



PERSONS OF THE YEAR



The Muslim 500

THE WORLD'S 500 MOST INFLUENTIAL MUSLIMS

2025





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

# *The Muslim 500*

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THE WORLD'S 500 MOST  
INFLUENTIAL MUSLIMS

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2025

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يتحمل المؤلف كامل المسؤولية القانونية عن محتوى مصنفه ولا يعزى هذا المصنف عن رأي دائرة المكتبة الوطنية أو أي جهة حكومية أخرى.



# Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Persons of the Year - 2025</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>A Selected Survey of the Muslim World</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SPECIAL FEATURE:</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>THE ABOMINATION OF THE DESOLATION OF GAZA</b>	
<b>THE HOUSE OF ISLAM</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>THE TOP 50</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>HONOURABLE MENTIONS</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>THE 450 LISTS</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Scholarly</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>Political</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Administration of Religious Affairs</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Preachers &amp; Spiritual Guides</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>Philanthropy, Charity &amp; Development</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Social Issues</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>Business</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Science &amp; Technology</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Arts &amp; Culture</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>Qur'an Reciters</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Media</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>Celebrities &amp; Sports</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>Top Extremists</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>OLYMPIANS</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>THE OBITUARIES</b>	<b>237</b>

<b>GUEST CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>Transforming Perceptions, Improving Lives</b>	<b>243</b>
Sir Mufti Hamid Patel	
<b>Defining the Core Identity of a 21st-Century Islamic University</b>	<b>248</b>
Osman Bakar, PhD	
<b>Bangladesh's Intellectual Renaissance: A Call to Action</b>	<b>253</b>
Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari	
<b>The World's Open Wounds – and the Remedy</b>	<b>255</b>
Sheikh Faid Muhammad Said	
<b>Gaza: The Graveyard of Liberal Values</b>	<b>257</b>
Faisal Kutty	
<b>A Comment on the Paris Olympics Opening Ceremony</b>	<b>259</b>
Paul Williams	
<b>Mirror of Reality</b>	<b>260</b>
Usman Isa Modibbo	
<b>Bradford Literature Festival – Culture as Social Intervention</b>	<b>262</b>
Syima Aslam	
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>MAJOR EVENTS TIMELINE</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>APPENDIX I: POPULATION STATISTICS</b>	<b>277</b>
<b>APPENDIX II: SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS</b>	<b>285</b>
<b>GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>THE INDICES</b>	<b>297</b>
Index by Name	<b>298</b>
Index by Country	<b>304</b>

عَنْ أَبِي الْمُؤْتَبِرِ بْنِ أَبِي جَبْرٍ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ  
 أَمَّا الْأَعْمَالُ وَالنِّيَّاتُ وَالْمَاكِلُ الْأَمْرِيُّ مَا نَوَى  
 فَمِنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَهِيَ هِجْرَةٌ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ  
 وَمِنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ لِدُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ لِأَنْثَى يَنْكِحُهَا فَهِيَ هِجْرَةٌ لِمَا هِيَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ

It is narrated on the authority of Amir al-Mu'minin (Leader of the Believers), Abu Haf's 'Umar bin al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, say

"Actions are according to intentions, and everyone will get what was intended. Whoever migrates with an intention for Allah and His messenger ﷺ, the migration will be for the sake of Allah and his Messenger ﷺ. And whoever migrates for worldly gain or to marry a woman, then his migration will be for the sake of whatever he migrated for."

