
Launching New Global Qur'anic Council in Malaysia

Prophet's Biography Museum Welcomes Ten Million Visitors

Chairing Islamic Leadership Across the Americas

Inaugurating the Fourth ASEAN Scholars Council Forum



Landmark Visit to Australia Partnership Across the Pacific

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-Tirmidhī 3955*

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MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ
وَجَدِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَرُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ

ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

سُورَةُ النَّازِعَاتِ

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

Faith That Reaches Outward

A faith professed in words and held in the heart is faith begun — but not faith complete. Belief was never meant to remain enclosed within the self. It finds its fullest expression only when it reaches outward into the world: into unfamiliar rooms, across distant borders, and toward those whose lives and experiences differ from our own. This is among the oldest lessons of Islam. The believer is asked not merely to know the truth, but to carry it. Conviction that never leaves the safety of its own circle is a conviction only half fulfilled.

This edition of the Muslim World League Journal is a testament to that outward journey. The pages that follow reflect an enduring principle: that faith grounded in knowledge carries responsibilities beyond the mosque door. It calls believers to build bridges where others erect barriers, to defend the dignity of minorities, to foster understanding across differences, and to serve the common good wherever it is found. The work gathered here demonstrates how religious values can move from belief into action.

Nowhere is that duty clearer than in Sheikh Al-Issa's landmark visit to Australia, the centerpiece of this issue. It raises an important question: what does moral leadership owe communities far from the historic centers of the Muslim world? The answer, offered in Sydney, was clear. Received at the highest levels of national leadership — by the Prime Minister and the Governor-General — and welcomed by the country's leading Muslim institutions, the visit demonstrated that faith can be a force for social cohesion, mutual respect, and national unity. It showed that meaningful engagement is measured by a willingness to listen and cultivate shared values.

Yet the responsibilities of faith do not end at national borders. If moral leadership is called to engage societies, it must also confront the questions shaping

humanity's future. The same commitment to human dignity that guided dialogue in Australia extended into global conversations about technology, ethics, and our shared future.

In Fez, before a global gathering on Artificial Intelligence, the MWL insisted that moral clarity must precede the machine — that a unified ethical framework, rooted in shared human values, must be set before such systems are built, and that final judgment over human dignity must remain in human hands. From the launch of a new scholarly council in Malaysia to welcoming the ten-millionth visitor to the Museum of the Prophet's Biography, the stories in this edition reflect a confidence that faith can meet modernity constructively — preserving timeless ethics while addressing the realities of a rapidly changing world.

This edition also arrives in the wake of the blessed days of Hajj and Eid al-Adha, and its spirit runs throughout. The season returns us to Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and reminds us of a truth: that the sacrifice was accepted the moment it was made in the heart, before the hand ever moved. Devotion, in Islam, is never meant to remain private. It is proven when it turns outward — into giving, into service, into presence among those who need it most. The initiatives, partnerships, and journeys chronicled here embody that same movement from conviction to action.

Read together, these stories describe a single disposition: faith, when informed by knowledge and sustained by courage, does not retreat from the world — it engages it with purpose and conviction. It lifts its voice where silence would permit harm and chooses unity where division would be the easier path, reaching across nation, culture, and creed. This journal is both the proof of one such season and a pledge of the next. ■



Secretary General in Australia National Outreach and Institutional Cooperation



Australian Prime Minister Mr. Anthony Albanese receives Sheikh Al-Issa at his residence in Sydney, Australia.

By
MWL



Every few years, a diplomatic visit reframes how two parts of the world understand their relationship. Australia is home to a Muslim community of approximately 800,000 — around 3.2 percent of the national population, drawn from successive waves of immigration from across the Muslim world. It is also one of the few Western democracies with a sustained record of governmental engagement with Islamic institutions, both domestically and internationally.

That engagement has deepened in recent years: when Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada jointly recognized the State of Palestine in September 2025, the MWL was among the first international

Islamic bodies to respond, with Sheikh Al-Issa welcoming the decision as a reflection of the principles of justice and the historical and legal rights of the Palestinian people.

It was to this country — and this moment — that Sheikh Al-Issa traveled in April 2026 for a visit of rare scope and depth. Over the course of several days in Sydney, he was received by Australia's head of government and head of state, met senior federal and state ministers and the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police, addressed audiences at the country's leading Muslim institutions, and held a series of individual meetings with figures from across Australia's political and civic leadership.



Sheikh Al-Issa in a meeting with Her Excellency Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of Australia, at Government House in Sydney.

Taken together, the visit brought to the level of direct governmental engagement a bilateral relationship that had been developing quietly for some time — and signaled Australia's growing place within the MWL's framework of international partnerships.

Meeting with the Prime Minister of Australia

The centerpiece of the visit was a meeting with H.E. Mr. Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister of Australia, at his Sydney residence.

During a working breakfast, Sheikh Al-Issa and Prime Minister Albanese discussed the importance of maintaining social cohesion within societal diversity through mutual respect and cooperation, as well as the need to strengthen friendship between nations and peoples through high-impact initiatives.

The two leaders also addressed

the role of United Nations organizations in advancing these objectives. The Australian model of coexistence in all its diversity was commended during the meeting, along with the distinguished role of the Australian government in supporting and entrenching it.

Meeting with the Governor-General of Australia

H.E. Ms. Sam Mostyn, Governor-General of Australia, also received Sheikh Al-Issa for a meeting that addressed issues related to societal diversity and the role of religious leaders in promoting social cohesion. During this interaction, the Governor-General publicly commended the MWL's global role in promoting peace.

Official Meetings with Other Australian Dignitaries

Over the course of his visit, Sheikh Al-Issa held a series of other individual meetings at his

Sydney residence with senior figures from Australia's federal and state governments. These included H.E. Mr. Tony Burke, Federal Minister for Home Affairs and Leader of the House of Representatives; H.E. Mr. Jason Clare, Federal Minister for Education; H.E. Mr. Andrew Giles, Federal Minister for Skills and Training; H.E. Mr. Jihad Dib, NSW Minister for Customer Service, Digital Government, Emergency Services, and Youth Justice; H.E. Mr. Paul Erickson, National Secretary of the Australian Labor Party; and Ms. Krissy Barrett, Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police.

Engagement with the Muslim Community in Sydney

Across three engagements with Australia's foremost Muslim institutions, Sheikh Al-Issa was received at the highest levels of both religious and civic life.



Sheikh Al-Issa in a meeting with Kristy Barrett, Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police at his residence in Sydney.

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils welcomed him at its Sydney headquarters, and the United Muslims of Australia hosted a separate gathering — both graced by the presence of H.E. Sheikh Shady Al-Suleiman, President of the Australian National Imams Council, and H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Abu Mohammed, Grand Mufti of Australia, together with federal and local ministers and members of parliament.

Sheikh Al-Issa received a briefing on the United Muslims of Australia's activities and tour of its facilities. He praised the organization's role as a distinguished model in serving Muslim communities.

The Australian National Imams Council convened a special banquet in Sheikh Al-Issa's honor, attended by Federal Minister for Home Affairs Tony Burke, Federal Minister for Education Jason Clare, NSW Minister Jihad Dib,

and NSW Minister for Industrial Relations Sophie Cotsis, alongside parliamentary and Islamic community representatives from across the country.

Each gathering offered a distinct opportunity to engage with the full breadth of Australia's Muslim community and its place within the country's broader civic landscape.

Speech on Coexistence and Diversity

At the United Muslims of Australia headquarters, Sheikh Al-Issa delivered an address that moved between the philosophical and the programmatic — setting out Islam's vision of coexistence across religious, ethnic, and cultural lines, while grounding that vision in the concrete work the League carries out across the world.

At its heart, he argued, MWL's

global programs exist to build the conditions for genuine friendship among nations — not through the erasure of difference, but through the cultivation of shared values that make peace and social harmony possible. The League's partnerships with international governmental and non-governmental organizations, the United Nations foremost among them, give that mission institutional reach: through these, MWL advances initiatives designed to dismantle the intellectual architecture that sustains conflict — the theories and slogans that treat civilizational clash as inevitable, and the cultures of racism and hatred that follow in their wake.

It is minorities, Sheikh Al-Issa observed, who bear the sharpest consequences of these frameworks — denied the inclusive citizenship and equality before the constitution and the law that



Sheikh Al-Issa is received by Sheikh Shady Alsuleiman, President of the National Imams Council, and Sheikh Dr. Ibrahim Abu Mohammed, Grand Mufti of Australia at the United Muslims of Australia headquarters.

should be theirs in both principle and practice. MWL's "Building Bridges of Understanding and Cooperation Between East and

West" initiative, presented at United Nations headquarters in New York, reflects precisely this concern: a comprehensive inter-

national effort to correct narratives of inevitable civilizational conflict at their source, before they harden into policy, prejudice, or violence.

He closed by praising the Australian model, citing it as evidence that a diverse society — plural in faith, ethnicity, and culture — can hold together through shared civic values and a genuine commitment to equal rights.

A Pattern of Engagement, a Deepening Partnership

Earlier in May 2025, Sheikh Al-Issa had received H.E. Mr. Mark Donovan, Ambassador of Australia to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, at MWL headquarters in Riyadh — an early signal of the institutional momentum building between the two sides. Months



Sheikh Al-Issa receives a tour of the United Muslims of Australia headquarters and briefing of its activities.



The Australian National Imams Council, represented by its President, H.E. Sheikh Shady Al-Suleiman, host a luncheon in honor of Sheikh Al-Issa, with senior level ministers in attendance.

later, the MWL's public welcome of Australia's recognition of Palestinian statehood further deepened the sense of shared values underpinning the relationship.

What the Sydney visit accomplished was to give that relationship a new institutional weight. A program that spanned the Prime Minister's residence and Government House, the headquarters of Australia's leading Muslim institutions, and the offices of federal and state ministers — with the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police among those who sat down with Sheikh Al-Issa — was not the product of a courtesy call. It was the expression of a partnership that both sides had chosen to invest in, built on a shared conviction that social cohesion, minority rights, and

the rejection of civilizational conflict are not abstract ideals but practical commitments requiring sustained, high-level attention.

Australia offered Sheikh Al-Issa a model worth praising. The visit itself offered both sides a framework worth building on. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa delivers a speech at an event hosted by the United Muslims of Australia.



H.E. Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, receives Sheikh Al-Issa at the Presidential Palace in the capital, Kuala Lumpur.

Advancing Strategic Collaboration in Malaysia

New Institutions and High-level Meetings



Sheikh Al-Issa Advances MWL's Qur'anic and Scientific Programs in Malaysia

Following a wide-ranging visit to Australia where Sheikh Al-Issa championed the

MWL's message of religious diversity and social coexistence, he traveled directly to Kuala Lumpur for what would prove one of the most substantive engagements the MWL has conducted in Southeast Asia in recent years.



Sheikh Al-Issa inaugurates from Malaysia the World Council for Scientific Miracles in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and sponsors the closing ceremony of the "Iman and Sains" program and competition..

This year's official visit to Malaysia was built on a foundation laid through years of deepening institutional ties, including the 2024 international conference on interfaith harmony that brought together some 2,000 religious and intellectual figures from 57 countries under the joint patronage of the MWL and Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, and the 2025 Global Forum on the Authentication of Qur'anic Ijazahs.

