

Rwanda Visit Advances Qur'anic Education Across Africa

U.S. Congress Honors Sheikh Al-Issa for Combating Hate

Launch of MWL's Award for Service to the Holy Qur'an

MWL Ramadan Food Baskets Reach Communities Worldwide



Secretary General at Davos

Faith in Action

رَابِطَةُ الْعَالَمِ الْإِسْلَامِيِّ

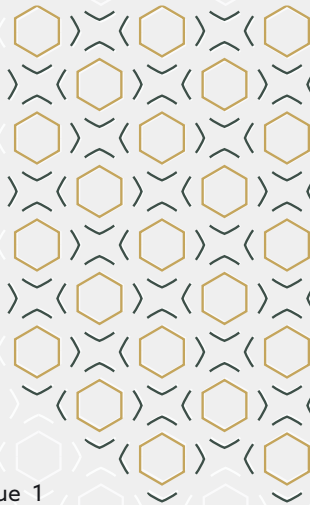
MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE



THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE JOURNAL

"All of the people are the children of Adam, and Adam was created from dust."

*Prophet Muhammad
Sunan al-Tirmidhi 3955*



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رَابِطَةُ الْعَالَمِ الْإِسْلَامِيِّ

MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْبُوعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ
بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ

أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

In the name of Allah, most Gracious and most Merciful

Invite all to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and kind advice, and only debate with them in the best manner. Surely your Lord alone knows best who has strayed from His Way and who is rightly guided.

Surah Nahel - vers. 125

Moral Leadership in a Fractured World

Today's world seems to be facing more darkness than ever. Rifts between countries, societies, and faiths are deepening, driven by conflict, displacement, climate stress, misinformation and social fragmentation. In such an uncertain landscape, technical solutions alone are not enough. What is missing, more often than not, is moral clarity – and leadership willing to act on it.

This edition of the Muslim World League Journal reflects that responsibility. Across these pages runs a simple but demanding idea: that faith must actively engage with the realities of the modern world rather than hiding behind tradition. Belief, when grounded in knowledge, and true understanding, carries obligations – to protect life, to defend dignity, and to serve the common good.

At the heart of this issue is a question that defined Sheikh Al-Issa's address at the World Economic Forum in Davos: what does religious leadership owe the world in times of conflict? His answer was unambiguous. Moral authority is not a symbolic inheritance – it is an active responsibility. To remain silent in the face of injustice is not neutrality. It is complicity. And to invoke faith in the service of violence is not conviction – it is betrayal.

That same clarity carried into Washington, where bipartisan members of the U.S. Congress honored the MWL for its work combating hate, racism and intolerance. The recognition was historic – the first of its kind extended at Capitol Hill – and it reflected something larger than an institutional tribute. It affirmed that the moder-

ate, principled voice of Islam, consistently and courageously expressed, earns credibility across divides that political actors often cannot bridge.

Africa occupies a central place in these pages. Sheikh Al-Issa's visit to the Republic of Rwanda – where the MWL presided over the graduation of 70,000 Qur'an memorizers and signed formal partnerships with the Rwandan government – demonstrated what long-term, community-rooted engagement looks like in practice. Rwanda's own journey from devastation to reconciliation offers the world a living lesson, and the MWL's deepening presence there reflects a commitment to partnership built on mutual respect rather than external prescription.

This edition also arrives during the blessed month of Ramadan, and its pages carry that spirit throughout. From food basket convoys reaching families across Africa and Asia, to the Suhoor gathering that brought together Islamic scholars and media leaders under the Charter of Building Bridges, Ramadan here is not only a season of personal devotion. It is a demonstration that faith, when organized and purposeful, translates into solidarity on a global scale.

Taken together, the contributions in this edition offer a clear message. Faith, when informed and courageous, remains a stabilizing force in uncertain times. And the moral authority of Islam carries the responsibility to speak when silence would cause harm, and to act when others hesitate.

This journal is both a record of that work and a promise to continue it. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa delivers the closing address for the religious and intellectual participation at WEF Davos Forum 2026

Sheikh Al-Issa at Davos: A Call for Moral Responsibility in Times of Conflict

Every January, Davos becomes a temporary capital of global decision-making. Set against the Swiss Alps, the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) brings together heads of state, international institutions, business leaders, academics, and civil society figures for what is often the first major diplomatic convergence of the year.

This year's conference, held from 19–23 January 2026, brought together close to 3,000 leaders from more than 130 countries, including a record 400 top political leaders and nearly 65 heads of state and government. Participation

also included representatives of key international organizations and multilateral institutions, marking one of the highest levels of governmental engagement in the Forum's history.

Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Issa, Secretary-General of the Muslim World League (MWL), was invited to deliver the closing address for the religious and intellectual participation during the WEF's official religious and intellectual dinner, a closed session attended by leading researchers, senior intellectuals, and representatives of international research centers.

Rejecting Violence and Reclaiming Moral Authority

In the main dialogue session, “The Moral Responsibility of Religious Leaders in Conflicts,” Sheikh Al-Issa positioned religious leadership as an active moral actor rather than a symbolic presence in times of war and humanitarian crisis. His remarks focused on accountability, the protection of civilians, and the ethical consequences of silence.

At the core of his intervention was a rejection of religious justification for violence. “Any text that is selectively extracted to legitimize killing is a betrayal of the text,” he said, framing the misuse of scripture as a distortion of faith rather than an expression of it. He argued that religious authority carries a responsibility to confront such distortions directly, particularly when religious language is deployed to normalize or excuse violence.

Sheikh Al-Issa linked this misuse of religious discourse to broader humanitarian consequences. “Dehumanizing the other is the first step toward every humanitarian catastrophe, and toward the chaos of our world,” he warned, describing dehumanization as a precursor to mass violence rather than a rhetorical byproduct of conflict. In this context, he emphasized that moral clarity must precede political alignment, noting that “there is no classification for innocent blood that elevates some over others.”

Affirming Universality: Justice Without Selectivity

Throughout his speech, Sheikh Al-Issa repeatedly returned to the principle of universality, arguing that ethical frameworks lose legitimacy when applied unevenly. “Justice is indivisible, and dignity

and mercy cannot be applied selectively,” he said, cautioning religious leaders against narratives that privilege one group’s suffering over another’s.

He linked selective moral reasoning to the weakening of both religious credibility and social cohesion, warning that silence in the face of injustice should not be confused with neutrality. In his words, failure to speak allows injustice to acquire moral cover rather than restraint.

Aligning Faith with International Legitimacy

Addressing the role of religious leaders within international systems, Sheikh Al-Issa called for alignment with established humanitarian and legal frameworks. He urged religious figures to support the New York Declaration, describing it as “a just and wise framework grounded in international legitimacy and humanitarian consensus.”

The declaration was issued in July by the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and France, and adopted by the UN General Assembly with a majority of 142 votes. He framed this endorsement as a practical step toward ensuring that moral language reinforces, rather than competes with, international law.

Articulating an Islamic Ethical Framework for Global Challenges

Sheikh Al-Issa affirmed that Islam, while fundamentally a monotheistic faith, is a comprehensive ethical framework centered on justice, mercy, and accountability.

“From this perspective, Islam aligns with the shared humanitari-

an principles embraced by the contemporary world, as reflected in the United Nations Charter and the international laws, norms, and conventions derived from it,” he stated. Justice, he explained, is essential not only to ethical integrity but also to social stability and the protection of rights without discrimination based on race or religious affiliation. Mercy, in turn, functions as a guiding principle for coexistence and engagement across difference.

He emphasized that Islam views the human being as an honored and accountable agent, responsible for words, actions, and choices, and that peace and tolerance form the foundation of sound human relations, with coexistence regarded as the norm rather than the exception.

From Declarations to Action: Charters, Dialogue, and Measurable Impact

Sheikh Al-Issa referenced ongoing MWL initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue and cooperation, including “Building Bridges of Understanding and Cooperation Between East and West”, which has been presented at the United Nations headquarters in New York as the first comprehensive international effort with executable programs aimed at correcting narratives of inevitable civilizational conflict, which he identified as among the drivers of hate-based practices and their consequences.