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# INTRODUCTION

# عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنِ الْقَائِلِ

بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ جُلُوسٌ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ ذَا يَوْمٍ إِذْ طَلَعَ عَلَيْنَا رَجُلٌ شَدِيدُ بَيَاضِ الثِّيَابِ  
شَدِيدُ سَوَادِ الشَّعْرِ لَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ سَيْفٌ وَلَا يَعْزِمُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ حَتَّى جَلَسَ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَأَسْتَبَدَّ  
بِكُنْتَيْنِ الرَّبِّيَّتَيْنِ وَوَضَعَ كَهَيْئَةٍ عَلَى فَخِذَيْهِ وَقَالَ يَا مُحَمَّدُ أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِسْلَامِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ  
الْإِسْلَامُ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَتَقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ وَتُؤْتِيَ الزَّكَاةَ وَتُصِومَ رَمَضَانَ  
وَتُحِجَّ الْبَيْتَ إِنْ سَطَعَتْ لَكَ سَبِيلًا فَإِنْ صَدَقْتَ فَعَجَبْنَا الرَّبِّيَّةَ وَوَصِيْقَةَ قَالَ  
فَأَخْبَرْتَنِي عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ قَالَ إِيَّاكَ وَمَا لَكَ بِكَ وَكَيْفَ وَسُئِلَهُ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرُ وَتَوَضَّعَ الْقَدْرُ خَيْرٌ وَشَرٌّ قَالَ  
فَصَدَقَ وَأَخْبَرْتَنِي عَنِ الْإِحْسَانِ قَالَ زَعْبَدُ اللَّهِ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ تَكْرَاهُ فَانْتَرِاقُ أَخْبَرْتَنِي عَنِ السَّيِّئَةِ  
قَالَ الْمَسْئُورُ عَمَّا بَابَ عِلْمِ الرَّبِّيَّةِ قَالَ فَأَخْبَرْتَنِي عَمَّا رَأَيْتُهَا قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذَا تَرَى الْخِطْمَ الْعَرَاءَةَ  
الْعَالَةَ تَرَاهُ الشَّيْءَ تَيْطُورِي الْبَيْتَانِ ثُمَّ أَنْطَلِقَ فَلْيَدِّ قَلْبًا ثُمَّ قَالَ يَا عَمْرُؤُا تَرَى مِنَ السَّائِلِينَ  
قُلْتُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ عَمَّا قَالَ فَأَنْتَ جَبْرِيْلُ يَا تَابِكُ رَعْلُكُمْ كَرِيْمُكُمْ

On the authority of Omar, who said :

One day while we were sitting with the messenger of Allah there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black; no signs of journeying were to be seen on him and none of us knew him. He walked up and sat down by the prophet. Resting his knees against his and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said: 'O Muhammed, tell me about Islam'. The messenger of Allah said: 'Islam is to testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammed is the messenger of Allah, to perform the prayers, to pay the zakat, to fast in Ramadhan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so.' He said: 'You have spoken rightly', and we were amazed at him asking him and saying that he had spoken rightly. He said: 'Then tell me about iman.' He said: 'It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both the good and the evil thereof.' He said: 'You have spoken rightly'. He said: 'Then tell me about ehsan.' He said: 'It is to worship Allah as though you are seeing Him, and while you see Him not yet truly He sees you'. He said: 'Then tell me about the Hour'. He said: 'The one questioned about it knows no better than the questioner.' He said: 'Then tell me about its signs.' He said: 'That the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress and that you will see the barefooted, naked, destitute herdsman competing in constructing lofty buildings.' Then he took himself off and I stayed for a time. Then he said: 'O Omar, do you know who the questioner was?' I said: 'Allah and His messenger know best'. He said: 'He was Jibreel (Gabriel), who came to you to teach you your religion.'

Related by Muslim



Welcome to the sixteenth annual issue of *The Muslim 500: The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims*. We are very pleased that we have made it this far and that the book has evolved as it has. We thank you for all your support and suggestions and look forward to continually receiving them.

There are approximately 2.1 billion Muslims in the world today, making up over a quarter of the world's population. As well as being citizens of their respective countries, they also have a sense of belonging to the 'ummah', the worldwide Muslim community.

This publication sets out to ascertain the influence some Muslims have on this community, or on behalf of the community. Influence is: any person who has the power (be it cultural, ideological, financial, political or otherwise) to make a change that will have a significant impact on the Muslim world or Muslims. Note that the impact can be either positive or negative, depending on one's point of view of course. The selection of people for this publication in no way means that we endorse their views; rather we are simply trying to measure their influence. The influence can be of a religious scholar directly addressing Muslims and influencing their beliefs, ideas and behaviour, or it can be of a ruler shaping the socio-economic factors within which people live their lives, or of artists shaping popular culture. The first two examples also point to the fact that the lists, and especially the Top 50, are dominated by religious scholars and heads of state. Their dominant and lasting influence cannot be denied, especially the rulers, who in many cases also appoint religious scholars to their respective positions.