What unfolded in April 2026 brought that partnership to a new level of institutional depth,

spanning the inauguration of a new global scholarly body, the signing of seven bilateral agreements, engagement with Malaysia's senior religious leadership, and meetings at the highest levels of federal and state government.

Meeting with the Prime Minister of Malaysia

At the Presidential Palace in Kuala Lumpur, Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim received Sheikh Al-Issa for a substantive exchange spanning Islamic and international affairs aligned with the MWL's mission and objectives.

Discussions focused on a range of Islamic and international issues, including efforts to promote dialogue and cooperation. Central to the meeting were preparations for the Third International Summit of Religious Leaders, which is scheduled to take place in Kuala Lumpur in the near future, alongside the fourth session of the ASEAN Council of Scholars — an MWL initiative established to strengthen scholarly collaboration and intellectual consensus across the region.

Sheikh Al-Issa expressed appreciation for Prime Minister An-



MWL signs seven agreements with the Malaysian governmental and civil entities, including universities, institutes, and research centers..

war's personal role in advancing the MWL's work in Malaysia, describing the government's sustained support as a reflection of a shared commitment to advancing Islamic values at the global level. The meeting was not a first encounter — Prime Minister Anwar and the MWL have collaborated closely since at least the landmark 2024 interfaith gathering — but it carried renewed significance given the upcoming summit, for which Malaysia will serve as host.

Inauguration of the World Council for Scientific Miracles in the Qur'an and Sunnah

The institutional centerpiece of the visit was the inauguration of the World Council for Scientific Miracles in the Qur'an and Sunnah, a new global body launched in Kuala Lumpur before an audience of international scholars, government ministers, and senior university figures. The newly established council is intended to advance scholarly engagement with the concept of scientific reflection in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah.

Sheikh Al-Issa also sponsored the closing ceremony of the Iman and Sains (Faith and Science) program and competition, which

aims to promote research and intellectual exchange in areas linking scientific study with Islamic teachings.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Sheikh Al-Issa said that such initiatives — organized in partnership with the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia — demonstrate a coordinated effort to strengthen Muslims' connection with the Qur'an through recitation, understanding, and appreciation of its values. In his keynote address, he was unequivocal about Malaysia's place in this work: "The Muslim World League con-



Sheikh Al-Issa holds a meeting with senior Malaysian scholars from across the states in Kuala Lumpur led by H.E. Sheikh Ahmad Fauwaz Fadzil, Grand Imam and Grand Mufti of Malaysia..

“

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”

sistently strives to strengthen Qur'anic values among younger

generations worldwide. Malaysia is a very special country, as

its people possess a strong sense of faith and deep love for the Qur'an." He also described Malaysia as a model for the broader Islamic world, pointing to its people's commitment as proof of what is possible when faith and institutional ambition are aligned.

The Iman and Sains competition was held via the "Iman & Science Malaysia" platform throughout the month of Ramadan. The closing ceremony also featured a visual presentation of the program's achievements alongside the announcement of the MWL's international awards.



Sheikh Al-Issa receives H.E. Senator Dato' Dr. Zulkifli Hasan, the Malaysian Minister of Religious Affairs at his residence in Kuala Lumpur.

Signing of International Agreements

Malaysia's cooperation with the MWL was further strengthened through the signing of seven agreements between the League and a number of Malaysian governmental and private institutions, including universities, research centers, and academic bodies.

The agreements formalize new frameworks for partnership in the service of the Qur'an and Sunnah, extending the MWL's institutional footprint across Malaysia's academic and religious es-

tablishment in a significant way. The breadth of the signatories — spanning government entities, civil institutions, and centers of higher learning — reflects the ambition of the partnership and Malaysia's willingness to anchor it across multiple sectors simultaneously.

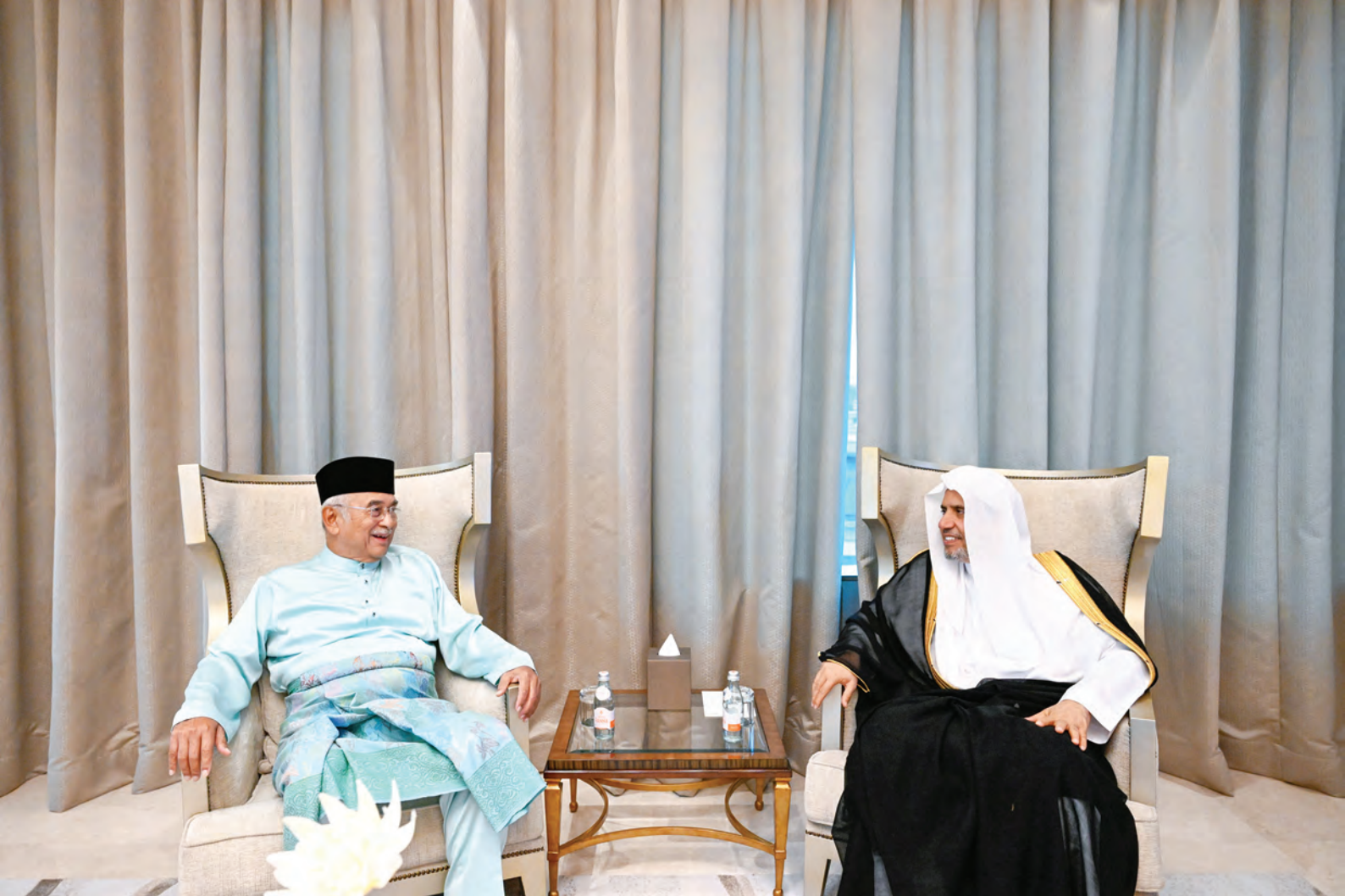
Meeting with Senior Malaysian Scholars

Sheikh Al-Issa met in Kuala Lumpur with senior Malaysian scholars from across the country, led by Sheikh Ahmad Fauwaz Fadzil, Grand Mufti of Malaysia. The Grand Mufti opened the meeting

with welcoming remarks before inviting Sheikh Al-Issa to deliver a lecture, which was followed by a discussion session on themes from it, as well as other issues of interest to the broader Islamic world. The gathering brought together senior figures from across Malaysia's diverse states, making it as much a convening of national religious leadership as it was a bilateral scholarly exchange.

High-Level Official Meetings

Sheikh Al-Issa received Malaysia's Minister of Religious Affairs, Senator Dato' Dr. Zulkifli Hasan, at his Kuala Lumpur residence.



Sheikh Al-Issa receives Tun Seri Dr. Haji Mohd Ali bin Mohd Rustam, Governor of Malacca, at his residence in Kuala Lumpur.

The meeting covered a number of topics of mutual interest, and Minister Zulkifli used the occasion to articulate Malaysia's broader religious policy commitments. He noted that such initiatives not only nurture Islamic values among participants but also bridge divine revelation with the development of modern knowledge in a balanced manner, and affirmed that Malaysia will continue to support programs that promote moderation and harmony while strengthening a proper understanding of Islam. He also conveyed appreciation to the MWL for its continued ef-

forts to advance knowledge and faith through international platforms.

Sheikh Al-Issa also met with Dr. Haji Mohd Ali bin Mohd Rustam, Governor of Malacca, in Kuala Lumpur, where the two officials discussed topics of mutual interest. The Governor's participation in the visit speaks to the engagement the MWL has cultivated not only at the federal level but across Malaysia's state leadership.

The Kuala Lumpur visit, arriving directly on the heels of Australia, reflected the MWL's sustained effort to anchor its work in concrete

institutional relationships rather than one-off engagements. Across four days, Sheikh Al-Issa met with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Religious Affairs, and the Governor of Malacca; inaugurated a new global scholarly body; signed seven bilateral agreements; and convened Malaysia's senior religious scholars. Taken together, the program illustrated what a maturing partnership looks like in practice — not declarations of intent, but frameworks built to last, with Malaysia increasingly central to how the MWL pursues its mission across Southeast Asia and beyond. ■



Empowering Youth Across the ASEAN

A Focused Visit Advancing Scholarship and Regional Cooperation

By
MWL



Less than two months after his April visit to Kuala Lumpur, Sheikh Al-Issa returned to Malaysia in mid-June for a concentrated program of engagements that placed the country at the center of the MWL's work in Southeast Asia. Where the earlier visit

had advanced the Qur'anic and scientific programs, this engagement turned to the people those programs are meant to serve — religious leaders, young participants, and the scholars and huffaz of the wider ASEAN region.



Sheikh Al-Issa delivers the opening address in the Third International Summit of Religious Leaders in the presence of Sultan Nazrin Shah and Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in Kuala Lumpur

Over the course of the visit, Sheikh Al-Issa delivered the opening address at the Third International Summit of Religious Leaders, held a dedicated dialogue with youth leaders from across ASEAN on the sidelines of the summit, and attended an inauguration of the fourth ASEAN Scholars Council Forum.

Taken together, the series of events during his visit lent fresh institutional weight to a partnership between the MWL and Malaysia that has been steadily building for years — and reaffirmed Malaysia's growing place within MWL's framework of international coopera

Keynote Address at the Third International Summit of Religious Leaders

Sheikh Al-Issa delivered an opening address at the “Third International Summit of Religious Leaders” at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Center in Malaysia.

The summit was convened in the presence of Sultan Nazrin Shah, Sultan of Perak, and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. The summit brought together a large number of young scholars, policymakers, and religious leaders from around the globe.