He also highlighted the Charter of Makkah, endorsed by more than 1,200 muftis and scholars and later adopted by the 57 member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The charter affirms that Muslims are active participants in global civilizational interaction, that diversity in beliefs and



Sheikh Al-Issa in a meeting with Mr. Jagan Chapagain, the Secretary-General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

schools of thought is a universal reality, and that all human beings are equal in their shared humanity and common origin.

In addition, Sheikh Al-Issa referenced the Charter of Building Bridges between Islamic Schools of Thought and Sects, under which training programs for imams and religious leaders are being implemented worldwide. Together, these frameworks seek to strengthen civilizational dialogue, clarify the innocence of religions from crimes committed in their name, and reject attempts to associate faith with violence or extremism.

He concluded by emphasizing the importance of global solidarity among peace-oriented institutions, calling for joint initiatives whose impact can be measured, refined, and sustained over time.

Bilateral Meetings on Media, Academia, Diplomacy, and Humanitarian Action

On the sidelines of the WEF, Sheikh Al-Issa held a series of bilateral meetings with leaders from media, academia, diplomacy, and humanitarian organizations.

He met with Jagan Chapagain, Secretary-General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), where discussions focused on humanitarian principles and the protection of human dignity in conflict contexts.

He also met with Pedro Vargas, Chairman of Euronews, to discuss the role of responsible media in countering dehumanization and maintaining ethical standards in conflict coverage. A separate meeting with Lord William Hague, Chancellor-elect of the University

of Oxford, focused on the role of academic institutions in sustaining civilizational dialogue and ethical leadership.

Additional meetings included Wolfgang Amadeus Brühlhart, Swiss Special Envoy for the Middle East and North Africa, and Princess Beatrice of York, with discussions addressing humanitarian principles, dialogue, and public interest in faith-based approaches to coexistence and social responsibility.

The sessions and meetings reflected the MWL's continued participation in international dialogue alongside governmental, humanitarian, academic, and media institutions. As part of the Forum's program, this engagement underscored the role of religious actors in contributing ethical perspectives to multilateral discussions on peace, coexistence, and the protection of civilian life. ■



U.S. Congress honors Sheikh Al-Issa for his efforts in combating hate

Historic US Congressional Honor for Combating Hate

Bipartisan members of the U.S. Congress honored Sheikh Al-Issa at the US Capitol in Washington, D.C. on February 10, 2026, with members from both the House of Representatives and the Senate signing a certificate commending the MWL's role in strengthening social cohesion and countering racism and intolerance that threaten the dignity and security of followers of different religions and ethnicities. The certificate highlighted the league's international efforts to counter racist attitudes and hate-driven narratives that threaten the security and dignity of people of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds.

Leaders from the Muslim community who attended the ceremony described the recognition as an honor

for the wider Muslim community in the US, noting that it marked a first-of-its-kind event at the Capitol. Commenting on the honor, Al-Issa said the efforts being recognized reflected Islamic values that call for global peace and harmony within societies. He reaffirmed the MWL's commitment to promoting constructive dialogue and cooperation to foster greater understanding and awareness. He added that embracing diversity and engaging with differences through reasoned and civilized dialogue, rather than conflict, remained central to the league's work in addressing global challenges related to intolerance and division. Al-Issa described the recognition as an affirmation of Islamic values that call for peace and harmony across societies. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa delivers a lecture at George Washington University on “Hatred and Islamic Values Toward Followers of Religions and Ethnicities”

Promoting Human Dignity at George Washington University

On February 16, 2026, Sheikh Al-Issa delivered a lecture at George Washington University in Washington, hosted by University President Ellen M. Granberg and attended by academics, students, and representatives of leading research centers. His address and the discussion that followed examined the concept of hatred in its broadest sense, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding hostility toward followers of different religions and ethnicities, and the ways in which such hostility undermines humanity and fundamental rights.

At this prestigious platform, Sheikh Al-Issa emphasized that human dignity is a foundational principle of Islamic values and that Islamic Shariah strictly prohibits any violation of it. He stated that “Islamic texts provide no justification for racial hatred; rather, they condemn it as a form of Jahiliya – a state

of moral, civilizational, and spiritual ignorance.” He described hatred as a dangerous set of negative emotions that often escalate into racist behavior.

Sheikh Al-Issa added that anyone who failed to respect the humanity of others was, in a sense, hating themselves, whether they realized it or not, and stressed that humanity, in its shared origin, is indivisible. He cited the Qur’anic verse: “And indeed We have honored the Children of Adam” (Qur’an 17:70), affirming the Islamic belief in every individual’s inherent right to dignity.

Addressing hatred at its roots, Sheikh Al-Issa said, requires early prevention across all platforms of influence, especially families and educational institutions, so that awareness becomes instinctive, surpassing the impact of laws, which remain crucial. He stressed that combating hatred is a shared international responsibility grounded in solidarity. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa launches the MWL's Award for Service to the Holy Qur'an

Launch of MWL's Award for Service to the Holy Qur'an in Makkah

On 28 February, Sheikh Al-Issa formally launched the MWL's Award for Service to the Holy Qur'an at the headquarters of the organization in Makkah. The announcement was made during the inauguration of the Second Coordination Forum for Global Digital Qur'anic Maqri', a gathering focused on strengthening international cooperation in Qur'anic education and digital recitation initiatives.

The award, structured across nine specialized categories, seeks to recognize and promote excellence in Qur'anic recitation, teaching, and scholarship worldwide. It is designed to support practitioners and institutions working across the full ecosystem of Qur'anic learning, including re-

citers, educators, Qur'anic academies, research specialists in Tajweed and Qira'at sciences, as well as global centers and digital platforms delivering remote Qur'anic instruction.

Beyond recognition, the initiative aims to encourage professional development within Qur'anic education and to strengthen institutional capacity in accordance with established academic and pedagogical standards. The award operates under clearly defined scientific and regulatory criteria aligned with the MWL's governance framework, with implementation carried out in coordination with relevant national authorities to ensure credibility, consistency, and transparency across participating countries. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa is welcomed at Kigali International Airport by H.E. Dominique Habimana, Minister of Local Government, and H. E. Sheikh Sindayigaya Musa, the Grand Mufti of Rwanda

Visit to Rwanda: Promoting Qur'anic Education and Peaceful Coexistence

As the holy month of Ramadan commenced, Sheikh Al-Issa traveled to the Republic of Rwanda for a three-day official visit in February 2026 — a fitting setting for a season defined by reflection and renewal.

He was received at Kigali International Airport by His Excellency Dominique Habimana, Minister of Local Government, and His Excellency Sheikh Sindayigaya Musa, Grand Mufti of Rwanda, alongside a number of Rwandan scholars. Sheikh Al-Issa praised Rwanda as “a model for building a society rooted in forgiveness and

shared purpose,” and confirmed that the MWL will continue partnering with the country to promote peace and positive relations worldwide.

Ramadan Iftar with the Muslim Community

Sheikh Al-Issa’s visit opened with a Ramadan Iftar hosted by the Muslim community of Rwanda at the Kigali Convention Centre. The gathering brought together several African scholars and ministers of the Rwandan government, creating a symbolic convergence of religious leadership and civic authority around the Iftar table.

Addressing an audience of over 300 participants, including 160 Qur'an teachers, Sheikh Al-Issa delivered a keynote speech emphasizing the role of religious education in fostering moderate values.

On behalf of the Rwandan government, Minister Habimana emphasized that Rwanda remains committed to hosting and collaborating with international organizations that support sustainable development and cooperation grounded in mutual respect.

Honoring 70,000 Male and Female Memorizers of the Holy Qur'an

In a landmark celebration of religious education, Sheikh Al-Issa presided over the graduation of 70,000 male and female memorizers of the Holy Qur'an at a ceremony held in Kigali. He was joined by the Grand Mufti of the Republic of Rwanda, alongside a distinguished assembly of scholars, students, ministers, and officials, to honor graduates who had completed memorization of the Holy Qur'an through programs supervised by the MWL across several countries, particularly across Africa.

In his opening remarks, Sheikh Al-Issa reaffirmed that the MWL's activities are carried out in full coordination with the governments of the countries in which it operates. "The League teaches and educates," he stated, inviting all stakeholders to observe the outcomes of its Qur'anic institutes and centers and to benefit from what he described as "a distinguished international model in Qur'an memorization, teaching, and student development."