This doesn't discount the significant amount of influence from other sectors of society. How to measure this influence is of course the most challenging aspect of the publication, and the one where opinions diverge the most. Influence can sometimes be gauged on a quantitative basis, the number of followers, the number of books written, the amount of sales etc., but more often it is not something measurable in quantitative terms and is more related to the qualitative and lasting effect of that influence. A combination of social metrics, public opinion (we have a month-long open call for nominations every year, and all suggestions are considered) and expert opinion are the basis of this attempt to measure influence. The achievements of a lifetime are given more weight than achievements within the current year. People who are trailblazers, or the lone voice in a remote area are also taken into account as we give weight

to people breaking barriers and to local influence as well as global influence. This means that our list of names will change gradually, rather than dramatically, year-on-year.

The Top 50 individuals are ranked and listed first. The remaining 450 names are then listed (not ranked) in categories of influence, with a small number also chosen to be in our Honourable Mentions section to value the notable contributions made in their fields.

Our 13 categories are:

- Scholarly
- Political
- Administration of Religious Affairs
- Preachers and Spiritual Guides
- Philanthropy/Charity and Development
- Social Issues
- Business
- Science and Technology
- Arts and Culture
- Qur'an Reciters
- Media
- Celebrities and Sports Stars
- Extremists

The individuals are ordered in each category according to geographical region (Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, North America, South America), then in alphabetical order by country and finally by surname.

This publication combines aspects of a review of the past year, including a timeline and statistics, but it also hopes to serve as a prospective guide to the new year, much like a *Who's Who*.

## WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?

We have our Persons of the Year; these individuals are recognized for their significant contributions in the past year or over their lifetime.

Our guest editor then offers his Selected Survey of the major events which have affected the Muslim world over the past twelve months.

We then have a special feature on the genocide that Gaza has been subject to since October 7, 2023. This gives a small taste of the horrific situation that the Palestinians have been subject to, all live streamed to the world.

Then we have our regular House of Islam essay which gives an overview of Islam and its branches. An updated Top 50 and 450 lists (including Honourable

Mentions) then follows.

We then list the Muslim Olympic medalists from the Paris Olympics.

The final part of our lists is the Obituaries section which lists the people from last year's book who have since passed away.

Our Guest Contributions section has exclusive articles covering a wide range of issues. These are sure to stimulate thought and discussion around current pressing issues.

Our Book Reviews cover several books that have been published recently as well as others which will be of interest.

The 'Major Events' section provides a timeline of the major events that have taken place over the past year. Given the events in Gaza, we have included a separate timeline for Gaza in the special features section.

Appendices I and II provide lots of statistics.

Appendix I shows total population and Muslim population by country, for all the countries in the world. Appendix II compiles a list of the most popular Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X and YouTube Muslim personalities, as well as worldwide.

To give a richer visual experience we have also included several calligraphy pieces throughout the book, which we hope will serve as a beautiful reminder to pause and reflect as you go through the book. We have also added write-ups within the main body of the text about major initiatives (see the Amman Message on p. 148, A Common Word on p. 159, the Marrakesh Declaration on p.162, The Muslim Council of Elders on p. 160, Free Islamic Calligraphy on p. 218, UN World Interfaith Harmony Week on p. 190, and Altafsir.com on p. 159

Our website [www.TheMuslim500.com] is a popular destination. We welcome your feedback and will take nominations for the 2026 edition through it.