In his address, Sheikh Al-Issa underscored the responsibility

of religious leaders in addressing issues affecting global peace and social harmony, highlighting the pivotal role of youth in confronting them, particularly the risks associated with unrestricted exposure to modern technology and artificial intelligence without adequate ethical safeguards.

Sheikh Al-Issa called on religious institutions to move beyond rhetoric and translate shared ethical values into education, dialogue, and practical action. “True harmony for our world lies not in extinguishing fires, but in preventing them from being ignited in the first place,” he said.



Sheikh Al-Issa meets with young leaders from across Southeast Asia in Kuala Lumpur

Turning to what he called the foremost concern of the Islamic world and the wider international community, Sheikh Al-Issa addressed the Palestinian cause, stressing "the necessity of its just resolution through the logic of the two-state solution."

He closed his address by announcing the launch of a new global honor, "The Global Religious Diplomacy Award," established in line with the summit's vision and objectives, and expressed hope that it would open the way to further international efforts in service of the world's diversity and harmon

Engagement with Prominent ASEAN Youth Leaders

On the sidelines of the Third International Summit of Religious Leaders, Sheikh Al-Issa held a dedicated meeting with prominent youth leaders, university students, and researchers from ASEAN countries.

The session combined a structured discussion with an open dialogue, focusing on the practical implementation of the summit's outcomes, particularly in the areas of youth awareness, capacity-building, and the ethical dimensions of information and

communication technologies.

Sheikh Al-Issa identified transparency and accountability as among the most pressing ethical concerns surrounding AI, noting that the processes by which systems reach their conclusions are not always clear to users or regulators. He further cautioned that biases embedded in datasets can produce discriminatory outcomes for individuals and communities.

He also highlighted widespread concerns over data privacy and the potential misuse of personal information. Sheikh Al-Issa add-

Recognition Ceremony of Quranic Ijazah Recipients



Sheikh Al-Issa, alongside senior Malaysian officials, honors the second cohort of Qur'an memorization students from across the region to receive their ijazahs at the recognition ceremony, Kuala Lumpur

ed that AI tools can be exploited to generate fabricated content that is difficult to distinguish from authentic material, compounding the challenge of combating misinformation in digital spaces.

Advancing Scholarship and Qur'anic Learning Across ASEAN

During his visit, Sheikh Al-Issa also inaugurated the "4th ASEAN Scholars Council Forum", attended by Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia Dr. Dato' Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Grand Mufti of Malaysia Sheikh Ahmad Faw-

zi bin Ali Fadzil, and Minister of Religious Affairs Senator Dr. Dato' Mohd Na'im Mokhtar.

The forum brought a significant number of distinguished participants, including scholars, muftis, academics, researchers, and Islamic intellectuals from across the region.

As part of the council's activities for this year, a new Arabic language program for huffaz from ASEAN member states was launched, aim to enhance Arabic proficiency and support understanding of Islamic texts.

In the presence of Sheikh Al-Issa,

the event also honored the second cohort of distinguished Qur'an memorization students from the region to receive ijazahs, with the continues unbroken chain of transmission (sanad) tracing back to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The certifications were awarded through the MWL's Global Technical Quran Recitation Academy.

Sheikh Al-Issa noted that MWL continually seeks to engage with Malaysia through various platforms, citing the country's role as an exemplary nation in strengthening the values of tolerance. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa and His Excellency Prof. Abdullah bin Saleh Al-Washmi discuss strengthening cooperation in serving and promoting the Arabic language, and preserving authentic linguistic identity.

MWL and King Salman Global Academy Sign Arabic Language Partnership

By
MWL



In May 2026, the MWL and the King Salman Global Academy for the Arabic Language (KSGAAL) signed a memorandum of understanding, establishing an organized framework for joint cooperation in the service of the Arabic language across educational, scientific, and technological contexts.

The agreement was signed in Riyadh. Representing MWL was Assistant Secretary General for Corporate Communication Abdulwahab bin Muhammad Al-Shehri, and representing KSGAAL was Deputy Secretary General Dr. Ibrahim bin Muhammad Abanmi. The signing was witnessed by Sheikh Al-Issa and



MWL Assistant Secretary General for Corporate Communication Abdulwahab bin Muhammad Al Shehri and KSGAAL Deputy Secretary General Dr. Ibrahim bin Muhammad Abanmi shake hands following the signing of a memorandum of understanding.

KSGAAL Secretary General Dr. Abdullah bin Saleh Al-Washmi.

Sheikh Al-Issa expressed the MWL's pride in the partnership, commending the Academy's distinguished efforts and significant role in serving the Arabic language worldwide through programs and initiatives that have reinforced authentic linguistic identity and strengthened the language's international presence across various fields.

Dr. Al-Washmi noted that the agreement expands the scope of joint work and contributes to developing impactful linguistic initiatives that support Arabic language education and facilitate its use in academic and technological contexts. He added that the

KSGAAL's efforts are carried out under the continuous guidance of Minister of Culture Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan, Chairman of the Academy's Board of Trustees, and in alignment with the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030.

The memorandum of understanding covers cooperation across several areas, including the digitization of the Arabic language through digital solutions, linguistic corpora, and electronic dictionaries; the teaching of Arabic to non-native speakers, including through MWL's Minhaj application; the implementation of language proficiency tests; and the exchange of information, expertise, and linguistic consultancy. The agreement also provides

for organizing joint seminars, conferences, and workshops, and conducting collaborative scientific research.

On the sidelines of the signing, Sheikh Al-Issa met with Dr. Al-Washmi to discuss topics of mutual interest. The MOU builds on an existing working relationship between the two institutions. In November 2025, MWL and KSGAAL jointly organized the opening events of World Arabic Language Day at MWL's headquarters in Makkah, the first such collaboration between the two bodies, bringing together scholars, delegation heads, and linguistic specialists in a shared commitment to advancing the Arabic language internationally. ■



High-level delegation led by His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Muzani, Speaker of Indonesia's People's Consultative Assembly, visits MWL headquarters to advance bilateral Islamic cooperation.

High-Level Talks with Indonesia's Parliamentary Leadership

In late May, Sheikh Al-Issa received H.E. Ahmad Muzani, Speaker of Indonesia's People's Consultative Assembly, at MWL headquarters in Makkah, along with a high-level delegation. The group included senior religious leaders from the Indonesian Ulema Council, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah, as well as members of parliament.

H.E. Muzani conveyed the greetings of Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, along with the President's appreciation for MWL's efforts worldwide, and extended a formal invitation to Sheikh Al-Issa to visit Indonesia. He noted that MWL has made a clear and tangible contribution to conveying Islam's message of tolerant moderation through its wide-reaching initiatives and engagements spanning different religions,

cultures, and regions. He added that these efforts have strengthened the global standing of the Islamic voice while addressing misrepresentations of the faith.

Sheikh Al-Issa, for his part, praised Indonesia's moderate Islamic model as an effective example of coexistence amid religious and ethnic diversity, reflecting the country's deep religious and national awareness. He expressed appreciation for the sentiments that Indonesia's President, government, and people hold toward MWL, and voiced hope that Indonesia would continue to advance its distinction at the national, Islamic, and international levels, particularly through its positive engagement with diversity as a form of social capital. ■

Exploring the Meaning and Principles of Islamic Moderation

The Saudi Journalists Association hosted a high-level lecture and dialogue session with Sheikh Al-Issa titled "Saudi Moderation: From Jurisprudential Methodology to Global Leadership." The session brought together muftis, scholars, heads of Hajj missions, representatives of Islamic news agencies, and prominent figures from the media, intellectual, and security sectors.

Sheikh Al-Issa opened by examining the concept of moderation in Islam, clarifying its essential characteristics at a time when the term is invoked by many with varying and often conflicting interpretations. He situated this discussion within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030, presenting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Islamic leadership as a concrete expression of moderation in practice. Central to this leadership, he noted, is the Kingdom's status as the home of Islam's qiblah, a distinction that carries deep religious significance and reflects the honor of serving the Two Holy Mosques and their visitors.

He then addressed the scholarly authority of the Council of Senior Scholars, pointing to its resolutions, fatwas, and religious guidance as expressions of principled jurisprudential engagement. The



Sheikh Al-Issa speaks about principles and practice of Islamic moderation before an audience of scholars, media figures, and Hajj mission heads.

Council's appreciation for diverse Islamic schools of thought, he explained, was most visibly demonstrated through its leading role in both the Makkah Charter conference and the Building Bridges Between Islamic Schools of Thought conference.

Sheikh Al-Issa also highlighted the Islamic Fiqh Council affiliated with MWL, presided over by the

Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Sheikh. Comprising senior jurists and muftis from across the Islamic world, the Council examines pressing jurisprudential questions facing Muslim communities globally, serving as a further expression of Saudi Arabia's centrality in Islamic scholarly life. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa addresses members of the Council of Islamic Leadership in North and South America during the Council's third session in Washington, D.C.

Council of Islamic Leadership Convenes in Washington

By
MWL



Convening in Washington, D.C., the Council of Islamic Leadership in North and South America held its third session this May under the chairmanship of MWL Secretary-General and Chairman of the Organization of Muslim Scholars, Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Issa.

The Council was founded on the principles of the Charter of Makkah, following its inaugural conference in Washington

in March 2022 — an event attended by Islamic leaders from across both Americas, with U.S. government officials, legislators, and leaders of religious diversity participating in its closing session. At the founding conference, Sheikh Al-Issa was selected by the assembled leaders to serve as Chairman, reflecting both the Council's grounding in the Charter of Makkah and his standing as a unifying figure across all parties. The Council's



Sheikh Al-Issa affirmed that civilized legal frameworks do not permit hate in any form.

membership extends beyond the Americas to include influential Islamic figures, centers, and organizations from other regions that share its objectives.

The third session took up several substantive issues put forward by the Chairman and members.

On the question of religious and national identity, Sheikh Al-Issa emphasized that the two are not in conflict. Civilized constitutions and laws accommodate religious particularity, and any perceived tension between faith and civic belonging is a construction of extremist ideology, not an inherent reality. He commended the American Muslim community for

rejecting the agendas of extremist groups, movements that have reduced Islam to narrow political ends and distorted its image through radicalism. In his view, American Muslims stand as a source of pride within the broader Islamic world, having demonstrated religious moderation through tolerance, coexistence, and principled civic engagement. Their relationships across the diverse fabric of American society, he noted, are a genuine contribution to social cohesion.

The session also addressed hatred broadly, and Islamophobia specifically. Sheikh Al-Issa affirmed that civilized legal frameworks do not permit hate in any form,

and expressed appreciation for the Muslim community's active role in confronting hateful voices, slogans, and practices, whatever their source, and regardless of which religion or ethnicity they target.

A third area of discussion concerned the misrepresentation of Islamic terminology. Drawing on his international surveys and direct observation, Sheikh Al-Issa walked through specific examples of commonly misunderstood terms, offering scholarly analysis grounded in textual evidence and historical context to outline the most effective approaches to correcting these misconceptions. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa delivers the keynote address at the opening of the international conference "The Future of Human Civilization Facing the Challenges of AI," hosted by the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez under the patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI.

AI and the Future of Human Civilization

By
MWL



The Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez, one of Morocco's most ambitious international academic institutions, hosted a landmark conference in late April 2026 under the patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI.