The ceremony featured a visual presentation of the MWL's institutes and an honoring of outstanding memorizers and educators, whose Qur'anic



Sheikh Al-Issa Attends the Ramadan Iftar of the Muslim Community in Rwanda



Sheikh Al-Issa attends the graduation of 70,000 male and female memorizers of the Holy Qur'an in Rwanda



Sheikh Al-Issa witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the MWL and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Rwanda

journeys and leadership roles after graduation were highlighted as a testament to the transformative power of Islamic education. Speaking on behalf of the graduates, Dr. Abkar Waler Madou commended the MWL for its efforts to educate Muslims and spread the principles of moderation across the world.

Championing Rwanda's Reconciliation Model

The scholarly dimension of the visit deepened with Sheikh Al-Issa's participation as Guest of Honor in the African Forum on Peaceful Coexistence and the Rwanda Experience, attended by religious leaders, scholars, intellectuals, and academics from across Africa. The forum placed Rwanda's extraordinary post-genocide journey of reconciliation at the center of continental

reflection, drawing on its model of forgiveness, unity, and national reconstruction as a living framework for conflict resolution. Sheikh Al-Issa praised Rwanda's model of post-conflict reconciliation as "a beacon of hope" for the world and stated that "only through contact can we re-plant the seeds of mutual respect, communal empathy, and authentic coexistence." The forum affirmed that the Rwandan experience carries universal lessons for religious and civic leaders seeking to transform the legacies of division into enduring frameworks of peace, and that the continent's scholars have a distinctive responsibility to lead that transformation.

Steering the Council of African Scholars

Another significant institutional en-

agement saw Sheikh Al-Issa presiding over the second meeting of the Council of African Scholars, established under the MWL's auspices to coordinate Islamic scholarship across the continent. The session focused on two priorities: enhancing religious awareness among youth, and adopting scientific metrics to measure program effectiveness. A central agenda item was the implementation of the Charter of Makkah within religious education curricula and training programs across Africa, approved during the Council's first meeting.

The Council also endorsed incorporating the Charter on Building Bridges between Islamic Schools of Thought and Sects into these efforts. Sheikh Al-Issa underscored that the MWL's programs protect



Sheikh Al-Issa delivers Friday sermon and leads worshippers in prayer at the Grand Mosque in Rwanda

Muslim youth “from falling prey to extremist organizations” and that measurable, government-supervised programs form the foundation of the League’s credibility. On the sidelines, he visited the Kigali Genocide Memorial to pay tribute to the victims of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi, reinforcing the MWL’s commitment to the principle of “Never Again.”

Formalizing a Long-Term Partnership with Rwanda

Several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed between the MWL and official bodies in Rwanda, formalizing the institutional outcomes of the visit. The agreements cover three areas: advancing the objectives of the Charter of Makkah within Rwanda’s religious and educational landscape;

promoting the Arabic language in coordination with Rwandan institutions; and supporting a project to restore the homes of widows.

One MOU was concluded between the MWL and the Government of Rwanda, focusing on social development and intellectual exchange, and a second with the Rwanda Muslim Community (RMC), aimed at enhancing the capacity of local religious leadership. Together, the agreements give institutional expression to Sheikh Al-Issa’s confirmation that the MWL will “continue partnering with Rwanda to promote peace and positive relations worldwide.”

Leading Friday Prayer at Rwanda’s Largest Mosque

The visit concluded on Friday with

Sheikh Al-Issa delivering the sermon and leading Friday prayer at the Al-Fath Onatracom Mosque in Biryogo, the largest mosque in Rwanda, before thousands of worshippers. The sermon addressed contemporary Islamic issues and underscored the values that guide Muslims in their interactions with others, emphasizing that these values reflect the noble character with which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent.

Sheikh Al-Issa extended congratulations on the advent of Ramadan and affirmed that “Islam instructs us to build coexistence among all faiths, cultures, ethnicities, and sects” and that “peace and tolerance form the foundation of sound human relations, with coexistence regarded as the norm rather than the exception.” ■



Sheikh Al-Issa alongside dignitaries at the MWL Ramadan Suhoor Event

Ramadan Suhoor Event Celebrates Charter of Building Bridges Between Islamic Schools of Thought and Sects

During the blessed nights of Ramadan, the MWL hosted a Suhoor gathering that doubled as a significant moment in contemporary Islamic media discourse.

Organized in partnership with the Union of News Agencies of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the event brought together an impressive cross-section of religious scholars, intellectuals, senior news agency officials from Islamic and friendly nations, and international journalists — all convened under the banner of the “Conference on Building Bridges Between Islamic Schools of Thought and Sects.”

At the heart of the gathering was the Charter of Building Bridges, a historic scholarly consensus that moves beyond theological debate toward practical cooperation among diverse Islamic schools of thought and sects. Sheikh Al-Issa addressed attendees, underscoring the charter’s role in forging a unified Islamic media voice capable of confronting extremism and sectarianism with clarity, credibility, and shared purpose.

The MWL’s commitment to this vision extends well beyond the charter itself. Following the founding conference, the MWL adopted a Strategic and



Sheikh Al-Issa observing MWL digital initiatives with attendees

Implementation Plan to guide its realization, published and circulated the Encyclopedia of Islamic Intellectual Consensus, and established the Coordination Council between Islamic Schools of Thought — a body comprising scholars and researchers from the founding conference who represent the full diversity of Islamic schools and sects. Together, these initiatives reflect the MWL's determination to translate scholarly consensus into lasting institutional action.

Participants at the Suhoor gathering widely praised this approach, affirming that responsible media — particu-

larly through the OIC's credible international institutions — has a vital role in carrying this message to the Muslim world and beyond. The charter, they noted, offers international media a reliable reference point drawn from a trusted and authoritative source.

The evening also marked the launch of “The Charter of Makkah: A Message of Moderation and Tolerance to the World – Global Presence and Civilizational Impact Across Continents,” further cementing the MWL's gathering as a milestone in the ongoing effort to project a coherent, moderate Islamic vision to global audiences. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa presenting award for Media Professionalism to the Palestinian News Agency “WAFA”



HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Convoys dispatched by MWL to the Republic of Djibouti during the month of Ramadan

MWL Delivers Ramadan Food Baskets to Communities Worldwide



Under the leadership of Sheikh Al-Issa, the MWL continues its global mission of compassion during the holy month of Ramadan, distributing food baskets to families in need — from Djibouti to Malawi and beyond. Upholding its enduring legacy of solidarity and generosity, MWL ensures that vulnerable families are sustained and supported throughout this blessed month of giving.

Throughout Ramadan 2026, these distributions provided essential staple foods to households facing economic hardship, food insecurity, or displacement, ensuring families are able to observe the holy month with dignity and stability. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa meets H.E. Sheikh Abdul Khabir Azad, Chairman of Pakistan's Organization of Imams and Council of Scholars

MWL and Pakistan's Grand Imam Advance Scholarly Coordination on Religious Leadership

At the headquarters of the MWL in Makkah on 2 March, Sheikh Al-Issa received H.E. Sheikh Abdul Khabir Azad for a high-level meeting aimed at strengthening scholarly cooperation and institutional coordination between global and Pakistani religious leadership. Sheikh Azad serves as Grand Imam of the Badshahi Mosque, Chairman of Pakistan's Organization of Imams and Council of Scholars, and head of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The engagement focused on issues of mutual interest relating to religious scholarship, institutional

collaboration, and the role of responsible religious leadership in promoting unity, moderation, and social cohesion across Muslim societies. Discussions also reflected shared priorities in advancing coordinated scholarly engagement on matters affecting Muslim communities globally, including religious guidance, community harmony, and the strengthening of credible religious institutions.

The meeting underscored the MWL's continued efforts under Sheikh Al-Issa's leadership to deepen partnerships with national scholarly bodies and reinforce constructive dialogue among leading Islamic institutions worldwide. ■

DISCUSSION



Sheikh Al-Issa participates in a discussion session on 'Shaping the Islamic Personality', attended by scholars, dignitaries, thought leaders, and members of the media

Addressing Islamic Character Formation at Makkah Platform

Mirkaz Al-Balad Al-Ameen, a prominent communication platform in Makkah dedicated to dialogue, knowledge exchange, and strategic partnerships aligned with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, hosted Sheikh Al-Issa for a discussion session on "Shaping the Islamic Personality." The event brought together esteemed scholars, dignitaries, thought leaders, and members of the media in the holy city of Makkah.