On the authority of Abdullah bin Masud, who said : the messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he is the truthful, the believed narrated to us :

"Verily the creation of each one of you is brought together in his mother's belly for forty days in the form of seed, then he is a clot of blood for a like period, then a morsel of flesh for a like period, then there is sent to him the angel who blows the breath of life into him and who is commanded about four matters: to write down his means of livelihood, his life span, his actions, and whether happy or unhappy. By Allah, other than Whom there is no god, verily one of you behaves like the people of Paradise until there is but an arm's length between him and it, and that which has been written over takes him and so he behaves like the people of Hell-fire and thus he enters it; and one of you behaves like the people of Hell-fire until there is but an arm's length between him and it, and that which has been written over takes him and so he behaves like the people of Paradise and thus he enters it."

Related by Bukhari and Muslim

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## Woman of the Year

### HER MAJESTY QUEEN RANIA AL-ABDULLAH



#### Overview

For more than 10 years, HM Queen Rania of Jordan has been the no.1 most influential Muslim woman in the world (in her own private capacity, not as Queen of Jordan) on social media, in terms of statistics and followers. After

the war in Gaza started post October 7th 2023, HM Queen Rania has emerged as a powerful and eloquent voice for justice and humanity in the face of the ongoing slaughter of Palestinian civilians. Her relentless efforts to change Western perceptions of the Palestinian cause, especially amidst the intense Israeli public relations campaigns, have made her a formidable force in global discourse. Being of Palestinian descent, she emerged as the only 'Palestinian' voice in the world—certainly the only woman—capable of presenting the plight of Palestinians in top Western media outlets, in an acceptable and reason-based way. Together with Egyptian comedian Bassem Youssef, and various TikTok videos, she was largely responsible for changing public opinion in the world about the plight of civilians in Gaza.

#### Changing Western Perception: Queen Rania's Strategic Advocacy

In a climate where much of the Western world was initially swayed by Israeli narratives that painted Palestinians as aggressors or terrorists, Queen Rania intervened. She addressed the misinformation and offered a counter-narrative that highlighted the suffering of the Palestinian people, the civilian toll of the conflict, and the pressing need for a just resolution. Her advocacy was particularly significant given the effectiveness of Israeli public relations efforts, which included widely circulated but later discredited stories, such as the claim that Hamas had beheaded 40 babies. By speaking out against these narratives, Queen Rania helped to dismantle some of the falsehoods that had

gained traction in Western media.

Through a series of high-profile interviews and public statements, Queen Rania challenged the validity of these claims. She pointed out the dangerous consequences of such false narratives, which fuel hatred and escalate violence. Her efforts to bring attention to the Palestinian experience, to humanize their suffering, and to call for an end to the conflict resonated deeply with audiences worldwide, especially in Western nations where the Israeli narrative had been largely unchallenged.

Queen Rania embarked on a strategic media campaign to change the perception of the conflict in Gaza. She appeared on major international platforms, including interviews with CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, and *The New York Times*, where she expressed her concerns about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Her eloquent and emotionally compelling messages reached millions, and she was able to provide a balanced perspective on the conflict that was often missing in mainstream media.

In these interviews, Queen Rania was clear and consistent in her message: the world must recognize the humanity of the Palestinian people and seek a just solution that ensures their dignity and rights. She challenged Western leaders and audiences to look beyond the headlines and propaganda and to consider the human cost of the conflict. Her ability to speak directly to Western audiences, often in their language and on their platforms, allowed her to reach people who may not have been previously exposed to the Palestinian perspective.

#### Voices Supporting Total Destruction and Queen Rania's Response

Amidst the conflict, there were strong calls from various voices in the United States and Israel for drastic military action against Gaza. Statements from Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, as well as some American political figures, expressed support for actions that could lead to the complete destruction or expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza. Some compared the scale of the proposed military response to using "nuclear bombs" in terms

of the devastation it would cause.

Queen Rania stood out as a powerful counter-voice to these genocidal positions. She condemned the indiscriminate bombing and called for restraint, reminding the world that the vast majority of those suffering in Gaza were innocent civilians, including women and children. Her message was clear: the international community must uphold its commitment to human rights and the principles of international law.