Titled "The Future of Human Civilization in the Age of Artificial Intelligence,"

the gathering brought together the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, academics and thinkers from 75 countries, and the university's global partners, with an audience exceeding 2,000 attendees. Sheikh Al-Issa delivered the keynote address at the opening ceremony, a role that placed him at the center of one of the most con-

sequential conversations currently unfolding in international intellectual life.

A Civilization at an Inflection Point

Sheikh Al-Issa opened by situating the AI revolution within the long sweep of human intellectual history, rejecting the tendency to treat artificial intelligence as an isolated technological phenomenon and insisting instead on understanding it as the latest chapter in a civilizational story centuries in the making. He traced the arc from the knowledge revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, which shifted humanity away from traditional material thinking toward an expanded experimental scientific method, back further still, to the Muslim scholars of the 10th and 11th centuries who had first established the foundational principles of that method. The implication was clear: the civilization now grappling with AI's consequences is one that Islamic scholarship helped build.

From those foundations, he argued, the present moment represents a qualitative leap unlike any before it. The AI revolution has transformed the nature of the machine itself, from a system of digital memory limited to storing knowledge, into one capable of analyzing and generating ideas. That shift, he suggested, carries consequences that demand more than technical responses. It demands a civilizational answer.

An Ethical Framework Before Everything Else

The core of Sheikh Al-Issa's address was a call for AI development to be governed by a uni-



Sheikh Al-Issa joins international figures and academics on stage at the opening session of the Euromed University of Fez conference, attended by over 2,000 participants from 75 countries, including the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations.

fied ethical framework rooted in shared human values — and crucially, for that framework to be established before AI systems are built, not retrofitted after the fact. He was particularly insistent on this sequencing when it came to AI handling content related to religions, ethnicities, and cultures, warning against allowing such systems to become tools that promote "hatred, racism, or theories of civilizational conflict." The danger, he made clear, is not hypothetical. Algorithmic systems trained on biased or manipulated data do not merely reflect the world; they amplify it, and at scale.

On accountability, he was equally direct, calling for "holding relevant companies accountable through transparency" and for "establishing strict boundaries in sensitive and high-risk areas, as

well as in major, consequential decisions" — domains where, he insisted, final judgment must remain in human hands. The framing was deliberate: this is not a matter of technical regulation alone, but of civilizational responsibility.

The Human and the Machine

Perhaps the most philosophically substantive passage of the address was Sheikh Al-Issa's articulation of the fundamental distinction between human and machine intelligence — a distinction he argued must not be allowed to blur, however sophisticated AI systems become.

"Humans are free in their thinking," he said, "and this freedom leads them to what is right when their reasoning is sound. Machines, however — foremost among them



Sheikh Al-Issa receives a commemorative award on the sidelines of the Euromed University of Fez conference, in recognition of the Muslim World League's contribution to the international dialogue on artificial intelligence and human civilization.

artificial intelligence — are not free; they are bound to the will of those who feed them, whether with facts or misleading information. As such, they possess neither awareness nor independent will."

This is not a limitation that can be engineered away. It is a structural feature of what machines are — and it is why the ethical weight of AI development rests entirely on human shoulders. He concluded with a formulation that captured the whole argument in a single sentence: "Our civilizational future with artificial intelligence depends on us, not on the technology itself, since it ultimately represents us within its vast domain according to the instructions and authority we grant it."

The Fez Declaration

At the conclusion of its proceedings, the conference issued the "Fez Message on Human Civilization and Artificial Intelligence" — a formal declaration affirming that AI represents a significant opportunity to advance human progress, provided its development takes place within a framework that respects universal values, human dignity, and the principles of fairness. The Message called for AI governance grounded in transparency, responsibility, accountability, and explainability; for international regulatory frameworks capable of addressing algorithmic bias and data quality; and for multilateral cooperation to prevent technolog-

ical fragmentation or domination by any single set of actors.

It also flagged the risks associated with cybersecurity, disinformation, and hate speech, calling for effective monitoring and early-warning mechanisms, and encouraged the development of AI models that account for cultural and linguistic diversity — thereby strengthening digital sovereignty and ensuring equitable access. The conference concluded by underscoring that artificial intelligence must ultimately be directed toward serving peace, sustainable development, and rapprochement among cultures and civilizations — a formulation that echoed closely the vision Sheikh Al-Issa had set out in his opening address. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa addresses the ceremony at ICESCO headquarters in Rabat, marking ten million visitors to the International Exhibition and Museum of the Prophet's Biography and Islamic Civilization.

MWL Marks Ten Million Visitors to the International Exhibition and Museum of the Prophet's Biography

By
MWL



When the International Exhibition and Museum of the Prophet's Biography and Islamic Civilization opened its doors at ICESCO headquarters in Rabat in November 2022, it did so as an act of institutional ambition: the first touring edition of the MWL's flagship Museums of the Prophet's Biography to be established outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

brought to Morocco to coincide with Rabat's designation as the Islamic world's capital of culture for that year.

Launched under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and inaugurated in the presence of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Moulay El Hassan, the museum was from the outset a project of the highest symbolic and



Distinguished scholars, ministers, and diplomats attend the ten million visitor ceremony at ICESCO headquarters in Rabat, representing the breadth of international support for the museum and its mission.

institutional significance — the fruit of a strategic partnership between ICESCO, the Muslim World League, and the Mohammedia League of Scholars of Morocco.

In late April 2026, Sheikh Al-Issa attended a ceremony at ICESCO headquarters in Rabat marking a milestone that few cultural institutions of any kind reach: ten million visitors. The ceremony was held in the presence of distinguished scholars, ministers, diplomats, and intellectuals, reflecting both the breadth of the museum's reach and the weight that the international community has come to attach to it.

From Medina to the World

The museum's origins lie in Medina, Saudi Arabia, where the International Fairs and Muse-

ums of the Prophet's Biography and Islamic Civilization was first established as a permanent institution under MWL's oversight. The Rabat branch was organized as a culmination of that strategic partnership, concerned with presenting the messages of Islam — justice, peace, mercy, tolerance, coexistence, and moderation — based on the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, and Islamic history, through the latest technologies.

The Rabat museum presents the Prophet's life with modern technology across 25 sections, each designed to draw visitors into the history and values of Islamic civilization through immersive, interactive means. Among its most distinctive features is what its directors describe as the largest audited and verified cinema in any

exhibition of its kind, alongside a simulation of the Prophet's pulpit. Holograms, 3D reconstructions of Makkah and Madinah, and curated content on the Prophet's character, values, and legacy guide visitors through a spiritual and historical journey designed to be as accessible to a young child encountering the Prophet's story for the first time as to a scholar approaching it from decades of study.

Ten Million and Counting

The visitor numbers tell their own story. By late July 2023, less than a year after opening, the museum had already received more than two million visitors, a pace that the ICESCO Director-General described at the time as exceptional by the standards of international exhibitions. The three



Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb described museum as "a miraculous project" that presents "both clear and hidden aspects of the life of the best of human beings."

million milestone was celebrated at a dedicated ceremony attended by Sheikh Al-Issa alongside the ICESCO President and the President of the Mohammadiyah Association of Scholars. By 2024, the number had surpassed five million. The ten million mark, reached in 2026, represents a sustained and growing draw across multiple years, a sign of recurring public engagement.

The museum has welcomed a diverse range of visitors, from high-level international dignitaries to local Moroccan families and tourists from across the world. Leaders and scholars have offered their reflections. Among them, Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb described it as "a miraculous project" that presents "both clear and hidden aspects of the life of the best of human beings." The Grand

Imam of Al-Azhar added that the institution had harnessed all its potential to serve the project and spread it to the world as "an Islamic civilizational façade introducing the Prophet's biography and his sublime message."

The MWL's Civilizational Mission in Practice

Sheikh Al-Issa's attendance at the ten million ceremony was fitting. As Secretary-General of the MWL and General Supervisor of the International Museums of the Prophet's Biography and Islamic Civilization, he has been closely identified with the museum's development since its earliest stages, and has consistently framed it as something more than a cultural institution. When the three million milestone was celebrated, he spoke of

the museum's role in enhancing Islamic awareness, countering extremism, and presenting the true image of Islam to non-Muslims: three objectives that sit at the heart of the MWL's contemporary mission.

That mission finds in the Rabat museum one of its most concrete expressions. Abstract commitments to dialogue, coexistence, and the presentation of a moderate, outward-facing Islam become, within the museum's walls, something a visitor can walk through, see, and feel. The ten million figure is a measure of how many people — Moroccan and international, Muslim and non-Muslim, young and old — have encountered the Prophet's biography and Islamic civilization on those terms. ■



Sheikh Al-Issa delivers a keynote address at the Oxford Center for Islamic Studies in which he calls for dialogue that moves beyond repetition and builds measurable impact

Sheikh Al-Issa's Visit to the United Kingdom: Strengthening Dialogue with Scholars and Islamic Leaders

By
MWL



Sheikh Al-Issa visited the United Kingdom in June for a series of engagements aimed at strengthening dialogue with the country's experts, Islamic leaders, and scholars. Prominent among them were his interactive meetings with senior members of the House of Lords. Received at the residence of Lord Rook and Lord Walney, Sheikh Al-Issa was joined by a high-level delegation for in-depth conversations.

The discussions spanned a wide range of topics, including the Islamic civilizational approach to the questions facing Muslim

communities in non-Muslim societies. The delegation expressed appreciation for the MWL's active role, distinguished initiatives, and efforts to clarify the true message of Islam and to confront extremist ideas and ideologies in all their forms.

Speech at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies

During his visit to the UK, Sheikh Al-Issa delivered a keynote address at the opening of a "high-level meeting of the Expert Group" at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, a University of Oxford affiliate

dedicated to advanced research into Islam and Muslim societies.

In his address in June, Sheikh Al-Issa called for a reinvigoration of religious dialogue, one that builds genuine bridges rather than revisiting familiar ground. He outlined two significant tracks through which MWL has pursued effective engagement. The first operates within the Islamic world itself, bringing together all schools of thought and traditions. This work produced the Charter of Makkah and the Charter of Building Bridges Between Islamic Schools of Thought and Sects, both commended by the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The second track addresses engagement between the Islamic world and wider global communities. It resulted in two major initiatives presented at the United Nations: "Building Bridges Between East and West," introduced at UN Headquarters in New York, and "Protecting Global Youth from Extremism and Violent Extremism," presented at the UN Office in Geneva. Both drew participation from senior UN officials alongside religious, intellectual, parliamentary, academic, and youth leaders.

Framing the standard against which all dialogue efforts should be judged, Sheikh Al-Issa stated "successful dialogue is never measured by who appears to win on the surface. Rather, it is measured by the truths uncovered and the shared objectives achieved—completely detached from personal whims or hidden agendas."

He also emphasized the concept of preventive peace, describing it as an approach that addresses, at an early stage, the civilizational ten-



Sheikh Al-Issa in a meeting with Mr. Humza Yousaf, Former First Minister of Scotland.

sions among nations and peoples that often give rise to conflict. As he put it, "preventative peace is the art of protecting the future from the mistakes of the present." He noted that MWL has been developing programs in this area for more than a decade. His address also covered the key conditions that enable effective dialogue, as well as the common reasons many dialogue efforts fall short of their intended aims.

