efforts to mitigate the impact of physical and psychological violence suffered by the Rohingya refugees of India and Bangladesh, implementing specialized initiatives for the care of orphans and widows.

AUGUST 14

The Muslim World League gathered religious scholars from more than 50 countries at the annual Hajj Conference in Medina. The theme of the 2019 Conference was: “The Aspects of Civilization in Islam.”



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa met with Archbishop Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith in Sri Lanka to advance religious coexistence ahead of the Conference on Peace, Harmony and Coexistence.

H.E. Dr. Al-Issa inaugurates the MWL's participation at the Pavilion in Rimini, Italy.



AUGUST 14

At this year's Hajj conference in Medina, Egypt's Minister of Awqaf (charitable donations under Islamic law), Dr. Mohammad Mukhtar Juma emphasized the necessity of building bridges of harmony across cultures with the goal of eliminating hatred and extremism.

AUGUST 19

On World Humanitarian Day, the MWL reinforced the message that it is committed to humanitarian relief to people affected by war and natural disasters through its charitable arm, the International Organization for Relief, Warfare and Development.

AUGUST 20

In Italy, H.E. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa opened the MWL Pavilion at the 40th annual Rimini meeting for Friendship Among Peoples, a gathering that boasts more than one million visitors per year. Jan Figel, the EU Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion, tweeted of his "constructive talk" with Dr. Al-Issa, and plans to organize a G20 Interfaith Forum in 2020.



H.E. post-conference ceremony with Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena.

With Jan Figel, EU Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion Rimini, Italy.

“If wisdom says that defining a problem is halfway to solving it, then the problem of terrorism lies in allowing the speech of hatred and racism to go unpunished without criminalization”

— H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa delivers riveting address at the Rimini Conference about the need for co-existence and acceptance among all people, regardless of faith, religion or creed.

AUGUST 21

While at the Rimini Conference, H.E. Dr. Al-Issa was honored with the "Children of Abraham" award by the Florence School of Dialogue, along with Rabbi Marc Schneier of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, . The award was created for spiritual leaders who dedicate their

lives to the promotion of understanding and collaboration between religious groups and citizens of different faiths and to the construction of human solidarity. ❖



“With anti-Semitism and Islamophobia on the rise in Europe, it is more important than ever before that Muslims and Jews come together. It's an honor to be acknowledged here in Rimini at the 40th annual Meeting for Friendship Amongst Peoples with my colleague from the Muslim World League, Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa. Because of our partners in the Islamic world, we've been able to make such a tremendous impact in Europe and globally.”

—Rabbi Marc Schneier, August 21, 2019



THE POWER OF PRINCIPLE

Editorial Staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

“This conference is here to assert the solidarity of good will with steadfastness and perpetuity. However, we mustn’t deny our lack of resolve in allowing the evolution of the primary material of violent extremism and terrorism, and, in particular, the rhetoric of hatred, racism and despicable superiority against others, under the guise of the hegemony of religious and ethnic ideology.”

— H.E. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa at the opening of the Sri Lanka Conference on

Ancient wisdom long ago discerned that life takes place in two spheres, the internal and the external: “As within, so without.” This wisdom, common to all major religions, reminds us to be aware that an individual who is healthy both physically and mentally must keep these two sides of existence harmonious and fully integrated. The same is true of a well-run organization. Founded upon a “strict diet” of Islamic principles, the internal life embodied in the Muslim World League’s spiritual call to action is expressed materially through the tireless efforts of its leader,

H.E. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, to construct an international culture of educated leadership. His ongoing engagements in the cause of moderation and anti-extremism is expressed in this outer world through medical, scientific, technological and cultural charitable acts and financial support

That is why with this month’s issue, August 2019, we explore the theme of “Taking on Terror,” a cause that demands both spiritual and material resources like never before. In this sense, there is no contradiction in our treating this theme, inspired by the Sri Lanka conference at the end of July, alongside reporting on Hajj 2019, N in-depth summary of the MWL’s charitable work, the Muslim-Jewish dialogue in Rimini, Italy, in mid-August, or H.E. Dr Al-Issa’s honors in Moscow, for all these are related as one. The principles that drive conviction are the principles that drive results. True religious devotion means that there is no place for fanaticism in faith. Sincere works of charity and civic duty do not permit ulterior motives for radical political gain. The world of the MWL is one that is whole, consistent and in these dimensions, just as for the true Muslim there is no “break” between his faith and all areas of life and one’s interaction with the world.

As such, Dr. Al-Issa is well aware that no matter the number of conferences he attends to spread the correct message of Islam and engage in all possible interfaith dialogue open to him, these

in turn must be then matched by the day-to-day physical tasks involved in executing humanitarian work in order to keep extremist indoctrination at bay. He knows that the Hajj pilgrimage is not merely a “ritual” or a “rite” or autopilot religious-response tradition done simply because one’s ancestors undertook the observance.

Rather, His Excellency is aware that to go on the Hajj (or Umrah, which may take place at any time during the year) is the living, active proof of one’s living, active faith. As followers of the MWL Secretary General are aware, he most often stresses in his addresses and speeches that faith without the operant power of Action is ultimately meaningless.

The Hajj pilgrimage, to be undertaken by all Muslims who are materially and physically able to do so, is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and is certainly the most outwardly spectacular of Islamic

observances. Taking place this year on August 9, the concentration of an estimated 2.5 million faithful on the city of Makkah was an orderly success, with photos from all media depicting the impressive organization of so many masses of figures—a sea of white dress fused as one external symbol of brotherly equality and representing the internal dignity of one’s purified faith. Such is the power of this essential principle of life that conviction creates reality. It is a principle that frames and animates the mission of the Muslim World League, a body whose deep-seated values and cross-cultural generosity speak to the soul as much as they please the senses. ❖

— The Editors



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa visits Sri Lanka church where a tragic bomb blast took place on Easter Sunday in April 2019.

SOLVING SRI LANKA: THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Editorial Staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

“As the country still struggles to cope with the aftermath of the Easter Sunday bombings that shook the nation, a peace conference attended by religious scholars and government leaders, including a senior official from the Arab world, asserted solidarity and good will for lasting peace and coexistence among the various communities.

— Sri Lankan Western Province Governor A.J.M. Muzammil in his welcoming address.

A constant theme throughout the various speeches given around the world any given year by H.E. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa is that it is those elements that embody and practice extremist “versions” and distortions of their respective religions who are the most ar-religious of all and the farthest from the authentic message of their purported faith. The corruption comes from within, Dr. Al-Issa has maintained, adding that it is the duty of religious leaders to confront deviant claims wherever possible and to clarify the truth to the world “through living testimony.” It was this point that he emphasized at the Sri Lanka meeting of the National Conference on Peace, Harmony and Co-Existence.

H.E. Dr. Al-Issa, the guest of honor, added that “religion has never been a menace to humanity,” but “certain evil elements, such as those who have been intellectually poisoned,” did not accept this. Instead, the weapon used by such individuals has been emotional and psychological power and the allure of religion “as an excuse to use their goals.” He added: “In the time since these criminal acts,

which not only terrorized Sri Lanka, but shocked the entire world, the attacks on Colombo have been widely condemned, including by Muslim religious leaders.” He went on to stress: “But condemnation alone does not exonerate us, or pose a solution.”

The Muslim World League co-sponsored this interfaith summit in Colombo in the presence of Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, and participants included Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu religious leaders as well as more than 2,000 religious scholars, politicians, intellectuals and media professionals, at the Nelum Pokuna Theatre in Colombo.

The Conference came just over four months after the “Easter Massacre” suicide-bomber terrorist attacks on three churches, three luxury hotels in Colombo and two housing complexes on the outskirts of the city on April 21, 2019, claiming 259 lives. As ever, upholding the values of and arguments for interfaith peace, harmony, coexistence and tolerance among the people of Sri Lanka and the world is a colossal challenge, one which Dr.



Attendees at the National Conference in Sri Lanka listening attentively as speakers deliver messages about the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

Al-Issa tackled with his usual forthrightness in his speech to the assembled guests, inspiring the optimism of the top officials of this tenaciously multi-religious, multi-ethnic community. The Governor of Western Province, Mr. Ahamed Mohamed Muzammil, former Mayor of Colombo, stated that the Conference “would encourage all communities in the country to adopt and live according to the Sri Lankan culture and tradition,” while President Maithripala Sirisena addressed the gathering as Chief Guest, highlighting the country’s historically diverse culture as a force stronger than political extremism, while Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe attended alongside Opposition Leader Mahinda Rajapaksa, Parliamentary Speaker Karu Jayasuriya, former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and the Leader of Tamil National Alliance (TNA), Mr. Rathana Sampanthan, in a display of national solidarity.

Addressing the conference, President Maithripala Sirisena emphasized that religious leaders should take the lead in mending the hearts that were broken in the tragic incidents of April 21. “Although the lives lost on April 21 cannot be restored, everyone can come together to defeat terrorism and ensure peace, unity and reconciliation in the country, for the sake of future generations.” He added: “I believe that this summit will spread the message of peace, harmony and coexistence.”