During the session, Sheikh Al-Issa addressed the foundational principles that shape Islamic character and identity in contemporary times, examining how Islamic values inform personal conduct, social responsibility, and engagement with the broader world. The discussion explored the integration of authentic Islamic teachings with modern challenges facing Muslim communities, emphasising the importance of cultivating a balanced Islamic personality rooted in knowledge, moral integrity,

and active contribution to society.

Sheikh Al-Issa cautioned against the dangers of moral complicity in an age of rampant misinformation, stating that "the enemy, the malicious, and the criminal rely on spreading false rumors, and whoever carries such rumors becomes an accomplice."

The session underscored the role of educational institutions, families, and religious scholars in nurturing individuals who embody Islamic values while engaging constructively with diverse communities and contemporary realities. It further affirmed that Islamic character formation is not a passive inheritance but an active, ongoing process — one requiring deliberate cultivation across every sphere of life. The gathering reflected the MWL's ongoing commitment to promoting moderate Islamic thought and character development through intellectual discourse and scholarly engagement at platforms rooted in Makkah's unique heritage. ■



STATEMENT

Sheikh Al-Issa with Nobel laureate Malala Yousufzai at MWL's International Conference on Girls' Education hosted in Islamabad, Pakistan in January 2025

Affirming Women's Rights and Dignity in Islam

On March 8, Sheikh Al-Issa issued a statement clarifying the true status of women in Islam and explaining how Islamic Sharia has preserved their dignity and protected their fundamental rights.

The statement coincided with the 115th observance of International Women's Day, which carried dual themes this year: "Give to Gain" from the official International Women's Day campaign, and "Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls" from the United Nations.

The occasion also aligned with the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, focusing on ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls worldwide.

Sheikh Al-Issa emphasized that Islamic teachings grant women inherent dignity and inalienable rights rooted in divine revelation.

He articulated how Islamic Sharia establishes le-

gal protections for women's rights to education, property ownership, financial independence, and participation in public life, countering misconceptions that Islamic law restricts women's fundamental freedoms.

Quoting the Holy Prophet (PBUH) who said that women are counterparts of men, Sheikh Al-Issa added, "Islamic law does not limit a woman's rights in comparison to those of men... this encompasses financial independence and non-interference in their personal affairs, it also includes the right to earn a living, pursue education, and more.

The statement built upon the MWL's recent initiatives promoting girls' education, including the landmark Islamabad Declaration of January 2025, which established an irrevocable right to education for all Muslim girls with support from senior scholars, jurisprudential councils, and international organizations. ■



RAMADAN EVENT

Sheikh Al-Issa delivers video address at Ramadan Iftar hosted by MWL at the U.S. Congress

MWL Hosts Ramadan Iftar at the U.S. Congress for Second Consecutive Year

For the second consecutive year, the MWL organized a Ramadan Iftar at the United States Congress in Washington, D.C. — an initiative that represents a historic milestone and continues the organization’s tradition of hosting Iftars across both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. The event was attended by American legislators, religious figures, and civil society leaders from across the United States.

In a video address to the assembly, Sheikh Al-Issa underscored the necessity of fostering global cooperation to uphold the values of coexistence and harmony, as well as combating hate speech and discrimination. He remarked that the holy month

of Ramadan serves as a vital occasion to reflect on the Islamic principles of tolerance, strengthen social solidarity, and reinforce universal human values.

The gathering reaffirmed the MWL’s role as a convener of meaningful dialogue at the highest levels of American public life. It forms part of a broader series of Ramadan Iftars the MWL has organized across the globe this year — including in Madrid, Spain, and Jakarta, Indonesia — reflecting the organization’s continued commitment to building bridges of understanding between Muslim communities and people of all faiths and backgrounds worldwide. ■



American legislators, religious figures, and civil society leaders gather at the U.S. Congress for the MWL-hosted Ramadan Iftar

ART & CULTURE



Contemporary Islamic
Geometric Design as a
Living Tradition



An ornate Moroccan fountain clad in hand-cut zillij tiles, where countless starbursts and rosettes radiate outward in perfect symmetry — a living testament to the precision and beauty of Islamic geometry

By
**Ghada
Qureshi**

Across a millennium of shifting empires and technologies, one art form has remained a constant expression of unity in diversity: Islamic geometry. From the hand-cut zillij tiles of Fez and the luminous domes of Samarkand

to the tessellated walls of the Alhambra and, today, algorithmic patterns on digital screens, the same stars and polygons continue to appear, reshaped by each era's tools yet faithful to a shared heritage. What began as artisans working with compass and



Detail of a zillij mosaic, with vivid blues, greens, and terracottas forming interlocking sunburst motifs. Each fragment is cut and placed by hand, creating a kaleidoscopic whole that captures both craftsmanship and cosmology

chisel became a visual language shared across the Islamic world, adorning Persian madrasas, Ottoman domes, and Mughal palaces. It is a tradition that has traveled widely, adapted endlessly, and still speaks with clarity: harmony, order, and unity expressed through infinite variation.

For example, a family of star-based tiles used since medieval times in Morocco (where it's called zillij) and in Andalusia (alicatado) continues to inspire artists – those very shapes are still cut by hand in workshops of Fez today. Any traveler wandering from Cairo to Kashgar could identify the kinship: countless variations of circles, stars, and rosettes, all repeating across wood,

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Every geometric artwork is a visual allegory for unity in diversity. Countless individual parts contribute to one beauty, much as stars in a pattern all circle around a single center.

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stucco, and ceramic, composing a great mosaic that spanned the Islamic world.

Its influence also reached far beyond Islamic lands. When Dutch artist M.C. Escher visited the Alhambra in the 1920s, he was

captivated by its tessellations of stars and polygons. He sketched them obsessively, later transforming their logic into his own iconic works of interlocking birds, fish, and lizards. For Escher, as for the artisans of Granada, pattern was



Muqarnas vault with blue tilework, Persia with geometric and floral patterns in glazed ceramic

a way of exploring infinity and order. His journey is a reminder that Islamic geometry, though rooted in faith, also speaks a universal artistic language.

Rooted in Faith and Philosophy

The Islamic affinity for abstract pattern has roots that extend deep into faith and philosophy. Since the earliest years, religious art in Muslim lands eschewed figural images – a reflection of aniconism, the avoidance of idolatry. But what began as a restriction blossomed into a creative philosophy. Muslim thinkers came to see geometric art as a window into deeper truths.

Islamic scholars and artists have noted that the perfection of geometric forms could reflect the perfec-



Iran, ca. 1300-1400, Cuerda seca technique, Collection Gemeentemuseum Den Haag

tion of the cosmos. The circle, for instance, has been described as the “primordial symbol of unity” – an emblem of tawhīd, the oneness of



M.C. Escher, Path of Life I, woodcut in red and black

God, and the source from which all diverse creation unfolds. Repeating patterns of stars and polygons, expanding toward infinity, hint at



King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), Dhahran, Saudi Arabia — contemporary architecture inspired by regional landscapes and heritage

an infinite Creator. As contemporary artist Timo Nasser observes, when we look at Islamic patterns “what we have is a cut-out of the infinite... it can go on forever”. In these interlocking designs without end, one senses order, harmony, and the divine unity that underlies a world of many forms.

A Living Tradition, Reimagined

Crucially, this tradition is not locked in the past – it is alive and flourishing in modern creativity. In historic cities like Fez and Isfahan, the old guild techniques continue: artisans still hand-cut ceramic tiles and carve plaster in geometries their ancestors would recognize.

Their workmanship graces new mosques, homes and cultural cen-

ters, proving that the demand for this age-old beauty remains.

At the same time, visionary architects are translating Islamic geometry for the 21st century. Using digital design tools, they create intricate mashrabiyya screens and facades with previously impossible precision.