He closed on a note of shared humanity, cautioning that intellectual disagreement must never override respect for the individual. "There is simply no way to convince others without first respecting their dignity, appealing to their minds, and showing kindness to their feelings," he said, framing mutual understanding and coexistence as the path toward what he called a shared harbor of peace and security. ■



Lord Rook, Senior Member of House of Lords, receives Sheikh Al-Issa at his residence in London



Sheikh Al-Issa delivers lecture on Artificial Intelligence and Hate Speech on Social Media Platforms at NYU.

NYU Hosts Sheikh Al-Issa for Lecture on Artificial Intelligence

The New York University (NYU) — one of the world's leading research institutions — hosted Sheikh Al-Issa for a lecture and comprehensive dialogue with a distinguished group of university academics and invited guests. The gathering focused on examining challenges linked to AI-generated content, online extremism, and the spread of misinformation.

The session centered on one of the most pressing challenges at the intersection of technology and society: the use of artificial intelligence to generate and amplify hate speech across social media platforms. Sheikh Al-Issa drew on extensive surveys and field studies to walk through the causes of this phenomenon and present concrete models for addressing it, with particular attention to the role that religious institutions and civil society can play in countering extremist discourse.

The discussion moved through the technical mechanisms driving the problem. These included AI-gen-

erated content — algorithmically produced texts, images, and videos carrying discriminatory or inflammatory material — and behavioral targeting, through which platforms analyze user interests to direct divisive content toward specific audiences in order to maximize engagement. Participants also examined the role of bots and coordinated inauthentic networks in spreading hate speech and disinformation at scale, the use of deepfake technologies to defame individuals and communities, and the way recommendation algorithms systematically surface provocative content precisely because it generates the highest interaction.

Sheikh Al-Issa framed the broader challenge as a legal and ethical one: how to strike the right balance between protecting freedom of expression within its legitimate boundaries and shielding society from content designed to incite hostility — while establishing clear lines of responsibility for digital platforms and the actors who operate within them. ■



Foreign Policy Magazine hosts a discussion session followed by a dinner in honor of Sheikh Al-Issa attended by a distinguished group of religious, intellectual, media, and political figures.

Foreign Policy Magazine Hosts a Session on Islam and Coexistence

By
MWL



As part of his engagements across the United States this May, Sheikh Al-Issa attended a discussion session hosted by Foreign Policy, the American global affairs magazine, in Washington, D.C. The session was attended by Editor-in-Chief Ravi Agrawal and CEO and Publisher Andrew Sollinger, alongside a distinguished group of religious, intellectual, media, and political figures.

Responding to questions from those present, Sheikh Al-Issa addressed the content and distinguishing features of the Makkah Charter. Attendees commended the document, noting that it reflects the broad-mindedness of Islam and gives expression to the faith's values of tolerance and coexistence, while engaging with a range of contemporary issues.

The Makkah Charter is regarded as one of the most significant contemporary religious documents. It was signed by more than 1,200 muftis and scholars, and its founding conference was attended by more than 4,500 Islamic thinkers. The Charter was subsequently endorsed by the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which recommended its integration into religious, educational, and cultural institutions across the Islamic world. In implementation of this recommendation, training programs for imams based on the Charter's principles are currently being conducted in multiple countries.

The session also covered a range of contemporary international issues in light of MWL's mission and objectives. ■

The Farewell Sermon: Establishing a Moral Framework for the Muslim Community

By
**Mashal
Imran**

On the 9th of Dhu al-Hijjah, the vast plain of Arafah fills with millions of Muslims as they mark the pinnacle of their Hajj. From noon until sunset, they remain: praying, repenting, calling on God in what Islamic tradition considers the greatest act of supplication available to a human being. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) described the significance of this simply in the words: "Hajj is Arafah" (Sunan Ibn Majah, 3015).

It is believed that on Arafah, Allah descends in a manner befitting His majesty and forgives more souls than on any other day of the year. Those performing Hajj stand in direct supplication; those unable to make the pilgrimage are urged to fast, seeking the forgiveness of two years' worth of sins. Across the Muslim world, the 9th of Dhu al-Hijjah carries a weight that few days on any religious calendar can match.

And it is the same day on which, in the



year 10 AH, the Prophet (PBUH) mounted his camel Al Qaswa, rode to the valley of Uranah at the foot of the plain, and spoke to between one hundred thousand and one hundred and twenty-five thousand people gathered from every corner of the Arabian Peninsula. His companions understood, though they could not have said precisely why, that this gathering was unlike anything that had come before. He began by telling them he did not know whether he would ever meet them again in this place, in this life.

That pilgrimage — Hajjat al-Wada, the Farewell Pilgrimage — became the fixed model for how every Muslim performs Hajj. The address the Prophet (PBUH) delivered at Arafah and continued over the following days at Mina is one of the most studied and transmitted speeches in the history of any civilization. Known as Khutbat al-Wada, the Farewell Sermon, it survives as a composite of authentic narrations preserved in Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, the Musnad of Imam Ahmad, and other major hadith collections — recorded by companions who understood they were witnesses to something that had to be carried forward with precision.

What those narrations form together is a public articulation of the core moral obligations of the Muslim community, delivered during the rites of worship, before the largest collective gathering in the history of early Islam, at the exact moment the Quran declared the religion complete.

The Pilgrimage That Set the Template

The Prophet (PBUH) had per-

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The Farewell Sermon functions in Muslim societies less as a historical record than as a founding text.... Scholars have identified it as the earliest comprehensive public articulation of such rights, announced fourteen centuries before international human rights law existed

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formed Hajj every year before the Hijra, never missing it while in Makkah. After the migration to Madinah, ten years passed without Hajj — consumed by the construction of a new community, by conflict, by the Conquest of Makkah in 8 AH, and by the task of bringing an entire peninsula into a coherent moral and political order. By the time 10 AH arrived, the Ka'bah had been purified of idols, the sacred city was open to Muslim pilgrims, and the Arabian Peninsula was largely under Muslim authority. The conditions for Hajj, fully performed under Islamic rites and in Islamic custody, existed for the first time.

When the Prophet (PBUH) announced his intention, people poured into Madinah from every direction, joining a procession that grew with every mile. Tribes and communities arrived along the route until, by the 4th of Dhu al-Hijjah, the assembly had grown beyond anything the Muslim world had seen.

That scale mattered: the obligations the Prophet (PBUH) was

about to announce required the largest possible witness — and this pilgrimage delivered one. The scholars of subsequent generations derived the entire legal framework of Hajj from the details of this single journey, recording every station, every movement, every prayer, guided by his instruction: "Take your rituals from me" (Sahih Muslim, 1297). One pilgrimage would teach every pilgrimage to follow.

The Inviolability of Every Person

When the 9th of Dhu al-Hijjah arrived — the Day of Arafah — the Prophet (PBUH) mounted Qaswa and rode to the valley of Uranah, where the crowd had assembled for Wuquf, the standing that is the pilgrimage's spiritual center. It was a blessed Friday afternoon, and as he spoke, something arrived that altered the meaning of the occasion entirely.

He opened the sermon with a question: what day was this? What month? What city? Each time, he let the answers settle

Prophetic Legacy



Pilgrims perform tawaf around the Ka'bah at the Masjid al-Haram — one of the rites whose entire legal framework was derived by classical scholars from the details of the Prophet's (PBUH) Farewell Pilgrimage in 10 AH.

before pressing forward. Then he drew a line of equivalence the assembled crowd could not miss.

The sacred months and the sacred city of Makkah were categories that pre-Islamic Arab culture already treated as absolute — periods in which ordinary violence was suspended, blood feuds laid aside, raids halted. The Prophet (PBUH) took those familiar markers of inviolability and extended them permanently, without exception, to the lives, property, and honor of every believer.

The narration preserved in records states: "Verily your blood, your property and your honor are as sacred and inviolable as the sanctity of this day of yours, in this month of yours and in this town of yours" (Sahih al-Bukhari,

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Across the Muslim world, the 9th of Dhu al-Hijjah carries a weight that few days on any religious calendar can match — a day on which the distance between the believer and their Lord is understood to collapse

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1741; Sahih Muslim, 1218).

This was law announced before witnesses. The person became the permanent equivalent of the most protected day on the calendar — a sanctity that belonged to everyone equally and admitted no variation by power or rank.

It came with an accountability that reached beyond any earthly authority: "Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds" (Sahih Muslim, 1218). The reckoning the Prophet (PBUH) invoked was a certainty binding



Muslims walk toward the plain of Arafah during Hajj — retracing a journey first made by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the year 10 AH.

on everyone, including those who held power over others.

Dismantling the Architecture of Injustice

From the inviolability of persons, the sermon turned to the specific structures through which pre-Islamic Arabian society had sustained injustice across generations. Two received direct and immediate demolition: inherited blood vengeance and usury.

The culture of jahiliyyah ran on inherited grievance. A killing created a debt of blood that passed from father to son, compounding across generations, its original circumstances long dissolved into tribal identity and pride. The Prophet (PBUH) declared the entire system abolished, beginning, he said, with claims belonging to

his own family. This was a demonstration that the principle applied universally, without exception for rank or kinship.

Usury, *riba*, received the same treatment. The Quran had addressed it directly: "Allah has permitted trade and forbidden interest" (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:275). The sermon formalized the abolition of all outstanding interest obligations. Capital was to remain with its owner; its multiplication through exploitation of need was over. Again, he named his own family's interests first — the *riba* owed to his uncle Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib was the first to be waived.

The pattern across both abolitions is unmistakable: the Prophet (PBUH) placed himself and

those closest to him inside the obligations he was announcing. Everyone — including those with the most to lose — stood within the moral framework being established. That refusal of exception gave the announcement its force.

Alongside these, the sermon reaffirmed the fundamental obligation of trust: goods entrusted to a person's care must be returned intact. The word in Islamic tradition for this is *amanah*, and its fulfillment is treated not as exceptional virtue but as the baseline of ethical life. A community in which *amanah* holds is a community with a working moral foundation. A community in which it fails has lost something that no amount of ritual observance can replace.



Pilgrims converge on the plain of Arafah on the 9th of Dhu al-Hijjah — the day the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) described as the heart of Hajj itself. It was before a gathering of this scale, in the year 10 AH, that the Farewell Sermon was delivered and the terms of the Muslim community's moral life were set before witnesses commanded to pass them on.

No Superiority Except in God-Consciousness

Perhaps the declaration from the Farewell Sermon that has traveled furthest — debated, cited, invoked in conversations about dignity and justice across fourteen centuries — is the one on human equality. It arrived in the sermon's treatment of the Muslim ummah as a brotherhood, but its reach extended well beyond any single community's boundaries.

Recorded in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad (23489) and supported across multiple authentic chains, the Prophet (PBUH) declared: "O people, your Lord is one and your father Adam is one. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab. A white person has no superiority over a black person, nor a black

person over a white, except by piety and good action."

The Quran had established this foundation: "O humanity, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you" (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:13). But the sermon announced this idea in the open, before the most demographically diverse gathering the early Muslim world had ever produced — people from different tribes, different regions, different origins, all standing together on the same ground, all wearing the same undifferentiated white of ihram. The pilgrimage was, physically and visually, the enactment of the principle it was preach-

ing. The garment of ihram strips away every marker of status and wealth. The plain of Arafah arranges everyone equally. The sermon named what the gathering was already showing.