And with that, he presented the highest honor in Sri Lanka to the secretary-general of the MWL for his role in promoting interreligious peace.

Dr. Al-Issa announced that the MWL had created a US\$5 million fund to support the families of the victims of the bombings. He later called on high-ranking Buddhist monks such as the Chief Prelate of Malwatta Chapter, Most Venerable Thibbatuwawe Sri Sumangala Thera, and the Chief Prelate of the Asgiriya Chapter, Most Venerable Warakagoda Sri Gnanarathana Thero, in the city of Kandy. Dr. Al-Issa also met the Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith. ❖

“Religion has never been a threat to humanity. Our duty as leaders and religious figures is to confront this false claim. This summit is about diagnosing the current situation and finding solutions to it, and to express the determination of the attendees to act effectively against the forces of terrorist evil, as well as to reveal the facts with transparency. This conference affirms the stability and dominance of good.

— H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa, the Sri Lanka Conference



INTERFAITH OUTREACH, INTERFAITH AID:

MWL Charity Knows No Religious Boundaries

Editorial Staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

Those unfamiliar with the work of the Muslim World League are apt to assume that it is a “religious” organization that is represented at various high-level meetings around the world to spread the message of Islam, or to correct perceptions of the faith in light of any act of extremist violence. But this is only one part of a greater humanitarian whole about which the public knows relatively little. It is therefore worthwhile to remind readers of the organization’s participation in and financial support of the most respected charitable aid agencies in the world. These include:

- The United Nations: as an Observer in consultative status with that body’s ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council).
- Organization of the Islamic Conference: with Observer Status in attendance at all meetings and conferences.
- ISESCO (the Morocco-based Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization founded in 1979) as a Member partner
- UNICEF (the United Nations International Children’s Educational Foundation) as a Member partner
- UNHCR (the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to which the MWL most recently contributed one million dollars to support refugees worldwide

- The International Organization for Relief, Welfare and Development (known by its previous acronym IIROSA), an adjunct agency of the Muslim World League, signed a memorandum of understanding in 2014 with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to establish a mutual cooperation framework to provide ongoing assistance to Palestinian refugees.

Most recently, this work involved an emergency program launched on August 7 in Islamabad as part of efforts to aid flood victims in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, through the International Organization for Relief, Welfare and Development (as noted above, an extension of the MWL). During the ceremony to launch the program, the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, H.E. Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, stated: “This program is an extension of the humanitarian role played by the Makkah-based Muslim World League and the Kingdom in assisting needy countries and people, including Pakistan.” Devastating floods killed more than 30 people in the northernmost region of Pakistan-administered Kashmir. At least 109 people were killed and 86 others injured in separate rain-related incidents across Pakistan, for which the MWL provided aid.

It is the latest in a series of behind-the-scenes activities that H.E. Dr. Al-Issa has undertaken as part of, and not distinct from, his work spreading the message of the fundamental principles of Islam—in turn, the motivation behind this dedication. The



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa plants a tree alongside the Mayor of Colombo, Rosy Senanayake.

following summary of humanitarian projects led by the MWL over the course of 2018 will bring readers up to date on the extent and depth of such work. This work is perhaps most distinguished by the fact that religious affiliation or ethnic nationalities play no role in determining the level of the organization’s engagement.

- **January 2018:** At the initiation of H.E. Dr. Al-Issa, the Muslim World League relaunched its blindness prevention programs throughout Africa, establishing medical eye camps specializing in severe cataract treatments based at centers opened in Zimbabwe, then later Burundi, Ghana, Sudan and other countries throughout the continent. By early 2018 the program, formally re-instituted in

October 2017, had carried out carried out at least 500 cataract surgeries after examining more than 1,500 patients, and provided those who did not need surgery with medications and eyeglasses.

- **March 2018:** The International Organization for Relief, Welfare and Development was one of the first relief organizations to reach the African countries then affected by Cyclone Idai.
- **May 2018:** The MWL delivered food aid to victims of extensive flooding in Mozambique. As reported in Arab News, teams of the MWL helped more than 13,000 people affected by the heavy rains that caused flash floods in the country. Emergency humanitarian relief included 2,500 food



“If you want to achieve peace, first, you need to maintain unity, harmony, and integrity.”

—Warakagoda Sri Gnanarathana, Mahanayaka Thero of the Asgiriya Chapter of Siam Nikaya



Dr. Al-Issa delivers critical food aid to local community in Ghana.

baskets and large quantities of raw materials and agricultural equipment. The emergency relief targeted Nampula province, one of the neediest and poorest regions in northern Mozambique with more than seven million people.

- **May 2018:** In a ground-breaking statement, H.E. Dr. Al-Issa announced during his visit to Washington that the world “can no longer go on denying the significance and historical importance of the Holocaust” and its impact on humanity. He made the statement at the keynote session of the Barbi Weinberg Founders Conference at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.
- **July 2018:** H.E. Dr. Al-Issa inaugurated the Integrated Services Center for Muslim Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh. The Rohingyas are a persecuted minority from Myanmar (Burma) who took refuge recently in India and Bangladesh. The Rohingyas are overwhelmingly Muslim, but also include some Hindus. The MWL-led service center would provide a small community of these refugees with social facilities that offer basic education, vocational training and primary healthcare.

- **August 2018:** The MWL extended its global care program for orphans, delivering financial assistance to 11,500 male and female orphans in 11 regions in the Kingdom of Jordan. It also launched a new effort in its global humanitarian care program for orphans, delivering assistance to more than 8000 orphans in nine Sudanese states.
- **September 2018:** The MWL implemented an urgent relief project to tackle the drought sweeping through some African countries by meeting the needs of thousands of families. That month the organization also implemented the “Ram of the Eid” project, delivering financial aid to orphans in the Republic of Malawi through coordination with local governments.
- **December 2018:** The Muslim World League sponsored an emergency relief campaign for 40,000 refugees from Central Africa who were residing in refugee camps on the borders of the Republic of Chad. The MWL served food in camps located on the border strip between the state of Chad and the Central African Republic and distributed about 8,400 food baskets that would then provide the camps with subsistence for a long period of time, making a special effort to reach forbidding and dangerous outposts in border regions.

As Dr. Al-Issa pointed out in his essay in Newsweek magazine in July that the new Charter of Makkah, promulgated in May 2019, requires that “we safeguard natural resources and manage industrial development; support climate treaties, fight hunger and poverty; eliminate disease and discrimination, and preserve the human rights of all people, including women and minorities.” This fundamental tenet of Islamic belief, which is also embodied in the Muslim World League’s charter, inspires the organization’s efforts worldwide to help alleviate suffering, manage economic disparities that can become breeding grounds for radicalism, and take care of one’s fellow human beings on the basis solely of their humanity. ❖

SRI LANKA SPOTLIGHT

During a trip to Sri Lanka, H.E. Dr. Al-Issa visited the Sri Lankan church that was victim to a deadly bomb attack on Easter Sunday, April 21. The attack killed more than 250 people. H.E. pledged to support the government of Sri Lanka in their fight to combat extremism and terrorism in all its forms. The message that the Muslim World League delivered during the visit was one of religious peace, harmony and coextensive. As a reaffirmation of H.E. Dr. Al-Issa’s commitment to helping the Sri Lankan people, the MWL donated \$5 million to families of Sri Lanka’s Easter attack victims.

“What we are doing and what we want to do is purify Islam of this extremism and these wrong interpretations and give the right interpretations of Islam. Only the truth can defeat that, and we represent that truth.”

— H.E. Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Reuters interview





HONEST DEBATE, HONORABLE DISSENT

Interfaith Summit Hosts Different Views & Intellectual Challenges

Editorial Staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019



Buddhist leaders gather at National Conference in Sri Lanka to discuss the role of cultural and religious dialogue in creating harmony and peace.

There are times when international conferences take on a particularly lively character, going “off script” and abandoning the predictable platitudes of representative interests. It is a particular breath of fresh air when such spontaneity takes place

at a gathering on religious points of view—for, far from raising “controversy,” such settings allow for the intelligent and reasoned critique of misunderstandings, stereotypes, false notions spread by irresponsible media, and, oftentimes, fundamen-

tal—and often understandable—gaps in education. Addressing the Sri Lanka Conference, the leader of the Buddhist community of the country, the Most Venerable Omalpe Sobitha Thera, read out some what he described as controversial verses said to be included in the Holy Qu’ran, and asked the audience whether those verses “can do any good for the society and communities to promote peace, goodwill and ethnic harmony.” In response, the Sri Lankan head of the Muslim community, Mufti Jamiyyathul Ulama, noted that those verses, which portray violence against non-Muslims, are not included in the Qu’ran. He added that “certain elements manipulate such writings to spread hatred and violence among communities.”