The recently built King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, for example, reinterprets familiar Islamic forms in futuristic materials – its cluster of rounded forms suggests abstracted domes and dunes, clad in sleek steel and glass that shimmer under the desert sun. Other contemporary mosques and museums, from Abu Dhabi to London, weave traditional patterns into modern

architecture – sometimes in bold displays, other times as subtle geometric motifs that catch the light. Even in minimalist designs, architects often speak of invoking the same spiritual principles, reflecting tawhīd (divine unity) through simplicity and purity of form.

Modern artists are also finding new ways to let these patterns speak. British artist Zarah Hussain, for instance, fuses classical Islamic geometry with cutting-edge technology. “There is a very interesting relationship between generative, computer-programmed art and Islamic art,” she explains, noting that in both “patterns and numbers underlie everything.” In her digital installations, star and flower motifs dance and morph in never-ending

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Today, these patterns remind us that a world of different peoples, cultures, and voices can form a balanced whole when aligned by shared values.

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A creation from Sahand Hesamiyan contemporary Iranian sculptor reinterpreting Islamic geometric forms in large-scale metal works

motion, generated by algorithms so that the composition never repeats the same way twice – a modern echo of the tradition’s obsession with infinity.

In Saudi Arabia, the inaugural Islamic Arts Biennale in 2023 even featured workshops where participants used AI tools to reimagine ancient patterns in futuristic digital artworks.

Painters and sculptors across the Muslim world likewise draw inspiration from sacred geometry: some incorporate Arabic calligraphy into geometric compositions, while others, like sculptor Sahand Hesamiyan of Iran, fabricate large-scale star patterns in steel that cast lattice shadows on gallery walls.

Through such works, the age-old motifs find fresh life on canvas, code, and in public spaces. The effect is

consistently mesmerizing – even in ultramodern forms, Islamic geometric design retains its power to evoke wonder and contemplation.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Islamic geometric art is how its message speaks to universal human values. The art is fundamentally about unity and harmony. A pattern may contain dozens of different shapes and colors, but they all follow one underlying logic, fitting together as a coherent whole.

Diversity of form does not lead to chaos; it leads to a higher order. In this way, every geometric artwork is a visual allegory for unity in diversity. Countless individual parts contribute to one beauty, much as stars in a pattern all circle around a single center.

It is a principle rooted in faith: the unity of the Divine manifest-

ing through the multiplicity of creation. Today, these patterns remind us that a world of different peoples, cultures, and voices can form a balanced whole when aligned by shared values.

This is not merely a metaphor; it is reflected in the very work of the MWL. Just as artisans bring countless fragments together into a coherent pattern, MWL convenes diverse schools of thought, nations, and communities to build harmony from difference. Its dialogues and initiatives mirror the logic of geometry itself: order without uniformity, unity without erasure.

Through this approach, MWL demonstrates how enduring peace is crafted not by eliminating difference, but by aligning it toward a common moral center, where plurality strengthens rather than fractures the whole. ■

FEATURES



The Al-Hazmi Mosque in Nigeria House of Light

By
Holly Cave
Michal Pawlak

Some buildings carry more than stone and paint. They carry intention. The Al-Hazmi Mosque in Nigeria is such a building. Modest in cost, plain in design, but deep in significance, it stands as both a sanctuary for worship and a symbol of how faith, when guided

by service, takes root in daily life.

The mosque occupies just over 400 square meters, large enough to hold around 550 worshippers. Its walls are painted in quiet tones, its arches frame the entrances with simplicity, and its minaret rises as a familiar landmark in the town.

“ In Nigeria, a nation with one of the largest Muslim populations in Africa, mosques are deeply regarded as centres of education, stability, and identity. ”

There is nothing extravagant in its lines or finish. The cost of construction, around 360,000 riyals, or just under one hundred thousand dollars, was carefully invested to create durability and comfort rather than grandeur. This is a house built to be lived in, prayed in, and relied upon.

Inside, the space is practical and calm. A pulpit ensures that sermons reach every ear, shelves line the walls with copies of the Qur’an, and ceiling fans stir the air. Windows allow natural light to soften the room. Carpets bear the weight of countless prostrations, while the courtyard outside becomes an extension of the prayer hall when the faithful gather under open skies. Every design decision reflects function, community, and continuity.

In Nigeria, a nation with one of the



Al-Hazmi Mosque through the construction phase

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Worshippers fill the main hall of the mosque for a sermon

largest Muslim populations in Africa, mosques are deeply regarded as centers of education, stability, and identity. The Al-Hazmi Mosque already fulfils that role. Children learn their first verses of the Qur'an within its walls, elders gather for rest and reflection, neighbors meet and exchange news in its courtyard. In towns and villages across the country, such spaces offer cohesion in lives marked by movement and struggle.

The story of this mosque cannot be told without reference to the Muslim World League. The MWL played a central part in making the project possible, not only by mobilizing financial support but also by ensuring that the building was aligned with its wider vision. The choice to support reflects the

MWL's origins in the Gulf and the global partnerships it has cultivated over decades – partnerships that continue to sustain efforts like this. Yet the MWL's contribution is not confined to accounting but to translating its philosophy into bricks and mortar.

The MWL is guided by three priorities. We seek to clarify the true image of Islam, often distorted by extremism or misrepresentation. We strive to promote unity among Muslims, encouraging moderation and tolerance rather than division. And we work to provide humanitarian service, in health, education, and relief, as an expression of Islamic ethics.

A mosque like Al-Hazmi represents all three. It is a place where the im-

age of Islam is lived through daily prayer and fellowship. It brings Muslims together under one roof, irrespective of background. And it delivers a humanitarian service in the simplest form: a space for dignity, teaching, and community.

This philosophy is not confined to Nigeria. Across Africa and Asia, the MWL has invested in projects that blend faith and service. It has cared for orphans in Sudan, brought solar energy to villages in Kenya, and supported schools in Pakistan, Chad, and Afghanistan.

Each context is different, but the principle is the same. Faith must move outward, meeting people where they are and addressing what they most need. In that sense, the mosque in Nigeria is one local



expression of a global pattern.

The MWL's Charter of Makkah captures this spirit in words, calling for moderation, peaceful co-existence, and cooperation. The Al-Hazmi Mosque embodies that charter in practice.

It is not designed as a statement of wealth or power but as a center for moderation and cohesion. Its very scale, restrained and thoughtful, underlines that message. In a world where religious spaces are too often politicized or used as markers of competition, this mosque reflects how a faith that serves, heals, and binds together.

For the community that now gathers beneath its roof, the significance is immediate. It is a place where spiritual duties are met,

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Al-Hazmi Mosque serves as witness to a vision of faith that is lived in service to others.

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but also where trust is built. A boy will grow into a man while learning within its walls. A traveler will pause to rest in its shade. An elder will find comfort in its quiet corners. For them, this is not an international initiative. It is daily life, given structure and dignity.

For the MWL, the Al-Hazmi Mosque is another step in a long journey to build trust, promote moderation, and anchor communities through service. By investing

in such projects, the MWL demonstrates that development must be measured in the moral and social fabric that binds people together.

When dawn breaks and the call to prayer drifts through the Harmattan air, the Al-Hazmi Mosque becomes what it was intended to be: a house of light. It serves as witness to a vision of faith that is lived in service to others. And in that light, generations in Nigeria will find their way. ■

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لِّئِنَّا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى ﴿٤٤﴾

Gentle Speech as a Path to Dialogue

Reflections from Surah Tāhā (20:44)

By
Mashal
Imran

There is a striking moment in the Qur'an that reads like a scene set for a stage.

Two men are preparing to confront the most powerful ruler of their age. He controls armies, monuments, and the very definition of truth in his land. Into his court, Allah sends Moses and his brother Aaron. Their mission is as bold as it is dangerous: tell Pharaoh that he has transgressed, and demand that he releases the Children of Is-

rael from bondage.

It is a mission loaded with risk. Pharaoh is not a leader known for patience. His court is not a forum for dissent. Yet the Qur'an describes the moment not with battle, not with fury, but with an instruction about tone. "And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]." (20:44).

This verse, nestled in the heart of Surah Tāhā, is more than a line of dialogue in a



story. It is a study in communication, diplomacy, and moral courage. It teaches that the manner of speaking is inseparable from the truth being spoken. It shows that even in the hardest rooms, gentleness is not weakness. It is strategy, principle, and hope fused together. For a world still struggling with conflict and division, it remains one of the Qur'an's powerful and lasting lessons.