In a social order that had organized itself entirely around lineage and tribal hierarchy, this was a structural intervention, not a spiritual aspiration. The only legitimate currency of worth, the Prophet (PBUH) said plainly, was taqwa — God-consciousness made real through conduct. Every other basis for human distinction was abolished.

The Day the Religion Was Declared Complete

When the verse came, Umar ibn al-Khattab wept. The Prophet (PBUH) asked what moved him, and Umar said it was the sense of completion — that a religion, once perfected, had nowhere left to go but forward in the hands of its people.

What had arrived, in the closing stretch of that sermon at Arafah, was a verse that those present understood immediately, even as its full weight settled slowly: "This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and chosen Islam as your way" (Surah Al-Maidah, 5:3).

A Jewish scholar later told Umar that this verse, had it been revealed to them, would have become the occasion for a permanent festival. Umar replied that he knew exactly when and where it had come — on the evening of Arafah, a Friday — and that for Muslims, that day already carried more than enough meaning of its own. The day of Arafah was already the greatest day on the Islamic calendar. The

declaration of completion had chosen it deliberately.

That the sealing of the faith arrived during worship, before the largest assembly in the early Muslim world, was itself a statement about the nature of Islam: its obligations belonged to the community gathered there and were announced to all of them at once. The faith was sealed in public. Its terms were set before witnesses who were commanded to pass them on.

A Covenant Designed to Outlast Its Moment

What makes the Farewell Pilgrimage historically singular is not only what was said, but the inseparability of where and how it was said. The Prophet (PBUH) was speaking inside the rites of Hajj, at the apex of Wuquf at Arafah. The moral framework he was articulating was delivered within worship, and that embedding has never been undone.

Every Muslim who has stood at Arafah since that afternoon has stood at the place where those obligations were announced. The rites of tawaf, the stoning of the jamarat at Mina in remembrance of Ibrahim's (PBUH) three refusals of Iblis, the sacrifice of Eid al-Adha — all of these carry within them the memory of a moment when the community was told, during its most fundamental act of collective worship, that their obligations to one another were as sacred as the ground beneath their feet.

The Prophet (PBUH) had understood this. Before closing, he asked the crowd to convey what they had heard to those who were absent, and he offered a thought that gen-



Praying on the Day of Arafah is considered the single greatest moment of supplication in the Islamic calendar, when Allah is believed to forgive more souls than on any other day of the year.

erations of scholars have returned to: that some of those who received the message secondhand might understand it more deeply than those who heard it in person (Sahih al-Bukhari, 67; Sahih Muslim, 1679). It was an instruction that transformed the sermon from a speech delivered once into a chain of moral transmission running across every generation. Then he asked twice, in a voice that carried across the valley: "Have I conveyed the message?" And when the crowd answered yes, he raised his finger toward the sky and said: "O Allah, bear witness" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 4406).

The Farewell Sermon functions in Muslim societies less as a historical record than as a founding text. Classical jurists across all four major schools drew upon its dec-

larations to develop the concept of inviolable rights — life, intellect, lineage, property, and religion — the organizing framework of Islamic legal theory on human dignity. Scholars have identified it as the earliest comprehensive public articulation of such rights, announced fourteen centuries before international human rights law existed, publicly witnessed, explicitly transmitted, and never revoked. Its principles continue to surface in contemporary discussions of justice, equality, and governance with the force of obligations that time has not diminished.

Those obligations were set at Arafah, during Hajj, at the moment the faith was declared complete. Every believer who stands on that plain carries the weight of having inherited them. ■

Eid al-Adha:

How One Father's Trial Became Every Believer's Inheritance

By
Noreen
Ahmad

Every year, on the 10th of Dhu al-Hijja, something remarkable happens across the Muslim world.

Families rise before dawn, dress with care, and walk together to the mosque for the Eid prayer — a communal act of worship that marks the official beginning of the celebration. When the prayers conclude, the day's central act begins: the offering of Udhiyah; the ritual sacrifice of a livestock animal that every Muslim who is financially able is required to perform.

It is from this act that the festival takes its name: Eid al-Adha, translating to the Festival of Sacrifice.

The day falls at the close of the Hajj pilgrimage — the annual journey to Makkah that every Muslim who is physically and financially able must undertake at least once in their lifetime, and one of the five pillars upon which Islam is built. The connection between the two is not coincidental. On the 9th of Dhu al-Hijja, the day before Eid, pilgrims



gather on the vast plain of Arafah — standing from noon until sunset in prayer and supplication. That same evening, they move to Muzdalifah, then to Mina, where on the morning of Eid they perform the offering of Udhiyah. The pilgrim in Mina and the family in their neighborhood mosque are performing the same act, on the same day, in remembrance of the same story.

Eid al-Adha is not simply a celebration. It is a commemoration. Every element of it — the sacrifice, the distribution of meat to the poor, the days of prayer and remembrance — points back to a single moment in the life of one man. A moment that the Qur'an describes as the most searching trial ever placed before a human soul. A father. His son. A knife. And a question that has never stopped being asked: what are you truly willing to surrender?

It is a question that arrived not as philosophy, but as a dream — vivid, recurring, and impossible to ignore — in the heart of a man who had spent a lifetime proving his answer. But nothing that had come before prepared him for what came next.

A Father's Test

Ibrahim is one of the most revered figures in all of Islam. The Qur'an refers to him as a hanif — one who turned purely and completely toward the Divine (Surah Aal-Imran, 3:67) — and as the father of the prophets, the man from whose lineage both Ismail and Ishaq were born, and through them, a line of prophethood that would culminate in our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Allah honored him with a title

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Every element of Eid al-Adha — the sacrifice, the distribution of meat to the poor, the days of prayer and remembrance — points back to a single moment in the life of one man. A moment that the Qur'an describes as the most searching trial ever placed before a human soul. A father. His son. A knife. And a question that has never stopped being asked: what are you truly willing to surrender?

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found nowhere else in the Qur'an: Khalilullah — the intimate friend of Allah (Surah An-Nisa, 4:125). In the five daily prayers, Muslims invoke his name and send blessings upon him alongside the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) — a practice that has continued unbroken for over fourteen centuries.

And yet, for all that Ibrahim would come to represent, his life was defined not by ease but by trial. He had waited decades for a child. After years of longing, Ibrahim prayed: "My Lord, grant me offspring from the righteous" (Surah As-Saffat, 37:100). Classical scholars, including Ibn Kathir in *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*, record that Ibrahim was advanced in age when this prayer was finally answered — some narrations place him at 86 at the time of Ismail's birth, others at 83. What all sources agree upon is that the wait had been long, and the gift, when it came, was immeasurable.

When Ismail finally arrived, the Qur'an describes him as a ghulam haleem — a forbearing, patient boy (Surah As-Saffat, 37:101). He was the answer to years of longing, a gift whose weight only a man who had waited that long could truly feel.

Shortly after Ismail's birth, Allah commanded Ibrahim to take the infant and his mother Hajar to the valley of Makkah — a place with no water, no vegetation, and no inhabitants — and leave them there. Ibrahim obeyed. As he turned to walk away, Hajar called after him: was this the command of Allah? When he confirmed that it was, she said simply that Allah would not abandon them. From her desperate search between the hills of Safa and Marwa — running seven times back and forth as her infant cried — the miraculous Zamzam well broke through the earth. A spring that has flowed without interruption for



The Zamzam well in Makkah — the spring that broke through the earth in answer to Hajar's desperation, as she ran seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa with Ismail, her infant child, crying beneath her. It has never run dry in the thousands of years since, a reminder that what emerges from surrender is often greater than what was given up

thousands of years and continues to do so today.

The pattern of Ibrahim's life had already been established long before the mountain. He was consistently asked to let go of what he held most dear, and consistently, what emerged from that letting go was greater than what he had surrendered. But the final test, when it came, would surpass everything that had preceded it.

When Ismail had grown old enough to walk beside his father, the dream began. Night after night, the same vision returned: Ibrahim was sacrificing his son. In the tradition of the prophets, such dreams carried the full force of divine command. The Qur'an names this moment a *balaa'un mubeen* — a clear and grievous trial (Surah As-Saffat, 37:106).

Ibrahim did not retreat into silence, and he did not act alone. He went to his son and told him everything. "O my son, I have seen in a dream that I am sacrificing you. So look, what do you think?" (Surah As-Saffat, 37:102) That Ibrahim consulted his son is itself significant. He was not seeking permission — the command had come from Allah. He was extending to his child the dignity of meeting his trial with open eyes rather than in ignorance. And Ismail has heard, answered in a way that has moved believers across fourteen centuries: "O my father, do what you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah wills, among the steadfast." (Surah As-Saffat, 37:102)

The Story of Sacrifice

On the day of the trial, they walked together.

The Qur'an uses the word *aslama* to describe what happened — they both submitted (Surah As-Saffat, 37:103). It was a complete and mutual surrender, father and son arriving at the same place in their hearts before they arrived at the appointed ground. Classical commentators including Al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir record that Iblis appeared three times along that walk to tempt Ibrahim away from his purpose. Three times, Ibrahim drove him off with stones. The ritual of *rami al-jamarat* — the stoning of the three pillars performed by pilgrims in Mina to this day — commemorates those three refusals.

When they reached the place, Ibrahim laid his son gently on the ground. The Qur'an uses the word *tal-lahu* to describe how he

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Ibn Kathir and Al-Tabari both noted that in the moment Ibrahim raised the knife — before any blood was shed, before the physical act was complete — the sacrifice was already accepted. Ibrahim had given his son in his heart. The ram confirmed what the interior act had already accomplished. Therefore, the trial was never about what Ibrahim's hands would do. It was about what his heart had already done

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positioned him — carefully, deliberately, with full intention (Surah As-Saffat, 37:103). He raised the knife. He brought it down.

The blade did not cut.

A voice called out: "O Ibrahim, you have fulfilled the vision. Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good" (Surah As-Saffat, 37:104-105). A ram appeared — described in the Qur'an as dhibhin azeem, a great sacrifice (Surah As-Saffat, 37:107) — and was offered in Ismail's place.

There is a depth in this substitution that deserves careful attention. The Qur'an describes the ram as fidyah — a ransom (Surah As-Saffat, 37:107). A ransom is something given in exchange for something already considered surrendered. Ibn Kathir and Al-Tabari both noted that in the moment Ibrahim raised the knife — before any blood was shed, before the physical act was complete — the sacrifice was already ac-

cepted. Ibrahim had given his son in his heart. The ram confirmed what the interior act had already accomplished.

Therefore, the trial was never about what Ibrahim's hands would do. It was about what his heart had already done.

The Meaning Within the Act

The Qur'an states this with unmistakable clarity: "Their meat will not reach Allah, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you." (Surah Al-Hajj, 22:37)

Every year, on the days of Eid al-Adha, Muslims across the world perform Udhiyah — the ritual sacrifice of an animal in commemoration of Ibrahim's trial. Islamic jurisprudence specifies that the animal must be healthy, free of defect, and of sufficient age: one year for sheep and goats, two years for cattle, and five years for camels. These conditions

point toward the same principle the Qur'an establishes: the offering must cost something real. It must come from one's best, not from one's surplus.