Soon after, H.E. Dr. Al-Issa met with Archbishop Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith and held a similar conversation about Islam and its relation to other faiths. The two leaders pledged to advance religious coexistence in the name of the National Conference on Peace, Harmony and Coexistence that they had just held. Such dialogue—intellectual, open, and respectful—underscore Dr. Al-Issa’s



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa greets Buddhist leaders in Sri Lanka, strengthening ties and spreading MWL’s message of moderation, tolerance and mutual understanding.

core belief that honest discussion is one of the most valuable weapons in the intellectual arsenal to destroy the lies that in turn attempt to corrupt religion. ❖



Six Verses from the Holy Qu’ran on Peace and Coexistence

“There is no compulsion where the religion is concerned.” (Qu’ran 2:256)

“You cannot guide those you would like to, but God guides those He wills. He has best knowledge of the guided.” (Qu’ran 28:56)

“God does not forbid you from being good to those who have not fought you in the religion or driven you from your homes or from being just towards them. God loves those who are just.” (Surat al-Mumtahana 8)

“You may fight in the cause of God against those who attack you, but do not aggress. God does not love the aggressors.” (Qu’ran 2:190)

“And feed with food the needy wretch, the orphan and the prisoner, for love of Him (saying): We feed you, for the sake of Allah only. We wish for no reward nor thanks from you.” (Qu’ran 76:8-9)

“And spend of your substance in the cause of Allah, and make not your hands contribute to your own destruction, but do good, for Allah loveth those who do good.” (Qu’ran 2:195)



GUEST ESSAY

THE FOLLOWING SPEECH BY MWL SECRETARY GENERAL SHEIKH DR. SHEIKH MOHAMMAD BIN ABDULKARIM AL-ISSA WAS DELIVERED AT THE NELUM POKUNA THEATRE ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PEACE, HARMONY AND COEXISTENCE.

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

Most Venerable Mahanayakes of Asgiriya, Malwaththa, Ramanna, Amarapura and Kotte Chapters and all other respected Maha Sangha, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, Buddhists, Hindus, Jewish, Christians and Muslims religious leaders coexisting peacefully in Sri Lanka, the land of peace and harmony, His Excellency, the President of the Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka Maithripala Sirisena, Honourable Karu Jayasuriya, Speaker of the Parliament, Honourable Mahinda Rajapaksa – former President and Leader of the Opposition Party, the Honourable A.J.M. Muzammil, Western Province Governor.

Honourable ministers, deputy ministers, state ministers, members of Parliament, leaders of political parties, excellences, ambassadors, high commissioners, consular generals, non-government organisations, the business community, intellectuals, ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to be in this remarkable gathering in the context of this historic summit, which happens to be against the backdrop of the painful tragedy that hit the Republic of Sri Lanka this year by treacherous terrorist acts; a terrible crime which deliberately targeted Christian worshippers and Westerners, desecrating places of worship and hotels.

This was just the latest manifestation in a trend of religious tragedies: Just a month prior, the city of Christchurch, New Zealand was the scene of a brutal attack on two Muslim mosques, also targeting worshippers as they sought refuge in prayer. And in the United States, Jewish synagogues in California and Pennsylvania have endured similar ruthless attacks.

Dear brothers, this important summit on the 'Peace of Religions' confirms the determination of the followers of religions to clarify the truth of religions that call for love, peace and harmony.

Religion has never been a menace to humanity. In Islam, Allah said in the Holy Qur'an about the

Prophet of Islam Mohammad (PBUH), "We haven't sent you (O! Mohammad) but a mercy to the worlds".

However, evil elements – and those who have been intellectually poisoned – did not accept this fact; instead, they used religion as an excuse to serve their goals. Thus, as religious leaders, it is our duty to confront this deceitful claim and clarify the truth to the world through living testimony.

In the time since these criminal acts, which not only terrorized Sri Lanka, but shocked the entire world, the attacks on Colombo have been widely condemned – including by Muslim religious leaders. But condemnation alone does not exonerate us, or pose a solution.

The Colombo Summit came to diagnose the current situation and propose real solutions to it, and to muster the determination of the participants to act effectively and efficiently to confront the forces of evil terrorism – and to reveal the facts with utter transparency.

We are all looking forward to the fact that the Colombo Declaration will formally codify the as-

pirations and hopes of the Summit's participants, launched from the Republic of Sri Lanka, a place that has been subjected to a great deal of disunity and terror through the decades.

God willing, our world will remain safe, despite the vile practices of the forces of evil and terrorism. And God willing, with our rock-solid will to confront them, their ideology will remain segregated, hounded and cornered, no matter how desperate their measures are.

This conference is here to assert the solidity of good will with steadfastness and perpetuity. However, we mustn't deny our lack of resolve in allowing the evolution of the primary material of violent extremism and terrorism, and in particular the rhetoric of hatred, racism and despicable superiority against others under the guise of the hegemony of religious and ethnic ideology.

The primary attitude of this carelessness comes from the lack of determination in enacting criminal legislations that would criminalize this particular narrative – hate speech that, left unchecked, inevitably will lead to malicious acts. This has been made obvious by obvious material facts, not



“At the heart of every goal for good lies responsible leadership.”

-- H.E. Dr. Al-Issa



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa addressing audience at Sri Lanka Conference.



President Maithripala Sirisena delivering speech at Sri Lanka Conference.

just theories and speculation. Some have found an easy pretext, when they have had the opportunity to export basic materials to manufacture violent extremism and terrorism under the guise of freedoms. Thus we ended with double the trouble; falsifying the moral meaning of freedoms and sneaking through to create the suitable environment for violence and terrorism.

If wisdom says that defining a problem is half way to solving it, then the problem of terrorism lies in allowing the speech of hatred and racism go unpunished without criminalization. Hence allowing the contempt of followers of religions and cultures

without criminalization, along with cramming the minds of children and youth with psychological illusions against “the other” – a sister soul created by God to share together the human bonds of brotherhood and companionship in life. To counter this, our need for cooperation, interaction and co-existence, require the most powerful antidote of all: love, tolerance and wisdom in words and deeds.

We are all looking forward to the fact that the Colombo Declaration will formally codify the aspirations and hopes of the Summit’s participants, launched from the Republic of Sri Lanka, a place that has been subjected to a great deal of disunity and terror through the decades. God willing, our world will remain safe, despite the vile practices of the forces of evil and terrorism. And God willing, with our rock-solid will to confront them, their ideology will remain segregated, hounded and cornered, no matter how desperate their measures are.

However, as we all see, artificial barriers often evolve into persuasions; under claims of obliterating the existence of this “other”, there is no possibility of coexistence with your fellow human – kindred brotherhood that God has honored and made his existence one of the necessities of life. Under the manmade guise of “the other”, there is no end to this intellectual madness, for it stands to defying confronting what the Creator has ordained: the existence of difference, diversity and pluralism. Yet, with the defeats and losses incurred by its predecessors throughout history, violence and terrorism has rarely heeded the lessons that can be learned.

To change this, the world is in dire need of national intellectual awareness – awareness that leads to bolstering harmony and stability. This will give rise to the respect of constitutions, laws and cultures of the countries where we live, in addition to the respect of religious and cultural dominance that expresses the opinion of the majority in each country, and also considering their feelings.

We are in the land of Sri Lanka, and we realize that this country is the land of Buddhist majority, thus, everyone has to understand this through the exchange of love, respect and to live in peace and harmony.

In conclusion, I ask Allah Almighty that this Summit, along with its international Declaration, will achieve its expected and anticipated objectives. I extend my sincere thanks to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sri Lanka, Maithripala Sirisena, for his patronage and support for this summit with the presence of quality participants from around the world. Worthy of praise and admiration are his efforts in fighting extremism, terrorism and opioids – serious scourges threatening the futures of generations to come.

It is also my pleasure to announce to you the initiative of the Muslim World League to create a \$5,000,000 charitable fund to support the families of the victims and wounded of the terrorist operations. May Allah bless the efforts of everyone involved. ❖

Thank you all, and peace be upon you.



Religious Scholars from all different backgrounds listen as H.E. Dr. Al-Issa speaks about the role of religious and interfaith cooperation in ensuring peace and stability.



“Although the lives lost on April 21 cannot be restored, everyone can come together to defeat terrorism and ensure peace, unity and reconciliation in the country, for the sake of future generations.”

—President Sirisena at the Sri Lanka Conference

GUEST ESSAY

PRESIDENT MAITHRIPALA SIRISENA

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

President Maithripala Sirisena asserted at the conference that “only Sri Lankans can find solutions to the reconciliation and co-existence challenges facing Sri Lanka,” and made a strong call for all communities to come together to achieve peace and harmony. Speaking at the National Conference on Peace, Harmony, and Co-existence that was co-hosted by the Muslim World League and Sri Lankan Western Province Governor Ahamad Mohamad Muzzammil, President Sirisena said he would be “ready to work with anyone dedicated to fostering peace in Sri Lanka.”

We have no way to bring [the victims of the Easter Massacre] back, the loss of life was serious. Removing the fear and insecurity among the people is not easy. Even though three months have gone by, the sorrow in our hearts has not diminished. The friend-

ship and trust that existed between the different communities of this country was completely destroyed. As a Government and at a personal level, we have worked to restore relations between all Sri Lankans. But after the Easter attacks, people started hating even the words reconciliation and co-existence. We can heal a wound, but it is not easy to heal a heart.