The Setting of the Verse

Moses is called at the burning bush, shown miracles as signs, and given Aaron as his partner. When he hesitates, worried about his speech and his reception, Allah reassures him: "Fear not. Indeed, I am with you both; I hear and I see." (20:46).

By the time Moses and Aaron are standing at the gates of Pharaoh's palace, the instruction is clear: truth must be spoken, but it must be

spoken in a way that leaves a door open. The message is direct – end oppression, release the Children of Israel – but the delivery must be gentle. The Qur'an gives us, in just a few verses, a complete playbook for high-stakes engagement: mission clarity, recognition of risk, reassurance of support, calibrated tone, and a specific ask.

The Weight of "Gentle Speech"

The Arabic phrase in the verse is *qawlan layyinān*. It is compact but loaded with meaning. *Qawl* is not casual chatter; it is speech with purpose and direction. *Layyin* conveys softness, suppleness, ease. Together they mean speech that is clear but pliant, words that can be received without immediate resistance. Classical scholars explain that this gentleness does not dilute truth. Instead, it disarms arrogance and reduces defensiveness.

Al-Jalalayn, the classical commentary, notes that the purpose of this manner was to keep alive even the faintest chance that Pharaoh might take heed. Al-Tabarī records an early report that Moses was instructed to use respectful forms of address, showing that gentleness included the etiquette of speech as much as tone. Ibn Kathīr highlights that gentleness is both an ethical requirement and a strategic tool. The command acknowledges that Pharaoh may never change, but the messengers must still speak in the way most likely to touch his heart.

This is a radical moment. Pharaoh is not met with insults, but with carefully chosen words. God Himself dictates tone as a matter of mission. The instruction turns communication into a moral act, one that is part of prophecy itself.

Why Speak Gently to Pharaoh?

The natural instinct when confronting oppression is anger. Anger feels righteous, especially when the injustice is deep. Yet the verse insists that anger is not the starting point. Gentleness is.

There are reasons for this. First, harshness entrenches pride in the one who receives it and makes them likely to dig in deeper, if only to save face before those present. Gentle speech lowers the cost of listening. It leaves room for concession without humiliation. Second, Pharaoh's court was full of attendants, servants, and officials, and the way Moses and Aaron spoke was itself a testimony to them. Courteous firmness showed that truth did not need fury to stand tall. Third, gentleness protects the messengers themselves. It disciplines their mission. It prevents their fear or frustration from spilling into words that could sabotage their purpose.

Gentleness in this sense is not appeasement. The demand is firm: end the oppression. The ask is clear. What is softened is not the content, but the delivery.

The Dual Hope: Remembrance or Mindfulness

The verse gives two possible outcomes for Pharaoh: that he may remember (*yathakkar*) or become mindful (*yakhshā*). Remembrance is the awakening of conscience. It is the recognition of truths long buried. Mindfulness is the fear or awe that comes from realizing one is accountable to a higher power.

Both outcomes are framed as hopes, not certainties. The language is conditional – perhaps. This shows a profound realism. Communication cannot guarantee transforma-

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tion. What it can do is maximize the chance for awakening. Gentle speech keeps that chance alive.

This dual aim is still relevant today. Diplomacy is often about planting reminders in the minds of leaders who know better, while also awakening a sense of accountability to law, morality, or public opinion. In both cases, tone determines whether the message can be received at all.

Lessons for Today's World

The power of Verse 20:44 in Surah Tāhā is that it reads like advice for our own fractured moment.

Around the world, dialogue across differences has grown strained. Social media fuels outrage. Faith communities often face hostility or suspicion.

In this environment, the Qur'anic command to "speak gently" offers a vital reminder that meaningful engagement begins with the tone we choose. That courage and courtesy are not opposites, but allies. And that even when facing power that seems immovable, gentleness remains the prophetic choice.

We can extract several living lessons for our day-to-day lives from this verse.

First, anchor your voice in clarity of mission. Moses and Aaron were not improvising. They had a mandate: free the oppressed. When we speak without clarity, tone wobbles. When we know why we are speaking, gentleness has strength behind it.

Second, acknowledge fear but don't let it dictate your words. Moses feared Pharaoh's aggression. The Qur'an records it openly. Yet reassurance steadied him. We too must admit our fears – of rejection, hos-

tility, or ridicule – but then lean on purpose to guide our delivery.

Third, separate content from tone. The message was firm, but the delivery was soft. Too often today we fuse them together, thinking that strong words require a harsh tone. The Qur'an shows otherwise: the strongest truths can be spoken calmly.

Fourth, always leave a door open. Pharaoh may never have walked through it, but the door was not slammed shut. That posture matters. In our dealings with others, gentleness keeps the possibility of change alive.

A Modern Mirror

Imagine the Pharaoh scene transposed into a contemporary setting of high-stakes dialogue. Every word

matters. What tone should guide such an encounter?

The Qur'anic guidance is clear: speak firmly, but with gentleness. Begin with a reminder that appeals to conscience. State the ask in plain terms. Avoid insult. Project confidence without aggression.

This does not guarantee transformation, but it maximizes credibility. It strengthens the moral force of the speaker. And it signals to the watching world that truth does not need rage to be heard.

This is precisely what faith-based diplomacy means. It is not silence, nor is it stridency. It is speech that models dignity, that appeals to the best in the listener, and that keeps dialogue open even when disagreement is deep.





“ *Our responsibility is not to mirror arrogance with anger. Our responsibility is to speak in the way that truth deserves; firm, dignified, and gentle.* ”

The Challenge of Practicing Gentleness

Of course, gentleness is not easy. It requires inner discipline. It requires the ability to separate anger from responsibility. It requires patience in the face of provocation. For many of us, this is the hardest part of communication. Yet the Qur'an frames it as divine instruction, not optional courtesy.

That means it is part of worship when the intent is to follow God's command. When we control tone, we are not only serving the strategy of dialogue; we are obeying God's command. This gives gentleness a weight far beyond etiquette. It is a form of faith in action.

A Living Verse for the MWL

For the MWL, which works daily to build bridges across faiths and na-

tions, this verse is a mirror.

Its message aligns directly with the organization's mission: confronting hatred without adopting its tone, challenging oppression without resorting to insult, and creating space for dialogue where others expect confrontation.

In meetings with leaders, in interfaith gatherings, and in public statements, Verse 20:44 in Surah Tāhā offers a compass. It asks: are we speaking truth firmly? Are we doing so gently? Are we leaving the door of remembrance and mindfulness open? If so, then we are walking in the footsteps of Moses and Aaron.

Closing Reflections

There is something deeply hopeful about this verse. It does not promise that the recipient will listen. Pharaoh did not. But it insists that our responsibility is not to mirror arrogance with anger. Our responsibility is to speak in the way that truth deserves; firm, dignified, and gentle.

Gentleness is not a tactic for the weak. It is the strength of those who trust that truth can stand on its own. It is the discipline of those who know that their mission is higher than winning an argument. And it is the ethic of prophets who carried God's word into the hardest rooms in history.

“And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear.” For Moses and Aaron, it was the guiding instruction that steadied their mission.

For us, it is a verse that can reshape how we engage in an angry world. It reminds us that faith-based diplomacy is not just about what we say, but how we say it – and that gentleness, even in the face of power, remains the most meaningful tool we have. ■



The Holy Month of Ramadan:

Lessons from the Qur'an and Beyond

By
Maryam Raza &
Ghada Qureshi

Ramadan occupies a unique and unparalleled position in the Islamic calendar.

“The month of Ramadan is that in which was revealed the Qur’an, guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion...” (Qur’an, 2:185). Ramadan is thus inseparable from revelation itself. It is the month in which divine guidance descended to reorder human life, conscience, and responsibility.

The Prophet Muhammad ,peace be upon him, reinforced the elevated status of this

month when he said: “When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of the heaven are opened, and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained.” [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1899).

For the companions of the Prophet, the arrival of Ramadan marked a profound spiritual threshold, approached with preparation, reverence, and seriousness. This reflects a deeper Qur’anic lesson that Ramadan is designated as a period of moral recalibration, in which acts of obedience are



elevated in reward (ajr) and intended to reshape deep self-awareness beyond the month itself.