The 9th-century scholar Al-Muhasibi, in his Ri'ayat Huquq Allah, observed that the greatest spiritual danger is not the abandonment of worship but its hollowing — the performance of outward forms while the heart remains untouched and unexamined. The sacrifice of Eid sits squarely within that tradition of self-reckoning. It asks the believer to select something of genuine value, stand before it, and release it — not because it has no worth, but because something else has greater worth.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) pointed to his chest and said: "Taqwa is here" (Sahih Muslim, 2564). The hand that holds the knife, the wealth that purchases the animal, the time given to the act — all of it reflects the condition of the heart that directs it. Ibrahim's story had already established this. The ram was accepted because the heart had already surrendered. Every Udhhiyah since has been, in its truest form, an attempt to arrive at that same interior place.

A Communal Responsibility

Ibrahim's surrender did not produce only a personal spiritual elevation. It produced a legacy that was, from the beginning, meant to be shared.

Islamic jurisprudence across all four major schools of thought — Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali — establishes that the meat of the Udhhiyah must be divided into three equal portions: one for the

Reflection

family, one for friends and neighbors, and one reserved strictly for those in need. The Hanafi school considers this distribution obligatory. The others regard it as strongly recommended. What all four agree upon is the underlying principle: no act of worship on this occasion is complete if its benefits remain enclosed within the household that performed it.

The Qur'an frames this as a matter of right: "And in their wealth there is a recognized right for the needy and the deprived" (Surah Adh-Dhariyat, 51:19). The word *haqq* — right — is precise. The portion that goes to the poor belongs to the recipient before it is offered. The one who distributes it is fulfilling an obligation.

The manner of that fulfillment carries its own instruction. "If you give charity openly, it is good; but if you conceal it and give it to the poor, it is better for you, and Allah will remove from you some of your misdeeds" (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:271). The *Udhiyah* distributed quietly, without display or expectation of recognition, is the fullest expression of what the festival asks: that the act of giving itself becomes a surrender, stripped of the desire to be seen giving.

Through this distribution, the festival performs something quietly extraordinary. It takes the most private of spiritual acts — a believer's interior reckoning with attachment and surrender — and turns it outward into the community. The family that sacrifices does not keep the whole animal. The neighbor who could not afford to sacrifice receives a portion. The stranger at the edge of the community is includ-



Worshippers perform Eid al-Adha prayers at Masjid Khairuddin in Amritsar.

ed. For one moment, across every street and city and continent where Muslims live, the distance between abundance and need is deliberately, structurally narrowed.

The festival becomes, through this division, something larger than a household celebration. It becomes a redistribution — of food, of joy, of belonging.

What Every Generation Inherits

Ibrahim's story is not preserved in the Qur'an as history. It is preserved as instruction.

The specific content of Ibrahim's tests — his father's idols, the desert valley, the dream — belonged to his time. But the shape of the test is universal. Every human being carries attachments that quietly compete for the place that should belong to the Divine. Status, security, the approval of oth-

ers, the fear of loss — the forms change across centuries but the tension does not. The question Ibrahim was asked is the question every generation inherits: around what, ultimately, is your life arranged?

Al-Ghazali wrote in his *Ihya Ulum al-Din* that the human heart is capable of holding only one ultimate loyalty at a time. Everything else arranges itself around that center. What Ibrahim's life demonstrated — across the leaving of his homeland, the years of waiting, the desert trial, and finally the mountain — was not the suppression of human love but its proper ordering. He loved his son with a depth the Qur'an makes unmistakably clear in the weight it gives to the trial. But he loved his Lord more completely still, and that ordering did not diminish the love beneath it. It sanctified it.



Worshippers gather for Eid al-Adha prayers at mosques across the world — in a single collective act of remembrance that unites believers on the day of the Festival of Sacrifice.

Ibn al-Qayyim wrote in *Madar-ij al-Salikin* that the stations of the spiritual path are not visited once and left behind. They are returned to, tested again under new conditions, and deepened through repeated encounter. Eid al-Adha is, in that sense, an annual returning — to the question Ibrahim was asked, to the answer he gave, and to the honest examination of whether the year that has passed has brought the believer any closer to that same interior freedom.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was asked which days of deeds are most beloved to Allah. He replied: "There are no days in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these days" — meaning the first ten days of Dhu al-Hijja (Sunan Ibn Majah, 3613). These days gather in a single brief window the greatest acts of worship Islam prescribes

— the Hajj pilgrimage, the fast of Arafah, the sacrifice, and the remembrance of Allah. For those who cannot make the pilgrimage, the fast of the 9th of Dhu al-Hijja — the Day of Arafah — carries its own immense weight. The Prophet (PBUH) said of it: "It expiates the sins of the previous year and the coming year" (Sahih Muslim, 1162). Together, these days form an annual immersion in the values Ibrahim embodied across a lifetime.

A Legacy Written in Every Direction

When the days of Eid al-Adha close and the pilgrims begin their journeys home, the season lifts. The prayers quiet. The meals are finished. The portions have been distributed. And what remains is the most honest question the festival leaves behind: did something change?

The Qur'an records that Allah preserved Ibrahim's legacy deliberately — "And We left for him favorable mention among later generations" (Surah As-Saffat, 37:108). That preservation was not only about memory. It was about transmission — the passing forward of a way of being in the world that does not expire with the circumstances that produced it. Ibrahim's willingness to surrender what he loved most did not die on that mountain. It became the inheritance of every believer who has stood before an animal, or before their own heart, and asked whether they are truly prepared to let go.

The sacrifice, in this light, is an act of profound hope. It declares that the believer has not forgotten the lesson. That the attachments accumulated over another year have not quietly displaced what should remain at the center. That the answer to the question — what are you willing to surrender — is still, after everything, the same one Ibrahim gave.

Eid al-Adha asks for orientation. A turning, renewed each year, toward the same direction Ibrahim faced — away from the self and its endless accumulations, toward the One who gave everything that was ever held, and who asks, in return, only that we hold it lightly.

That is the legacy. And it is written not in a single act of sacrifice on a mountain thousands of years ago, but in every quiet morning since, when a believer rises before dawn, dresses with care, and walks out into the world carrying something of Ibrahim's willingness in their heart. ■

The top half of the page features a wide, ornate border with a repeating floral and geometric pattern in gold, blue, and red. Below this border is a decorative header with a blue background, featuring a central gold-colored archway filled with intricate floral and calligraphic designs. The archway is flanked by red and blue elements, and the entire header is topped with a row of small, stylized floral motifs.

The Charter of Makkah

**By the Conference on the
“Charter of Makkah”**

**Under the Umbrella of the
Muslim World League**

Convened between 22-24 Ramadhan 1440AH
corresponding to 27-29 May 2019

Inside the Making of the Kiswah

By
**Maryam
Raza**

When Allah commanded Ibrahim (peace be upon him) to raise the foundations of a House in the barren valley of Makkah, he and his son Isma'il built it in obedience, placing stone upon stone while their lips moved in supplication: "Our Lord, accept

this from us" (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:127). Ibrahim then called humanity to it, and the Holy Qur'an records Allah's response to that call: the valley filled, the city grew, and the Ka'bah has stood ever since as "a center and a sanctuary for the people" (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:125).



Five times a day, nearly two billion Muslims across every continent face its direction — a command established in the Qur'an: "Wherever you are, turn your faces toward it" (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:144). The House built by a prophet in an empty valley became the singular point toward which the entire Muslim world orients itself in prayer.

Every year, that House is clothed anew. A garment of black silk, embroidered with the Word of God in gold and silver thread, is draped over its four walls and fixed at its base. The cloth is called the Kiswah — from the Arabic *kiswa*, meaning robe or garment. To make it is to serve the House. Renewed without interruption across fifteen centuries, the Kiswah is that piety made material.

The Origins of a Sacred Tradition

The Ka'bah was being clothed long before the revelation of Islam, by people who understood that a sanctuary of such gravity required more than proximity — it required tending.

The first complete clothing of all four walls is attributed, in the account of the classical biographer Ibn Hisham, to Tubba Abu Karib As'ad, ruler of the Himyarite Kingdom of Yemen, who came to Makkah in the early fifth century CE and draped the House in a red-striped Yemeni weave called Ma'afir.

After Tubba, covering the Ka'bah was understood as an act of honor open to any ruler or merchant with the means to perform it. The coverings accumulated — one laid atop another, generation af-

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Since approximately 1224 CE, the Kiswah has remained black — eight centuries of unbroken inheritance. Black absorbs the intensity of the Makkan sun, resists wear, and provides the most legible ground for gold calligraphy

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ter generation — until their combined weight began to threaten the structure they were meant to dignify. It was Qusay ibn Kilab, the fifth great-grandfather of the Prophet (PBUH) and the consolidator of Quraysh authority over Makkah in the mid-fifth century CE, who gave the tradition its first institutional form: the Quraysh tribes would fund the covering collectively each year, transforming individual largesse into shared communal obligation.

Among those who contributed in this era was Nutaylah bint Janab, wife of Abdul-Muttalib and mother of al-Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him). When al-Abbas went missing as a child, she made a vow: if he were returned to her safely, she would clothe the Ka'bah with silk and brocade. He was found, and she kept her word. Recorded in the *Fath al-Bari* of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, her act is preserved as the first time silk was used for the Ka'bah's covering, and the first time a woman clothed it independently.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) grew up watching the

Quraysh manage and compete over this honor, but was barred from engaging in it. The early Muslims were not permitted to drape the Ka'bah until the Conquest of Makkah in 8 AH (630 CE). Even after entering the sanctuary as its custodian, the Prophet (PBUH) left the existing covering undisturbed.

It was only when a woman accidentally set the cloth alight while perfuming it with incense that the old Kiswah was finally lost. The Prophet (PBUH) replaced it with Yemeni cloth — from the same region that had furnished the very first covering under Tubba — and in doing so established the principle that has governed the Kiswah ever since: the House of God must be tended with intention, renewed with care, and served without end.

A History of Color

The Rightly Guided Caliphs continued the tradition with characteristic simplicity. Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman (may Allah be pleased with them) covered the Ka'bah with qubati — a fine white Egyptian linen embroi-



Artisans at the King Abdulaziz Complex hand-embroider a Kiswah panel in gold and silver thread.

dered by Coptic craftsmen. Umar ibn al-Khattab established that the Kiswah would be funded from the Bayt al-Mal, the state treasury, binding the tradition to the institutions of Islamic governance. Uthman ibn Affan became the first to place two layers simultaneously, each one with a separate gesture of care.

With the Umayyad dynasty,

the Kiswah acquired new dimensions of both devotion and sovereignty. Caliph Mu'awiyah introduced the practice of covering the Ka'bah twice a year — on Ashura and after Ramadan — in silk and brocade from Damascus, and ordered the removal of the pre-Islamic hangings that had accumulated beneath newer coverings, making deliberate renewal a

formal part of the tradition. His successors did not always hold to this discipline, and layering crept back. By the time the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdi performed Hajj in 160 AH (777 CE), the accumulated weight had grown dangerous. He decreed that only one Kiswah could cover the Ka'bah at any given time — a rule that has held ever since.