People misinterpreting and destroying the teachings of major religions is a problem the world over, Sri Lanka did not expect it to happen here. Since the attack, the dedication of the Muslim community to reach out and have more engagement with other communities is laudable, and I commend the organizers of this event. We must hold more programs with co-existence as the focus, to bring people together and improve their understanding

“Due to the Easter Sunday attacks, people started fearing Muslim people. Even within the community, there was fear that another attack could take place. We as a Government have done everything in our power to tackle this situation. No other country managed to root out a terrorist organization in a matter of weeks.”

– President Maithripala Sirisena

of other communities [...] People misinterpreting and destroying the teachings of major religions is a problem the world over.

Due to the Easter Sunday attacks, people started fearing Muslim people. Even within the community, there was fear that another attack could take place. We as a Government have done everything in our power to tackle this situation. No other country managed to root out a terrorist organization in a matter of weeks. Under my guidance, all officials met every night to make sure those responsible were caught. Even though I believe in and stand for peace and reconciliation, I will not hesitate to use all State power to fight terrorism.

Our security institutions worked with the intelligence at our disposal, and they were extremely competent. It is true that the attack could have been averted if the officials who received initial intelligence carried out their duties in a more efficient manner, and I hold myself responsible for that.

Nonetheless, officials who were dedicated to their duty did manage to deal with the situation effectively.

There are clearly significant problems. There are factions with extremist views, and no matter how

much we try to bring these warring factions together, they will not come together. They will not agree to work together. In Buddhism, we know that hate only begets hate. But terrorism does not understand this, they have a completely different agenda. People of other communities need to understand how much the Muslim community has suffered because of the act of the attackers. As a result, everyone has suffered. Therefore, all of us need to come together to stamp out extremism. I will extend a hand of friendship to anyone who comes in peace, and anyone who works to heal Sri Lanka, regardless of the criticism that I will face. I deplore factions that attempt to use the situation of the country for their own political agendas, and call on them to understand the seriousness of what they do and the damage it causes.

We need to find a way to put aside suspicion and solve for ourselves how we can move on. We must accept that this is a Buddhist nation, and protect our history, culture, and intrinsic Sri Lankan-ness. But we also have to understand how the traditions of other communities can be protected and we can live together. Only we can find solutions to these challenges. To find solutions we have to have greater understanding, patience, intelligence, empathy, and intellectual capacity. All of us have to be dedicated to this cause. ❖



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa seated to the right of President Maithripala Sirisena. Also pictured: The Mahanayaka Theras of the Asgiriya, Malwatte, Ramanna, Amarapura and Kotte Chapters leaders.

GUEST ESSAY

HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL I OF MOSCOW

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

On July 23, 2019, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with H.E. Dr. Al-Issa at the patriarchal and synodal residence in St. Daniel Monastery in Moscow. The meeting came on the heels of Dr. Al-Issa's receiving an honorary doctorate from the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Russian Academy of Arts and Sciences.

As reported by the Church, participating in the meeting from the Russian Orthodox Church were also Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR); Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman; Rev. Dimitry Safonov, DECR secretary for interreligious relations; and Hieromonk Gregory (Matrusov), Patriarchal experts council for cooperation with the Islamic world.

Taking part in the meeting were also Mr. Raid Halid Krimli, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Russia; Mr. Turko Daudov, advisor to the head of the Republic of Chechnya and to the Secretary General of the Islamic World League in Russia; Mr. Muhammad Said Al Gamdi, Secretary General deputy for public issues; and Mr. Ahmad Faisal El-Youssef, director of the Islamic World League representation in Moscow.

For the Russian Orthodox Church, contacts with Moslems are very natural because for one thousand years

we have lived together with Moslems in our country; we are brothers and fellow citizens who have never had conflicts or discords between them. And since Orthodox Christians and Moslems belong to the Eastern culture, the relationships of our communities are always simple and sincere.

Orthodox Christians and Moslems belong to the same Eastern culture. And as for Russia, we are aware of ourselves as one people regardless of religious affiliation, be it Orthodox or Islamic. And certainly, Russia can be for many countries a good example of good relations, cooperation and interaction of Orthodox Christians and Moslems...

Extremism and terrorism have no national face, and it would be wrong to associate them only with the Muslim community. Terrorists are those who can declare their affiliation with a particular religion, but essentially they are those who are outside any religion because their terrorist actions are contrary to the Divine law.

I would like to point to the positive role of the Muslim World League, which, in recent years, have made considerable efforts to educate the Moslem youth in the spirit of peacefulness and solidarity..

We have read the statement of [the Charter of Makah] and evaluated it very positively. Since the leading



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa and Patriarch Kirill at the monastery of St. Denis in Moscow, the patriarchal and synodal residence.

role in the organization and conduct of the conference belonged to the Islamic World League and personally to you, I would like to point to its positive outcome.

The Russian Orthodox Church is participating in many programs for humanitarian aid to those in the Middle East who are suffering from armed conflicts and standing in need of support. In the first place, it is Syria in which there is an internal conflict making suffer the peaceful population, both Christians and Moslems.



His Holiness also congratulated Mr. Muhammad Abdelkarim Al-Issa on having been awarded the rank of Doctor Emeritus by the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Oriental Studies. "This rank," he said, "is very much respected as it points to the academic community's recognition of your work. Along with the recognition of your work as a scholar, it is also an expression of gratitude for your work as a man who serves the cause of peace and justice."

“You are carrying out a great educational work, which commands special respect. You are taking care of vulnerable people who need aid and support in Asia and especially in Africa. Therefore, thanks also to your contribution to the work of the Islamic World League, it has gained authority not only in the world of Islam but also become renowned and respected for its work in the Christian community as well.”

— His Holiness Patriarch Kirill I of Moscow to H.E. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa



ASPECTS OF CIVILIZATIONAL IN ISLAM: THE MINA CONFERENCE

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

With the annual Hajj comes the Hajj-Mina Conference hosted by the Muslim World League, bringing together some 500 intellectuals and scholars to discuss the tenets and meaning of the religion that unifies them, especially at this time of the year. This year's theme was familiar, yet always relevant: building "bridges of communication and cultural dialogue" to show that Islamic civilization is "inclusive and integrated." As reported in Arab News, the conference, titled "Aspects of Civilization in Islam," called upon Muslims "to contribute to humanity's needs" in order to resolve the vast moral, social and environmental crises engulfing all modern societies, and, in doing so, to achieve the moral authority by perfecting one's own character.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa gave the keynote speech, noting that "authenticity and modernity are the hallmarks of Islamic civilization." He added: "A true Muslim is an ambassador for Islam, reflecting its values and principles."

It was an occasion to stress the importance of developing an Islamic discourse characterized by moderation, and to recommend the intelligent use of social media to shed light on the objectives of Islamic civilization. In addition, it urged the use of modern technology to maximize the benefit of Islam's cultural heritage to serve modern societies, based on achieving a balance between spirituality and materialism.

In his opening speech, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Ashkeikh, the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the Council of Senior Muslim Scholars as well as chairman of the MWL's Supreme Council, said that Islamic civilization was established on foundations "that qualified it to lead the world toward happiness and stability." He also stated that "Islamic civilization has always been characterized by its moderate approach, which does not tolerate extremism, injustice or prejudice. It is a balanced civilization that created a balance between the spiritual and material inclinations of man."

In the spirit of the Hajj, the conference participants profoundly thanked His Majesty HRH King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman "for their efforts in serving Muslims, their great care for the Two Holy Mosques and the holy places, and their initiatives to serve pilgrims."



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa addressing the Mina Conference "Aspects of Civilization."



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa delivered remarks at the Annual Hajj Conference on the Aspects of Civilization, where he spoke about building bridges of communication and cultural dialogue.



Excerpts from: H.E. Dr. Al-Issa's Address at "Aspects of Civilization", Mina, August 9, 2019

"Our solution is the Charter of Makkah, a document of groundbreaking frankness that received the endorsement of the entirety of the Islamic scholars who participated. It received political backing as well through its first signatory, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud."

"The charter's 30 points send a clear message not just to the Muslim world but to the entire global community and worshippers of all faiths: We must put aside our differences and embrace our religious and cultural diversity. For isolated and independent of one another, we will never overpower the voices of hate."

"We have a great challenge before us. Everywhere we look, we see old divides and outdated superstitions calcifying. We see the forces of intolerance and fanaticism finding new followers, spurred by social

media and a culture that magnifies our disagreements and ignores our commonalities. How do we win this battle? From the Muslim world, it starts with commitments the likes of which we have never formally adopted or connected to tolerance."

"Our charter demands that we safeguard natural resources and manage industrial development; support climate treaties, fight hunger and poverty; eliminate disease and discrimination, and preserve the human rights of all people, including women and minorities. It includes a special obligation to empower women through social equality and economic opportunity, and to reject any effort that is disrespectful or marginalizing toward women."