Fasting in Ramadan: Discipline, Patience (Sabr), and the Formation of Taqwa

Fasting (Sawm) in Ramadan is a fard obligation and one of the five pillars of Islam. It requires abstinence from food, drink, and marital intimacy from dawn until sunset, transforming everyday human needs into sites of ethical discipline. By restraining what is lawful, the believer learns mastery over the self and develops the capacity to restrain what is unlawful.

The purpose of fasting is stated with remarkable clarity in Qur'an: "O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed

for those before you, so that you may attain taqwa" (Qur'an, 2:183). Hunger and thirst are not the objective. Taqwa—sustained moral consciousness and accountability before Allah—is.

At the core of fasting lies patience (sabr), understood as an active moral restraint. The Prophet ,peace be upon him, said: "Fasting is a shield" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1894), meaning it protects the believer from sinful impulse and moral collapse. He further stated: "Whoever observes fasts during the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 38).

Many illuminating incidents highlight this inward discipline. The Prophet ,peace be upon him, once cautioned that fasting is not invalidated only by eating and drinking, but also by moral failure. He said: "Whoever does not give up false speech and acting upon it, Allah has no need of him giving up his food and drink" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1903). This establishes fasting as a comprehensive moral act governing speech, behavior, and intention.

Taqwa and Ramadan are inseparable at their core. Taqwa, in its essence, is to be so conscious of Allah that one follows His commands and refrains from His prohibitions. The Prophet Muhammad ,peace be upon him, emphasized this inner reality when he pointed to his chest and said, "Taqwa is here," affirming that God-consciousness begins in the heart before shaping outward action (Sahih Muslim, 2564). Fasting, therefore, nurtures this state through sustained restraint, worship, and reflection, making taqwa the defining aim of the month.

The elevated reward of fasting reflects its ethical depth. In a Hadith Qudsi, Allah declares: "Every deed of the son of Adam is for him, except fasting; it is for Me, and I alone give its reward" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1904). Fasting cultivates sincerity precisely because it is often unseen, practiced in private, and anchored in conscience rather than display.

The Prophet ,peace be upon him, also taught that those who fast will enter Paradise through a special gate known as Al-Rayyan, reserved exclusively for them (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1896). This honor reflects the unique moral refinement fasting produces.

How the Prophet (PBUH) Practised Fasting

The Prophet Muhammad ,peace be upon him, did not teach fasting as a harsh or performative act. His practice reflected balance, intentional simplicity, and moral clarity, reinforcing that fasting disciplines desire without cultivating excess or rigidity.

One of the clearest expressions of this ethic appears in how the Prophet ,peace be upon him, broke his fast. Anas ibn Malik reported: "The Messenger of Allah ,peace be upon him, would break his fast with fresh dates before praying; if there were no fresh dates, then with dry dates; and if there were no dry dates, he would take a few sips of water" (Sunan Abi Dawud, 2356). This practice underscores that iftar was never an occasion for indulgence, but a moment of gratitude, restraint, and obedience.

The Prophet ,peace be upon him, also emphasized timeliness and decisiveness in breaking the fast, saying: "The people will continue to

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be upon goodness as long as they hasten to break the fast” (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1957). This establishes that delaying iftar unnecessarily was discouraged, as fasting was not meant to become a display of endurance but an act of compliance with divine instruction.

These practices reveal a critical dimension of fasting. Discipline in Islam does not aim to glorify deprivation, but to align the believer’s will with divine limits.

Another incident highlights how fasting extends beyond physical abstention into moral refinement. While fasting one day, the Prophet ,peace be upon him, observed companions engaged in harsh speech. He reminded them that fasting governs conduct as much as appetite, stating: ... If one of you is fasting, he should avoid obscene language and quarrelling, and if somebody should fight or quarrel with him, he should say, ‘I am fasting’ (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1904). This instruction situates fasting as a comprehensive ethical discipline, shaping speech, temperament, and emotional restraint.

The Ethics of Compassion through Charity

If fasting disciplines the self, charity disciplines one’s relationship with others.

Ramadan does not permit inward piety to remain isolated from social responsibility. Rather, heightened awareness of Allah must translate into care for the vulnerable. The Qur’an establishes this principle clearly: “And in their wealth there is a recognized right for the needy and the deprived” (Qur’an, 51:19). Thus, charity is not an optional act of generosity but divinely mandated



mechanism to safeguard social balance and protect human dignity.

The Prophet ,peace be upon him, warned against illusionary ownership of wealth, stating: “The son of Adam says, ‘My wealth, my wealth,’ but of his wealth he has only what he eats and consumes, what he wears and wears out, or what he gives in charity and sends forward” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2958).

Qur’an frames charity within a divine moral economy: “The example of those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah is that of a grain that sprouts into seven ears, each bearing one hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [the reward even more] to whoever He wills. For Allah is All-Bountiful, All-Knowing” (Qur’an, 2:261).

The Prophet ,peace be upon him, embodied this ethic. Ibn Abbas reported: “The Messenger of Allah ,peace be upon him, was the most

generous of people, and he was even more generous in Ramadan” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2308).

Qur’an further teaches that charity preserves sincerity and human dignity: “If you disclose your charitable expenditures, they are good; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, it is better for you, and He will remove from you some of your misdeeds [thereby]. And Allah, with what you do, is [fully] Acquainted” (Qur’an, 2:271). The ethical value lies not only in giving, but in how and why one gives.

The Prophet ,peace be upon him, affirmed this moral logic when he said: “Charity does not decrease wealth, no one forgives another except that Allah increases his honor, and no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises his status.” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2588).

Compassion thus reshapes both the



“*Ramadan doesn't permit inward piety to remain isolated from social responsibility. Rather, heightened awareness of Allah must translate into care for the vulnerable.*”

soul and society. Through charity, Ramadan becomes a profound reminder for the Muslim ummah that spiritual devotion is connected to social responsibility, uniting believers through mercy, generosity, and care for the vulnerable.

Significance of the Last Ten Nights of Ramadan

As Ramadan approaches its close, its moral demands do not soften. They intensify.

The last ten nights mark the point at

which the month's purpose becomes most concentrated and its claims upon the believer most exacting. These nights are when disciplines are tested for sincerity, depth, and endurance. What has been practiced throughout the month is now subjected to scrutiny, as intention is refined and reliance upon Allah is stripped of habit and comfort.

The Qur'an frames this intensification through a pairing that recurs at moments of moral strain: patience

and prayer. “O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.” (Qur'an, 2:153). Patience here is disciplined perseverance, the ability to remain obedient when one feels fatigue. Prayer, in turn, affirms dependence upon Allah at moments when personal strength wanes. Together, patience and prayer establish the ethical posture required when spiritual effort can no longer rely on momentum alone.

Night prayer during the final days of Ramadan embodies this posture. In the quiet of the night, distraction recedes and intention is exposed. Surah Al-Baqarah acknowledges the weight of prayer when it states, “And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah]” (2:45). In this context, humility is not emotional softness, but clarity — an honest recognition of limitation and a conscious return to divine authority. Night prayer thus becomes an act of correction, restoring proportion between the self and the commands of Allah.

The distinctive gravity of the last ten nights is further shaped by uncertainty. The Qur'an does not assign a fixed date to Laylat al-Qadr. Although the Qur'an identifies Laylat al-Qadr as a night marked by revelation, divine decree, and peace — “Indeed, We sent it down on the Night of Decree... The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months... Peace it is until the emergence of dawn” (Qur'an, 97:1–5) — it withholds the comfort of certainty. The believer is directed toward sustained vigilance across the final nights of Ramadan. Worship continues across these nights as intention is laid bare. Consistency replaces

anticipation, and devotion is measured by perseverance rather than precision.

In these nights, restraint cultivated through fasting, responsibility refined through charity, and reliance deepened through prayer are no longer practiced in isolation. They are brought into coherence. What has been learned over the course of Ramadan is clarified and tested. The question that emerges is no longer whether acts of worship have been performed, but whether they have produced attentiveness, humility, and moral resolve capable of withstanding fatigue and uncertainty alike.