The Ka'bah has worn many colors across its history. The Prophet (PBUH) covered it in Yemeni cloth striped in white and red. The Rightly Guided Caliphs used white. Ibn al-Zubayr used red brocade. Al-Ma'mun dressed it three times a year in rotating colors. Subsequent Abbasid caliphs tried green. The Seljuk sultan covered it in yellow. Then came Abbasid Caliph al-Nasir, who settled on black. Since approximately 1224 CE, the Kiswah has remained black — eight centuries of unbroken inheritance. Black absorbs the intensity of the Makkah sun, resists wear, and provides the most legible ground for gold calligraphy. Every dynasty since has accepted it and left it unchanged.

From Cairo to Makkah

For most of its Islamic history, the Kiswah was made in Egypt — and it traveled.

From the Fatimid period onward, Cairo's workshops produced the covering each year, and its departure for Makkah was a public occasion. Crowds filled the streets to watch it pass, borne by camel in an ornate ceremonial container called the Mahmal, with an armed escort and a procession of drums and flags — the biographer Ibn Jubayr recorded the



A panel of the Kiswah laid flat, revealing the full geometry of its gold embroidery before installation. Each inscription is hand-drawn by master calligraphers in Thuluth script.

scene as early as 1184 CE.

Under the Mamluks, the right to produce the Kiswah became an assertion of sovereignty as much as an act of piety: when a Yemeni ruler attempted to send his own covering in 751 AH, Sultan Baybars treated it as a direct challenge to Egyptian primacy. That possessiveness endured through the Ottoman period, when Muhammad Ali Pasha formalized production in 1817 at the Dar al-Kiswah in Cairo's Kharanfash quarter — a dedicated workshop of over a hundred craftsmen, calligraphers, and embroiderers.

What ended it was a decision made in Makkah itself. In 1927, King Abdulaziz ibn Abdulrahman Al Saud established the first Saudi Kiswah workshop in the city's Ajyad district — a single-story building with sixty specialized workers that completed its

first Kiswah that same year. The logic was one of proximity and purpose: the cloth that clothes the House of God belongs in the city that holds it. Egypt sent the Kiswah for the final time in 1962, and production has remained in Makkah ever since.

The current facility — the King Abdulaziz Complex for Kiswah Production in the Umm al-Joud district, modernized in 1977 and renamed by royal decree of King Salman in 2018 — operates under the General Presidency for the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque. Over two hundred artisans, engineers, calligraphers, and technicians work across its departments year-round, producing not only the outer Kiswah but also the inner green covering of the Ka'bah. A single Kiswah requires a full year to produce, with embroidery

alone demanding eight to ten months of hand-stitching.

The Making

Each year, approximately 670 kilograms of natural white silk arrive from Italy and pass first through the laboratory — tested for tensile strength, thread density, and resistance to a full year of the Makkan sun — before moving to the dyeing department, where they are transformed into a deep, uniform black.

From there, the silk moves to the weaving hall. Plain panels are produced on high-speed looms; patterned sections, including the text of the Shahada woven directly into the fabric, are produced on Jacquard machines. Master calligraphers then hand-draw each inscription in the Thuluth script — one of the most formally demanding styles in the Arabic tradition, known for its curved

letterforms and elongated strokes — before it is transferred onto the panels by silkscreen as a guide for the embroiderers.

The embroidery is where the work truly lies. It is the only stage that cannot be mechanized, and it accounts for eight to ten months of the production cycle. Artisans stitch each letter and motif by hand using thread plated in 24-carat gold and in silver, over a cotton padding that raises the inscription approximately two centimeters from the surface of the silk. The raised relief is what makes the calligraphy legible and luminous to the millions standing below. Approximately 120 kilograms of gold-plated thread and 100 kilograms of silver-plated thread are dedicated to this process each year.

When complete, the panels are assembled on the world's largest sewing machine — 16 meters in length — and backed throughout with white cotton calico for structural support. The finished Kiswah covers 658 square meters, rises 14 meters, spans 47 meters in circumference, and weighs close to 980 kilograms.

The Garment and Its Inscriptions

The Kiswah is composed of several distinct parts, each with a specific function and inscription.

The most commanding element is the Hizam — the belt. A wide embroidered band, 95 centimeters tall and assembled from sixteen separate pieces of silk, it encircles the Ka'bah approximately two-thirds of the way up its full height. The Hizam carries Qur'anic verses rendered in Thuluth calligraphy in gold and silver thread. At each of the Ka'bah's four cor-

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In 1927, King Abdulaziz ibn Abdulrahman Al-Saud established the first Saudi Kiswah workshop in the city's Ajyad district — a modest single-story building with sixty specialized workers that completed its first Kiswah that same year.it

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ners, beneath the Hizam, square panels called the Kardashiyyat carry Surah al-Ikhlās inside circular medallions framed within squares — the chapter that distills the doctrine of divine unity into four verses. Between the corner panels, six additional Qur'anic verses appear in separate embroidered frames, separated by lamp motifs bearing divine Names: Ya Hayy Ya Qayyum, Al-Rahman Al-Rahim, Al-Hamdulillah. Every inscription on the Kiswah — on the main panels, the Hizam, the corner medallions — is executed in the same Thuluth hand, with the single stipulation that all text must remain legible from the ground below.

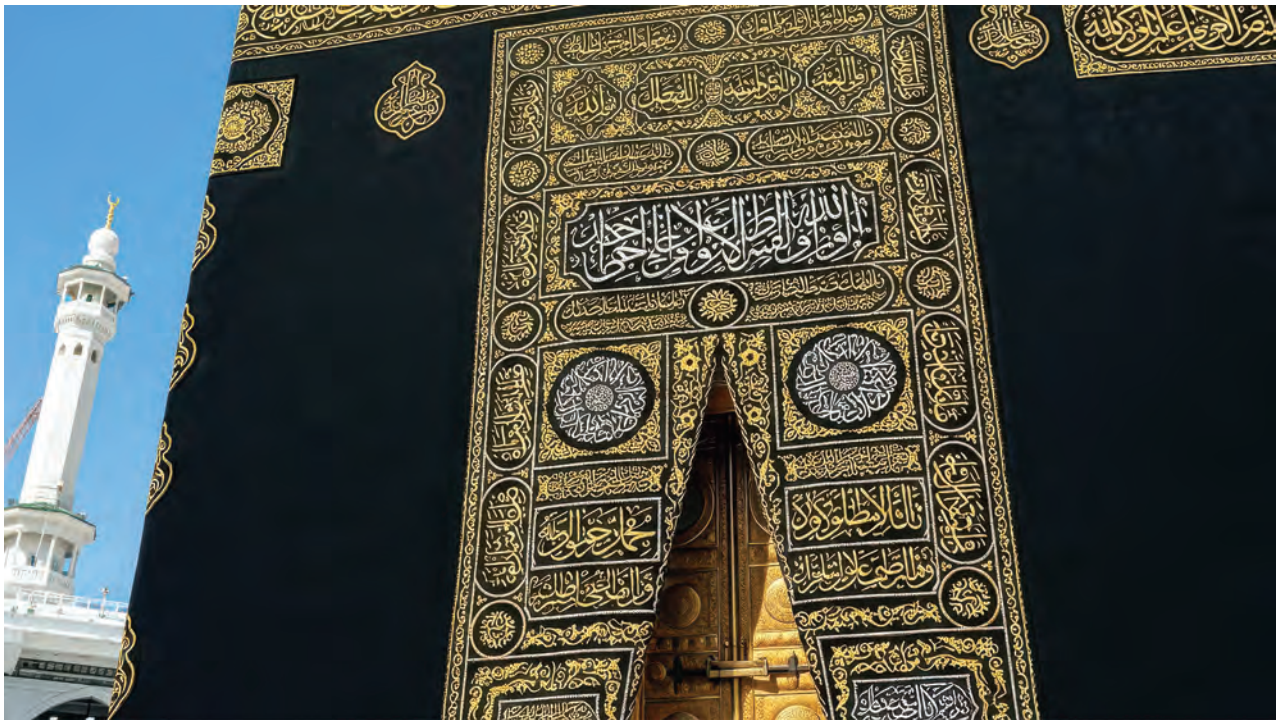
The most elaborately worked element of the entire Kiswah is the Sitara — the curtain that hangs over the Ka'bah's door. At approximately 7.75 meters tall and 3.5 meters wide, assembled from four panels and layered with additional padding, the Sitara carries the densest concentration of gold embroidery on the entire garment. It is also the heaviest single component. Above the Sitara, inscribed across the face of

the Ka'bah directly over the door, is a verse from Surah Al-Hajj: "Whoever honors the symbols of Allah — indeed, it is from the piety of hearts" (22:32).

The four walls of the Kiswah are fixed to the Ka'bah's base with copper rings. Before Hajj, the lower three meters of the cloth are raised and secured — lifted away from the hands of pilgrims performing tawaf, replaced temporarily by a white cotton skirt. This precaution is known as the Ihram of the Ka'bah. During Hajj, the Ka'bah wears its covering gathered upward, as if prepared for the intensity of what surrounds it.

Renewal, Custodianship, and the Meaning of Service

The replacement of the Kiswah has historically taken place on the 9th of Dhu al-Hijja — the Day of Arafah — while millions of pilgrims stand in supplication on the plain of Arafat. Since 2022, by royal decree, the ceremony has been moved to the 1st of Muharram, the first day of the Islamic New Year, separating the replacement from the logistical pressures of Hajj and allowing



The Sitara — the embroidered curtain over the Ka'bah's door — bears the densest concentration of gold work on the entire Kiswah.

it to take place with the focused care it requires.

A specialized team of 154 experts carries out the replacement before Fajr. The old Kiswah is carefully removed, section by section. The new one is unfolded and raised into position from above, lowered and draped across the four walls in a process that takes several hours. When the work is complete, the Ka'bah stands clothed for another year.

The old Kiswah is never discarded. It is cut into sections and distributed as gifts of honor to Muslim heads of state, foreign dignitaries, international organizations, and Islamic institutions around the world. A section is displayed at the United Nations headquarters in New York — a piece of devotional craft that has traveled far from the valley where it was made.

For the artisans who produce it, the Kiswah is understood as amanah — a trust. Their authorship disappears entirely into the finished whole, which belongs to the House of God and to no individual hand. This anonymity is the discipline at the center of the work. The Qur'an says that what reaches God from acts of devotion is never the material offering itself, but the intention behind it: "Their meat will not reach Allah, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you" (Surah Al-Hajj, 22:37). The gold thread is offered in service of the Word. The anonymity is offered in service of sincerity.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's stewardship of the Kiswah is inseparable from its custodianship of the Two Holy Mosques — a responsibility the Kingdom has

treated since 1927 as an institutional commitment, resourced and continuously improved across nearly a century. The King Abdulaziz Complex today combines traditional handcraft with advanced textile science, laboratory testing, and precision engineering, without displacing the hand embroidery that gives the Kiswah its character. The weaving is aided by technology. The calligraphy remains entirely handmade.

The Kiswah is remade every year because the service of the sacred carries no endpoint. It is a discipline, not an achievement — renewed annually, executed with full institutional weight, and offered in the spirit that the Qur'an describes as the only thing that ever truly reaches God: the piety of hearts. ■



رَابِطَةُ الْعَالَمِ الْإِسْلَامِيِّ

MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE



PEACE