"We will take each of these commitments home with us, and exhort our community members to adhere to them. We must."



THE RIMINI CONFERENCE: THE MWL AND THE ART OF MODERATION

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019



Ribbon-cutting to inaugurate the Rimini Conference on August 23. At the Conference, H.E. Dr. Al-Issa stressed medical and technological advances used by the MWL in its humanitarian work.



Young Italians gather to see the MWL Pavilion in Rimini.



“Islamic civilization has always been characterized by its moderate approach, which does not tolerate extremism, injustice or prejudice. It is a balanced civilization that created a balance between the spiritual and material inclinations of man.

— Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Ashkeikh, the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Muslim World League

One of the more distinguished talents of H.E Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa in his role as the “moderate voice of Islam” the world over is how the Secretary General manages to maintain a nuanced approach to Islam’s meaning and message in a global setting in which extreme positions are increasingly common in cultural and political discourse. One such example of this tempered style was at the inauguration of the MWL’s pavilion at the 40th annual “Meeting for Friendship Among Peoples” in Rimini, Italy. The MWL is proud to have been the first Islamic organization to take part in the well-respected international fair, which this August registered more than 1 million visitors. The pavilion featured pictures and movies about the League’s projects as well as its worldwide work in humanitarian relief and health care. It also included a number of documentaries telling the stories of people “whom the league saved from poverty, illness and illiteracy,” according to a profile in Arab News.

It was in the context of this international fair that the organization could spread its message without having to lecture, preach or indoctrinate, as can often be the case at high-profile cultural events in which the loudest display garners the most attention. In this case, it was the pavilion that did the work, drawing attention to how the much value the MWL places on the humanitarian values of Islam. These values, in turn, are about helping those in need regardless of their religion, ethnicity or culture.

On display was also a model for the MWL’s emergency room at its Makkah headquarters to monitor disasters worldwide and ensure a rapid response, “while determining the degree of risks and the level of intervention required.” By using state-of-the-art technologies, the organization can help save lives and property.

The pavilion received a large number of diplomatic and academic delegations and political leaders, most notably the head of the European Parliament, Mr. David Sassoli, the head of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Mr Roberto Fico, and a large number of young Europeans, especially Italians. The visitors were introduced to the MWL’s vision, mission and objectives, and to a number of its initiatives and

programs around the world. In his address, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa underlined the dangers of political Islam, noting that some movements try to achieve their political objectives through exploiting the Muslim religion and playing on emotion so as to induce vulnerable individuals to commit acts of violence. “Political Islam concepts have harmed Islam. Besides being a religion, Islam is a way of life and cannot be reduced to political goals as some violent and terrorist groups do,” he said.

At the Conference, Dr. Al-Issa was presented with The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding’s (FFEU) Rabbi Marc Schneier, the “Children of Abraham” award by the Florence School of Advanced Studies for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue. ❖



The MWL’s pavilion held at the 40th Meeting for Friendship Among People in Rimini, Italy, focused on their humanitarian work around the world. Particularly of note, was the MWL’s emergency room model that monitored global disasters to ensure a timely response. Demonstrating the MWL’s use of state-of-the-art technology for crisis, the model provided a baseline risk assessment and determined an applicable method of intervention.



SPECIAL HAJJ 2019



Photo of people enjoying their Hajj Journey to the Holy City, Mecca.

The pilgrimage to Makkah is well known as the Fifth Pillar of Islam: Every Muslim who is of age is obliged to perform it as a religious duty at least once in his lifetime, provided he has the wherewithal to undertake the journey. To the Muslim, the duty of performing the pilgrimage is his alone, and he must have the means to provide for his wife and children and his dependents during his absence, unless he takes them with him. Women who are not married are not expected to go on the pilgrimage unless they can form a company of sufficient number to protect themselves while on the journey or have protectors from among their male relatives.

Sick or aged people without sufficient physical strength need not go; yet there is a belief among Muslims that to die while on pilgrimage is very meritorious and that sickness or weakness does not necessarily shorten life: "A man dies only when his predestined time has come, neither one second before nor one second after." The pilgrimage season begins in the month of Rajab which does not fall on the same month in the Gregorian calendar (there are 354 days in the Islamic year as against 365 in the Gregorian). Pilgrims go to Makkah from the month of Rajab to the month of Zulkedah (five months) to await the appointed time in the month of Zulhijjah when the actual Hajj is performed.

THE DAY OF ARAFAT

In the Islamic holiday calendar, the 9th day of Dhul-Hijjah (the Month of Hajj) is called the Day of Arafat (or Day of Arafah). This day marks the end of the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah, Saudi Arabia. Because the Day of Arafat, like other Islamic holidays, is based on a lunar calendar rather than the Gregorian solar calendar, its date changes from year to year.

Rituals of the Day of Arafat

The Day of Arafat falls on the second day of pilgrimage rituals. At dawn on this day, nearly 2 million Muslim pilgrims will make their way from the town of Mina to a nearby hillside and plain called Mount Arafat and the Plain of Arafat, which is located about 12.5 miles (20 kilometers) from Makkah, the final destination for the pilgrimage. Muslims believe that it was from this site that the Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) gave his famous Farewell Sermon in his final year of life (excerpted in this Hajj section).

Every Muslim is expected to make the pilgrimage to Makkah once during his or her lifetime; the pilgrimage itself is not considered complete unless the stop at Mount Arafat is also made. Thus, the visit to Mount Arafat is synonymous with the Hajj itself. Completion involves arriving at Mount Arafat before noon and spending the afternoon upon the mountain, remaining until sunset. However, individuals who are physically unable to complete this portion of the pilgrimage are allowed to observe it by fasting, which is not practiced by those making the physical visit to Arafat.

HAJJ REFLECTIONS

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Hall-of-Fame basketball player:

"On this pilgrimage, what I have seen and experienced has forced me to rearrange much of my thought patterns previously held, and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions."

Paul Pogba, French soccer player:

"Every person who has come here will understand the feeling; I hope for the people who haven't been here, they will get to come one here one day. Beautiful place. And the feeling I cannot even explain to you. Insha'allah you will come."

Mohammed Ali, champion boxer (d. 2016)

"Everything I do now I do to please Allah. I conquered the world and it didn't buy me true happiness. The only true satisfaction comes from honoring and worshipping God."

Kristiane Backer, From MTV to Mecca:

How Islam Inspired My Life. "Among the lessons I learned on Hajj was that I needed to be mindful and keep the inner connection with God at all times and that self improvement is definitely a never-ending struggle."



The Meaning of Eid al-Adha

As Islamic scholarship recounts, during the Hajj, Muslims remember and commemorate the trials and triumphs of the Prophet Abraham. The Qur'an describes Abraham as follows:

"Surely Abraham was an example, obedient to Allah, by nature upright, and he was not of the polytheists. He was grateful for Our bounties. We chose him and guided him unto a right path. We gave him good in this world, and in the next, he will most surely be among the righteous." (Qur'an 16:120-121)

One of Abraham's main trials was to obey the command of Allah to kill his only son. Upon hearing this command, he prepared to submit to Allah's will. When he was all prepared to do it, Allah revealed to him that his "sacrifice" had already been fulfilled. He had shown that his love for his Lord superseded all others, that he would lay down his own life or the lives of those dear to him in order to submit to God.

Muslims commemorate Abraham's great demonstration of faith during the celebration of Eid al-Adha by slaughtering an animal such as a sheep, camel, or goat. This action is very often misunderstood by those outside the faith.

In the words of one source describing the observance: "The meat from the sacrifice of Eid al-Adha is mostly given away to others. One-third is eaten by immediate family and relatives, one-third is given away to friends, and one-third is donated to the poor. The act symbolizes our willingness to give up things that are of benefit to us or close to our hearts, in order to follow Allah's commands. It also symbolizes our willingness to give up some of our own bounties, in order to strengthen ties of friendship and help those who are in need. We recognize that all blessings come from Allah, and we should open our hearts and share with others."

🗨️ *People misinterpreting and destroying the teachings of major religions is a problem the world over."*

—Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, August 2019.

MECCA OR MAKKAH?

"There are a number of ways to spell "Qur'an" and "Mohammad," but few might be aware that when it comes to the name of the holy city of Makkah, this spelling was decided by royal decree." So opined Arab News in an informative article on August 9, guiding perplexed Western/English-language readers in navigating proper use of the name of this Holy City

While most western authorities spell the city's name as "Mecca," it was decided in the 1980s by the then-Crown Prince, King Fahd bin Abdulaziz that this was wrong. He ordered that the spelling "Makkah" be used in all government and private sector correspondences in the Kingdom when writing in the Latin script.

The Muslim World League, an NGO with several offices around the world, has since argued that it is important to use what it defined as the correct spelling, as a "sign of respect to the holy site and the Muslim population."

So Makkah it is for readers of the MWL Journal!



Quotes on the Beauty of the Hajj

from the Qu'ran (excerpted from the Islamic website www.submission.org)

“In the Name of God the Most Merciful”...