This emphasis on alignment is further reflected in the Prophetic engagement with the Qur'an itself. Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Angel Jibreel would review the Qur'an with the Prophet Muhammad ,peace be upon him, once every Ramadan, and that in the final Ramadan of the Prophet's life, this review took place twice (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 4997). This intensification mirrors the significance of Laylat al-Qadr as the moment when divine guidance entered human history, underscoring that the culmination of Ramadan is marked not by accumulation of acts alone, but by careful confirmation of alignment with revelation.

The Prophet Muhammad ,peace be upon him, further embodied this seriousness through heightened devotion during the final nights. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported: "When the last ten nights began, the Messenger of Allah ,peace be upon him, would tighten his waist belt, spend the night in worship, and awaken his family" (Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1174). This

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”

conduct signals intensified resolve and withdrawal from distraction, affirming that these nights permit no reliance on routine or partial effort.

The content of supplication during this period reinforces its moral character. When Aisha asked what should be said if Laylat al-Qadr is encountered, the Prophet ,peace be upon him, instructed: "Allahumma innaka 'afuwun tu'ibbul-'afwa fa'fu 'anni" — "O Allah, You are Most Forgiving and You love forgiveness, so forgive me" (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, 3513). At the apex of Ramadan's promise, the believer's attention settles on pardon, with forgiveness becoming the defining concern.

The significance of the last ten nights lies in the convergence of promise and demand. They mark the point at which Ramadan either extends beyond the calendar or recedes into memory. Through sustained patience, prayer, and vigilance, these

nights prepare the believer for continuity rather than conclusion, affirming that the purpose of Ramadan is not intensity confined to time, but transformation that endures.

Eid al-Fitr: Gratitude, Accountability, and Continuity

Surah Al-Baqarah closes its discussion of fasting with a reminder that completion is never an end in itself, but a moment laden with responsibility. "Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship and [wants] for you to complete the period and to glorify Allah for that [to] which He has guided you; and perhaps you will be grateful." (Qur'an, 2:185). From this Qur'anic framing, Eid al-Fitr emerges as a confirmation of guidance received. It marks the conclusion of a defined period of discipline and the beginning of a quieter, more demanding test: whether the moral clarity cultivated in Ramadan will endure once its structure recedes.

Gratitude, in this context, takes the form of a sustained posture rather than a passing emotion. It is expressed through remembrance, restraint, and an honest acknowledgment of dependence upon Allah. The takbir that fills the hours leading to the Eid prayer functions as a return to source, affirming divine guidance at the very moment when celebration begins.

The Qur'an captures this alignment with striking economy: "He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself. And mentions the name of his Lord and prays." (Qur'an, 87:14–15). Celebration is encouraged, yet bounded by humility. Eid affirms that whatever discipline was achieved in Ramadan was enabled by Allah alone, and that acceptance



remains beyond human certainty.

Just as fasting is prescribed during Ramadan, its cessation on Eid is also commanded. The Prophet ,peace be upon him, therefore forbade fasting on the Day of Eid al-Fitr (Sahih Muslim, 1137), clarifying that discipline in Islam is defined by alignment with divine instruction. Celebration and abstinence each occupy their proper place within this moral order.

Zakat al-Fitr gives this ethic concrete, institutional form. Mandated at the conclusion of Ramadan and given before the Eid prayer (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1503), it ensures that the joy of Eid is shared rather than unevenly distributed. No member of the community is excluded from dignity or celebration at the month's

end. Zakat al-Fitr thus functions as a mechanism of inclusion, accountability, and shared moral responsibility. By requiring material need to be addressed before festivity, the ethical vision articulated throughout Surah Al-Baqarah is preserved: worship remains incomplete if it does not account for others. The success of Ramadan is therefore measured both inwardly and socially.

Ramadan concludes with Eid al-Fitr, yet its purpose extends beyond the month itself. The disciplines cultivated through fasting, restraint, charity, and prayer are intended to shape moral awareness in ordinary life. Eid marks the completion of a period of guidance and the beginning of its application, affirming

that gratitude is expressed through continued obedience and ethical responsibility.

The Qur'anic emphasis on completion, remembrance, and gratitude situates Ramadan as preparation for sustained consciousness of Allah. What is refined through fasting informs restraint, what is strengthened through charity informs social responsibility, and what is deepened through prayer informs judgment and conduct.

The true measure of Ramadan is found in what remains when it ends: whether the clarity it instills continues to govern choices, relationships, and responsibility long after the month has passed. ■



Faith Above Fear:

A Call for Spiritual Diplomacy in a Divided World



By

Pastor Mark Burns

*Founder of The NOW
Television Network; Spiritual
Advisor to President Trump*

In every generation, there comes a moment when faith must rise above fear, when bridges must be built in place of barriers, and when voices of truth must step into spaces where silence has allowed hatred to grow. I believe that moment is now.

As a Christian pastor, I have traveled the world to meet with leaders of different faiths and nations. I have broken bread with Muslims in the Kingdom of Eswatini, prayed with Jews in Ukraine, spoke about peace with Hindu gurus in India, met with Christian leaders in South Africa, and stood shoulder to



shoulder with faith believers from every corner of the globe. And if there is one thing I have learned, it is this: We have far more in common than we think.

We all want safety for our children.

We all want to live in dignity and freedom.

We all long for justice, for peace, and for the right to worship without fear.

And yet, too often, fear clouds our vision.

Bombs Will Never Bring Peace

I have walked through war zones. I have prayed with families whose

children were killed in airstrikes. I have seen the brokenness that comes when entire communities are shattered under the weight of drone warfare.

We cannot defeat terrorism by killing more innocent people than the terrorists do. Every bomb that destroys a family home creates another enemy. Every strike that misses its target plants seeds of hatred in the heart of someone who only wanted to live in peace.

If the West truly wants to stop extremism, we must invest not only in weapons but in relationships. We must speak with one another. Break bread together. Learn

names. Understand pain. And walk in the courage of compassion, not just strength.

This is why I believe in quiet diplomacy. And this is why I embrace what I call the role of the Spiritual Diplomat.

What is a Spiritual Diplomat?

Spiritual Diplomats are faith leaders who step into the places politicians cannot reach. We carry no weapons. We carry wisdom. We do not negotiate policy. We bring healing to broken spirits and light into dark corridors. We speak truth in places where power is used to suppress it, and we bring peace where politics have failed.



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The Reverend Billy Graham gave us the model. He stood in stadiums and preached to millions, but he also walked quietly into the offices of presidents and heads of state. He came not to flatter, but to speak boldly. Not to compromise, but to call for change.

Today, there are imams, rabbis, priests, and pastors all over the world following in that same tradition. They are visiting refugee camps. They are sitting with law-

makers. They are risking their lives to remind leaders that real power serves the people, not the other way around.

I am honored to walk in that calling, and I know I am not alone.

Interfaith Unity is the Way Forward

What would happen if we listened more than we judged? If a Christian pastor could sit with a Muslim cleric and discover shared purpose

instead of assumed difference? If a rabbi and an imam could walk the streets of a city together as brothers, not representatives of old conflict?

The truth is this is already happening. Quietly. Faithfully. And we must amplify it.

We need more interfaith tables, not more war rooms. We need more prayer gatherings, not more military alliances. We need spiritual diplomacy to rise above political rivalry.

Our greatest strength is not our weapons. It is our shared humanity.

If our faith is true, it must lead us toward peace. And if our religion is pure, it must teach us to protect the vulnerable.

A Sacred Responsibility

To my Muslim brothers and sisters reading this, I honor your faith. I see your sacrifice. I reject the lies that have been told about you. I commit to stand with you against hatred, against Islamophobia, and against every force that tries to divide what God has called us to reconcile.

This is not about politics. This is about people. This is not about policy. This is about peace. This is not about conquest. This is about calling.

Let us work together. Let us speak together. Let us lead together.

Because in the end, it will not be armies or governments that heal this world.

It will be people of faith, carrying wisdom instead of weapons, speaking not for power but for peace, and walking in the spirit of a Spiritual Diplomat – for the glory of God and the good of all people. ■



رَابِطَةُ الْعَالَمِ الْإِسْلَامِيِّ

MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE



PEACE