[Qur'an 2:125] “We have rendered the shrine (the Kaaba) a focal point for the people, and a safe sanctuary. You may use Abraham’s shrine as a prayer house. We commissioned Abraham and Ismail: ‘You shall purify My house for those who visit, those who live there, and those who bow and prostrate.’”

[Qur'an 2:196] “You shall observe the complete rites of Hajj and Umrah for God. If you are prevented, you shall send an offering, and do not resume cutting your hair until your offering has reached its destination. If you are ill, or suffering a head injury (and you must cut your hair), you shall expiate by fasting, or giving to charity, or some other form of worship. During the normal Hajj, if you break the state of Ihram (sanctity) between Umrah and Hajj, you shall expiate by offering an animal sacrifice. If you cannot afford it, you shall fast three days during Hajj and seven when you return home - this completes ten -provided you do not live at the Sacred Masjid. You shall observe God, and know that God is strict in enforcing retribution.”

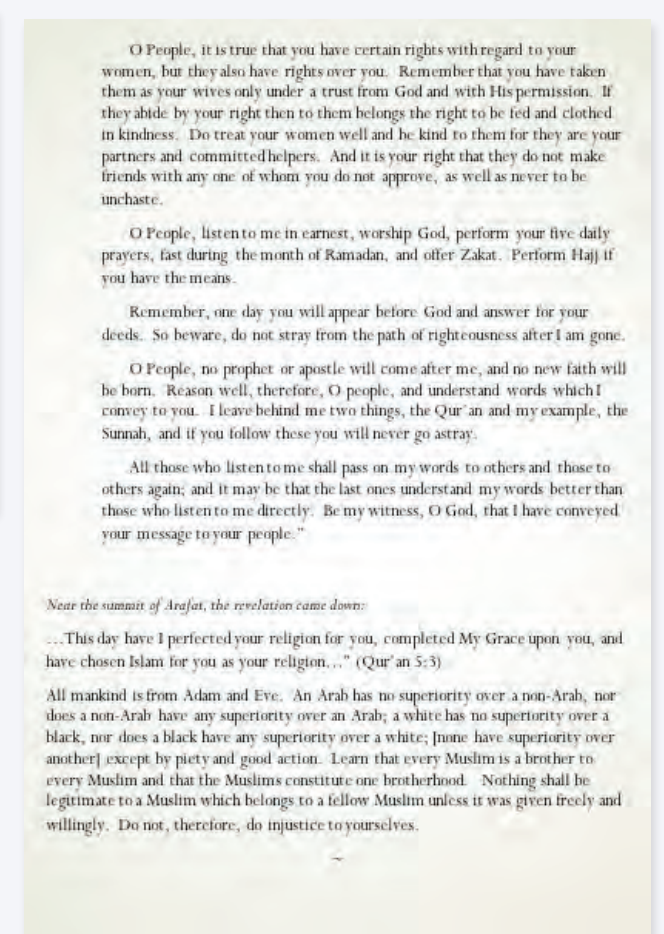
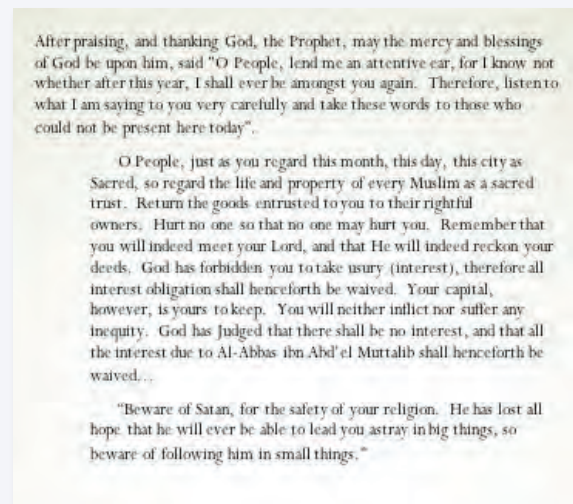
[Qur'an 2:197] “Hajj shall be observed in the specified months. Whoever sets out to observe Hajj shall refrain from sexual intercourse, misconduct, and arguments throughout Hajj. Whatever good you do, God is fully aware thereof. As you prepare your provisions for the journey, the best provision is righteousness. You shall observe Me, O you who possess intelligence.”

[Qur'an 3:96-97] “The most important shrine established for the people is the one in Becca; a blessed beacon for all the people. In it are clear signs: the station of Abraham. Anyone who enters it shall be granted safe passage. The people owe it to God that they shall observe Hajj to this shrine, when they can afford it. As for those who disbelieve, God does not need anyone.”

The Farewell Sermon

The Year 10 A.H of the Islamic Calendar (corresponding to March 632 in the Christian/Gregorian calendar) is considered to be one of the most significant years for three reasons. Firstly, this was the year when the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) delivered his Last Sermon during his farewell pilgrimage to Makkah. Secondly, this was the year where a number of deputations came to the Prophet to announce their Islam as well as their tribes. Thirdly, it was the golden period of Islam when multitudes of people embraced the faith by accepting the message of the Prophet.

The poignant Farewell Sermon is believed by Muslims to have been delivered by the Islamic prophet Muhammed on the 9th of Dhu Al Hijah, (6 March 632 in the Uranah valley of Mount Arafat, during the Islamic pilgrimage of the Hajj. The sermon consists of exhortations for Muslims to follow the teachings that Mohammad had set forth in the Qu'ran and the sunnah.



Excerpt from the Final Sermon:



THE HAJJ AND HIGH TECH: THE HARAMAIN RAIL

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

As reported in Quartz magazine, two million visitors suddenly converging at once would present many infrastructural and logistical challenges for even the most modern of cities. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with an estimated \$12 billion in Hajj tourism, has had to invest heavily to keep the event in as modern a context as possible and to minimize the impact of so many visitors on the country's infrastructure. In 2019 the first high speed rail link between Makkah and Medina shortened the common road trip by eight hours. With the new Haramain rail station, furthermore, pilgrims are treated to the latest AI technology to connect them to the medical care they might need and to allow them to learn which areas are most crowded.

In one pilot program, some 25,000 pilgrims were issued smart cards from the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, a kind of wearable tech that could be scanned as one moved from location to location. A new matching app shows the transportation schedule and which spots are the most crowded. "These build on initiatives already in place," writes Quartz, "including an electronic early-warning system created with the help of the World Health Organization that sounds an alarm in the event of some disease." At the same time, six transmitting stations with 350 sensors across Mina—the heart of the Hajj—were established to gather data.

Meanwhile, in October 2018, the Kingdom's new high-speed railway opened to the public, whisking Muslim pilgrims and other travelers between Makkah and Medina. The Haramain High Speed Rail system transports passengers 450 kilometers (280 miles) via the Red Sea port of Jeddah at speeds of up to 300 kilometers per hour (186 miles per hour) on electrified rails. There are 35 trains, each with 13 cars and 417 seats in two classes – business and economy. It is expected that the train will transport 60 million passengers across five stations on the line at: Medina Station, King Abdullah Economic City in Rabigh, the King Abdulaziz International Airport, the Jeddah Station and the Makkah Station. An ancient tradition seamlessly and smartly fuses with the latest and greatest state-of-the-art: certainly an attraction that will lure a Muslim to Umrah anytime of the year!



The station at Al-Haramain as designed by Foster + Partners. Photo Credit: Foster and Partners.



“I realize these may seem like small steps in the grand sweep of humanity. Our over-politicized world is replete with zero-sum standoffs, seemingly intractable disputes and unbridgeable chasms of misunderstanding dividing communities of all kind. It is going to take leadership at all levels to change the world.”

— Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa, Newsweek, January 30, 2019



THE NEW WHITE GOLD

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

In a fascinating 2018 work by the British scientist and journalist Dr. Vince Beiser, *The World in a Grain*, the author argues that sand “is to cities what flour is to bread, what cells are to our bodies: the invisible but fundamental ingredient that makes up the bulk of the built environment in which most of us live.” He went on to demonstrate how this (unsustainable) resource has never been more in demand.

As the single most important vital component in every building and road—to say nothing of its role in every pane of window glass and the silicon chips of phones and computers—the world is using more than 50 billion tons of sand every year – and rising. Now, Dr. Beiser notes, Arab re-

searchers have come up with a new technology made of sand that is as strong as concrete, yet has half the carbon footprint. Is this the next Gulf economic miracle?

However, as Gulf News recently reported, as impossible as it might seem, the world is running out of sand – not desert sand, but the kind found on beaches and riverbeds and under the sea. Grains of rock or shell eroded over time by the movement of water are perfectly shaped for bonding together to make strong concrete. Smooth, wind-sculpted sand is useless for this purpose. Not too surprisingly, the search is on for an alternative. A team of four researchers at Imperial College London believe they have found it with the invention of a newly developed material called Finite. It is, they say, as strong as concrete, yet has half the carbon footprint. If they are right, the four inventors stand to become wealthy “and Finite will disrupt a multi-billion-dollar international mining industry” that in 2016 was valued at \$8.9 billion in the US alone.

The advantages for the Gulf states, and for every other economy with a desert in its backyard, are plain: no more importing sand from halfway around the world at exorbitant prices, which will slash the cost of development and create a new export business worth billions of dollars. What “black gold” once did to transform economies, a new take on one of Nature’s least appreciated building blocks of civilization—sand itself—is poised to spearhead a stunning industrial revolution.

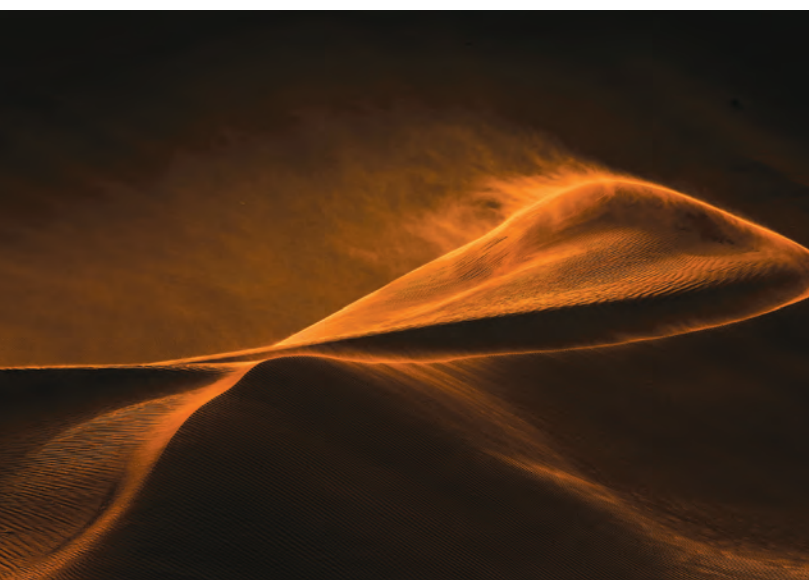


Photo Credit: Saudi Commission on Tourism & National Heritage



A REVIEW OF MUSLIM WOMEN AND MODERN PROGRESS

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

It goes without saying that there was great excitement that followed the announcement in early August that Saudi women would no longer require permission from a male guardian to travel or obtain a passport. Following this legislation, Her Royal Highness Princess Reema bint Bandar bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Saudi Ambassador to the United States, emphasized that the decrees were “designed to elevate the status of Saudi women within our society, including granting them the right to apply for passports and travel independently.” This significant step is the latest in a series of epochal changes taking place across the Saudi social landscape that promote the development of Muslim women within a traditional cultural context. Here is a detailed overview:

- Women over the age of 21 in Saudi Arabia may obtain a passport and travel abroad without the permission of a male relative.
- The country has also allowed women to drive.
- Women can also now travel outside the country without a male guardian.
- Previously, women only had a page in their male guardian’s passport.
- The new legal changes also allow women to register births, marriages, divorces, or deaths. (This used to be possible only for men).
- Women can voting municipal elections.
- Women can open their own businesses without a guardian’s permission.
- Dima Al-Shareef, a Saudi law consultant, told Arab News that the country was “witnessing a new era in the empowerment of Saudi women, in the commercial sphere in particular.”

- Stadiums recently began letting women watch sports live.
- King Abdullah Sports City stadium in Jeddah made history when it first allowed women to attend events in January 2018.
- The number of women working in the private sector has soared 130% from 2013.
- Sarah Al-Suhaimi became the first woman to chair Saudi Arabia’s stock exchange.
- Saudi Arabia joined the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which promotes gender equality and female empowerment.
- Women can now jog and do physical exercise in the streets. Saudi Arabia introduced physical education for girls in 2017 and began granting licenses for women’s gyms, allowing women to exercise publicly. Over 1,500 women participated in the first all-women run that was organized shortly before International Women’s Day in 2018.
- They can also enlist in the military.
- Divorced women can retain custody of their children. In March 2018, mothers in Saudi Arabia were granted the right to retain custody of their children after divorcing, without going through legal proceedings.

Lina Abirafeh, the director at the Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World, told the online publication Business Insider that these changes have been impactful. “There is a need to progress gradually but also to be clear that the goal is full equality – without exceptions,” Abirafeh said.



THE HAJJ, ART AND LITERATURE ACROSS THE AGES

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

The lore and allure of the Middle East and its mysterious charms has long spellbound the Western imagination, driving such intrepid explorers as the Englishman Sir Richard Burton to take great personal and security risks in venturing into the unknown—in his case, to visit Makkah disguised as an Afghan doctor. He would be among the first of the British scholar-soldier-poets to penetrate “Felix Arabia” and other countries of the region, compelled by the unknown and the endlessly fascinating culture of Islam. A tradition of writing, art, poetry and painting grew colorfully and magnificently into this particular niche, and has not stopped since.

But Burton was far from the first. Almost three hundred years earlier, the following account of a non-Muslim making the Hajj was proudly published: “On the 18th of May we entered into the said city of Mecca; we entered from the north, and afterwards we descended into the plain. On the side towards the south there are two mountains which almost touch each other, where is the pass to go to the gate of Mecca. On the other side, where the sun rises, there is another mountain pass, like a valley, through which is the road to the mountain where they celebrate the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac, which mountain is distant from the said city about eight or ten miles. The height of this mountain is two or three casts of a stone by hand, and it is of some kind of stone, not marble, but of another colour. On the top of this said mountain there is a mosque according to their custom, which has three doors. At the foot of the said mountain there are two very beautiful reservoirs of water. One is for the caravan from Cairo, and the other for the caravan from Damascus...”

The above passage was written by Ludovico di Varthema, the first non-Muslim to ever enter the city of Makkah and witness the Hajj, in 1503. But the attraction was not limited to adventurous non-Muslims enchanted by the thrill of it all.

The great Muslim scholar-explorer Ibn Battuta spent four days in Medina before reaching Makkah, where he wore a simple white ihram and threw himself in the rituals of the Hajj. At the Kaaba, “we made around it the (seven-fold) circuit of arrival and kissed the holy Stone; we performed a prayer of two bowings at the Maqam Ibrahim and clung to the curtains of the Kaaba at the Multazam between the door and the Black Stone, where prayer is answered; we drank of the water of Zamzam... then, having run between al-Safa and al-Marwa, we took up our lodging there in a house near the Gate of Ibrahim.”

The Moroccan explorer provided an intrepid account of the Fifth Pillar of Islam from almost 700 years ago. As Arab News wrote recently of Hajj art and literature, “he is far from alone when it comes to documenting the wonders of the Hajj.” As that paper states, the annual Islamic pilgrimage is a recurrent and varied theme in art, poetry and literary essays from across the Islamic world, but nowhere more so than in travel literature. “From the Andalusian geographer Ibn Jubayr to the Spanish explorer Ali Bey El-Abbassi, the genre is rich with eloquent and descriptive texts”, most of which animate the course of the pilgrimage but bring to life the times and political context in which they took place.

“There is a rich literature on Hajj,” Arab News quotes Dr. Nuha Al-Sha’ar, an associate professor at the



“Procession of the Mahmal,” 1909 . Ludwig Deutsch.

American University of Sharjah. “Many documented their Hajj journey and therefore we have a genre of travel literature called ‘Al-Rihla Al-Hijaziyya’ — the journey to Hijaz to perform pilgrimage. We also have many travel accounts of the Hajj. The famous Ibn Battuta was first to [document performing] Hajj... and in the modern period the famous Bint Al-Shati documented her journey to Hajj [in] Ard Al-mu’jizat. Ibrahim al-Mazini also documented his Hajj journey.”

During the first half of the 14th century, the theologian and spiritual writer Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya published “The Journey of Love,” which explored the inner spiritual journey of the Hajj with its many physical challenges. The poem described Al-Jawziyya’s journey, the Kaaba, Arafat, Muzdalifah and Mina, the farewell tawaf, and his fellow pilgrims. “You see them on their mounts, hair dusty and disheveled,” he wrote. “Yet never more content, never happier have they felt/Leaving homelands and families due to holy yearning/Unmoved are they by temptations of returning/ Through plains and valleys, from near and far/Walking and riding, in submission to Allah.”

Of the Kaaba he said: “When they see His House — that magnificent sight/For which the hearts of all creatures are set alight/It seems they’ve never felt tired before/ For their discomfort and hardship is no more.”

Although central to the Muslim faith, the Hajj has also drawn writers from farther afield, from Europe and the Far East, and even from North America, home of the civil rights campaigner Malcolm X,

who made the Hajj in 1964. It was in Makkah that he discovered an Islam of universal respect and brotherhood.

“There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world,” he wrote upon his return. “They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blondes to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and the non-white.”

European writers also sought to experience the Hajj’s spectacle. The Victorian explorer, geographer and writer Sir Richard Francis Burton published his Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Makkah in 1855 after disguising himself as a dervish in order to gain access to Makkah illicitly. Another Briton, Eldon Rutter, visited Makkah and Medina between 1925 and 1926 and published The Holy Cities of Arabia in 1928. The book was launched to universal critical acclaim, although Rutter — a convert to Islam — remains an obscure figure.

Contemporary Saudi artist Maha Malluh’s work “The Road to Makkah” contrasts experiences of traveling on Hajj in the present and in the past; French artist Kader Attia’s “Black Cube II” painting series was inspired by the form of the Kaaba.

Some of the most famous visual depictions of the Hajj, however, are shown from a Western perspective. Leon Belly’s Pilgrims Going to Makkah is amongst the most celebrated and is considered a masterpiece of Orientalist painting. Completed in 1861, it is now exhibited at the Musée d’Orsay in Paris and portrays a long and compact caravan crossing the desert on its way to Makkah.

It should come as no surprise that the Hajj should occupy such an esteemed position in the arts. Being inspired by that which moves the spirit, it is no wonder that this most life-defining of spiritual experience should have taken hold of so many brilliant and diverse imaginations.



“ENGAGING THE SENSES”: ARTS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD

THE SACKLER GALLERY, WASHINGTON DC.
ONGOING

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

According to classical and Arab philosophy, the five outer senses—sound, sight, taste, touch, and smell—are directly connected to the inner senses that define us as human beings: understanding, imagination, and memory. Some works, such as manuscripts of the Qur’an, were frequently recited and viewed in public. Other creations, as the website for this stunning exhibit points out, were intended for personal enjoyment and contemplation.

“As artists, objects, and ideas moved across the Islamic world—a vast geographic span from Morocco and Spain to the islands of South-east Asia—certain formal and sensory features

spread across borders,” notes the Sackler Gallery in its write-up of its spectacular exhibit of Islamic art Engaging the Senses. “Yet each region, province, or city developed its own artistic language with rich sensory resonances.” The exhibit is an aesthetic experience of Islam from a uniquely sensual perspective.

For most Muslims, the highest form of visual art—and for some, the only spiritually meaningful one—is calligraphy, the art of beautiful writing. Calligraphy gained its preeminence from the Qur’an, God’s revelation to the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century of our era. Delivered orally in Arabic and received aurally, its verses were written in the Arabic script, first by the Prophet’s associates and later by professional scribes who tried to give reverent physical form to the immutable beauty of God’s word. Over the centuries, calligraphers developed many scripts and styles, but all Islamic cultures continue to accord great importance to beautiful writing, principally and primarily of Qur’anic scripture, but also of other literary genres.

One point of frequent confusion among non-Muslims regarding Islamic art is that it’s often said—quite incorrectly—that Islam forbids figural representation. This is simply untrue: The Qur’an itself has little to say about the subject,

except that people should not worship idols. For example, many examples of Islamic pottery are decorated with scenes of people and animals engaged in a variety of activities, like hunting, feasting, fighting, riding, and so on. Many examples of Islamic art are decorated with plants, leaves, stems and flowers. This vegetal decoration often grows according to the laws of geometry rather than the laws of nature: Stems scroll symmetrically and regularly around evenly spaced leaves and flowers. This kind of decoration is usually called arabesque, a term coined by 15th-or 16th-century Europeans who admired it and associated it with the Arab lands.

But Islamic art has been produced over 14 centuries “from the shores of the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, from the steppes of Central Asia to the savannas of Africa”, in lands where people spoke a myriad of languages but shared a common belief in the tenets of Islam and a common—if sometimes limited—knowledge of Arabic, the language of the Qur’an. With an exhibit such as “Exploring the Senses” one appreciates the full expression of this Islamic tradition in its diverse and rich array of imagery and symbolism, as beautiful to the eye as relaxing to the spirit.



A Sufi miniature depicting prayer at Mecca.



Illuminated Qur’anic manuscript from the exhibit “Engaging the Senses.”



“COMMON GROUND”: THE GROUND-BREAKING INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE MEETING

OCTOBER 2007

Edited by the editorial staff of the Journal of the Muslim World League | August 2019

On October 13, 2007, approximately 140 of the world’s leading Muslim scholars and intellectuals (including such figures as the Grand Muftis of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Oman, Bosnia, Russia, and Istanbul) sent an “Open Letter” to the world religious leaders of Christianity. The Letter was addressed to the leaders of the Christian churches and denominations of the entire world, starting with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and proposed, based on verses from the Holy Qur’an and the Holy Bible, that Islam and Christianity share, at their core, “the twin ‘golden’ commandments of the paramount importance of loving God and loving one’s neighbor.” Based on this common ground, the Letter called for peace and harmony between Christians and Muslims worldwide.

The background was as follows: On October 13th 2006, one month to the day after Pope Benedict XVI’s famous Regensburg address of September 13th 2006, 38 Islamic authorities and scholars from around the world, representing all denominations and schools of thought, joined together to deliver an answer to the Pope in the spirit of open intellectual

exchange and mutual understanding. In their Open Letter to the Pope, for the first time in recent history, Muslim scholars from every branch of Islam spoke with one voice about the true teachings of Islam.

Exactly one year after that letter, on October 13th 2007, as mentioned above, Muslims expanded their message. In A Common Word Between Us and You, those 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals have unanimously come together for the first time since the days of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) to declare the common ground between Christianity and Islam. Like the Open Letter, the signatories to this message come from every denomination and school of thought in Islam.

“Every major Islamic country or region in the world is represented in this message, which is addressed to the leaders of all the world’s churches, and indeed to all Christians everywhere,” as the movement states in its literature.

The final form of the Letter was presented at a conference in September 2007 held under the theme



H.E. Dr. Al-Issa meets with His Holiness Pope Francis in Vatican City to discuss interfaith cooperation and a pathway forward.

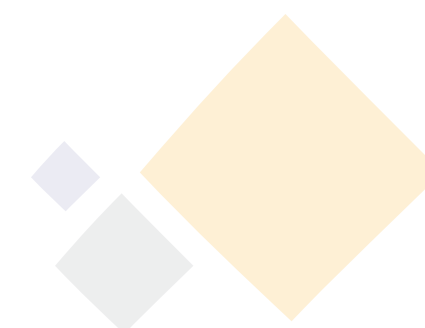
of “Love in the Quran,” by the Royal Academy of The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan, under the Patronage of H.M. King Abdullah II. Indeed, the most fundamental common ground between Islam and Christianity, and the best basis for future dialogue and understanding, is the love of God and the love of the neighbor.

“Never before have Muslims delivered this kind of definitive consensus statement on Christianity,” writes the editors of the A Common Word (ACW) website. “Rather than engage in polemic, the signatories have adopted the traditional and mainstream Islamic position of respecting the Christian scripture and calling Christians to be more, not less, faithful to it.”

This has led to a historical global peace movement between Muslims and Christians specifically. While it has not reduced wars as such between Muslims and Christians or ended mutual hatred and prejudice, it has done a lot of good, and, as one commentator noted “has noticeably changed the tone between Muslim and Christian religious leaders and somewhat deepened true understanding of each other’s religions in significant ways.”

“It is going to take leadership at all levels to change the world. No one of us has all the solutions. But together, we just might find one.”

—H.E. Sheikh Dr, Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa



A Common Word between Us and You

(Summary and Abridgement, excerpted from the ACW website)

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Muslims and Christians together make up well over half of the world's population. Without peace and justice between these two religious communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians.

The basis for this peace and understanding already exists. It is part of the very foundational principles of both faiths: love of the One God, and love of the neighbor. These principles are found over and over again in the sacred texts of Islam and Christianity. The Unity of God, the necessity of love for Him, and the necessity of love of the neighbor is thus the common ground between Islam and Christianity. The following are only a few examples:

Of God's Unity, God says in the Holy Qur'an: Say: He is God, the One! / God, the Self-Sufficient Besought of all! (Al-Ikhlās, 112:1-2). Of the necessity of love for God, God says in the Holy Qur'an: So invoke the Name of thy Lord and devote thyself to Him with a complete devotion (Al-Muzzammil, 73:8). Of the necessity of love for the neighbor, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said: "None of you has faith until you love for your neighbor what you love for yourself."

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ said: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. / And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. / And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 'There is no other commandment greater than these.' (Mark 12:29-31)

In the Holy Qur'an, God Most High enjoins Muslims to issue the following call to Christians (and Jews—the People of the Scripture):

Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him).



Aal 'Imran 3:64

The words: we shall ascribe no partner unto Him relate to the Unity of God, and the words: worship none but God, relate to being totally devoted to God. Hence they all relate to the First and Greatest Commandment. According to one of the oldest and most authoritative commentaries on the Holy Qur'an the words: that none of us shall take others for lords beside God, mean 'that none of us should obey the other in disobedience to what God has commanded'. This relates to the Second Commandment because justice and freedom of religion are a crucial part of love of the neighbor.

Thus in obedience to the Holy Qur'an, we as Muslims invite Christians to come together with us on the basis of what is common to us, which is also what is most essential to our faith and practice: the Two Commandments of love.

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, And may peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad

**A COMMON WORD
BETWEEN US AND YOU**

THE
**MUSLIM
WORLD
LEAGUE**
JOURNAL