Her advocacy was particularly effective because it was not just political but also deeply personal. As a mother, Queen Rania spoke passionately about the children caught in the conflict, emphasizing their innocence and their right to safety, education, and a future free from violence. She highlighted the psychological and physical trauma being inflicted on a new generation of Palestinians, making it harder for the world to ignore the human cost of the conflict.

### **Pushing Back Against Israeli PR: Queen Rania's Strategic Allies**

Queen Rania was not alone in her efforts to change Western perceptions. She was joined by other influential voices, such as Bassem Youssef, an Egyptian comedian and political commentator known for his sharp wit and fearless criticism. Together, they provided a formidable counter-narrative to Israeli public relations campaigns that often dominated Western media. Youssef's comedic approach complemented Queen Rania's more diplomatic and heartfelt appeals, and resonated with a wide range of audiences. While Israeli public relations efforts were well-funded and extensive, the combined voices of Queen Rania, Youssef, and other advocates began to shift the conversation. They used humour, empathy, and factual evidence to challenge false narratives and to call for a more balanced understanding of the conflict. Their efforts made it more difficult for misinformation to go unchallenged and helped to create a more nuanced conversation about the realities on the ground in Gaza.

### **HM Queen Rania's Social Media Accounts:**

1. **Instagram:** Queen Rania has around 10.4 million followers. Her Instagram account is very active, featuring photos and videos from her public appearances, family moments, and advocacy work.
2. **X (Twitter):** On Twitter, she has

approximately 10 million followers. She uses this platform to share her thoughts on current events, human rights, and global issues.

3. **Facebook:** Queen Rania has around 18.2 million followers on Facebook, where she shares a mix of personal updates, speeches, and posts about her humanitarian and social initiatives.
4. **YouTube:** Her YouTube channel has about 250,000 subscribers, and it features videos of her speeches, interviews, and other official activities.

Adding up these figures, Queen Rania has over 38 million followers across Instagram, X (Twitter), Facebook, and YouTube.

### **Some Key TV Interviews and Speeches:**

- CNN Interview (October 2023): Queen Rania spoke with Christiane Amanpour, discussing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and calling for an immediate ceasefire.
- CBS News Interview (November 2023): She appeared on "Face the Nation," emphasizing the need for humanitarian aid and challenging some narratives about the conflict.
- BBC Interview (November 2023): Queen Rania spoke about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the need for a peaceful resolution.
- On September 7th, 2024 at the 50th European House Ambrosetti Forum, Italy, Queen Rania made a powerful argument calling out the world's double standards and doublespeak as regards Palestinian human rights and Israel.
- On September 22nd, 2024 at the One World Summit, Montreal, Canada, Queen Rania presented a cogent overview of Israel's collective punishment of the Gazans and the subhuman and dire humanitarian conditions they are suffering under.
- On September 23rd, 2024 at an event by Save the Children in New York, USA, Queen Rania gave a powerful and moving speech entitled "Shattered Futures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory-Children's Perspective."
- ABC Interview (September 2024): Queen Rania spoke with Linsey Davis on ABC News and said that the realities of the war on Gaza are setting new precedents in the world. She also warned of the dangerous escalations in Lebanon.

# Man of the Year

## DR GHASSAN ABU-SITTAH



Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah is a leading figure in the medical community and a powerful advocate for Palestinian rights. His relentless work in Gaza during the ongoing genocide has brought global attention to the humanitarian crisis there, and

his tireless efforts to seek justice for Palestinians continue to resonate globally.

### Education and Early Career

Born into a Palestinian family, Dr Abu-Sittah began his journey in medicine at the University of Glasgow, where he earned his medical degree. He further specialized in plastic and reconstructive surgery in the United Kingdom. He completed a Master's degree in War Surgery from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and a fellowship in craniofacial surgery at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London.

### Dedication to the Disadvantaged: Medical Work in Gaza

Dr Abu-Sittah has dedicated much of his career to providing medical care in some of the world's most challenging environments. Since 2007, he has regularly travelled to Gaza to perform life-saving surgeries and offer medical assistance under extremely dangerous and difficult conditions.

His contributions extend beyond patient care; he has been instrumental in training local medical staff, ensuring sustainable, high-quality healthcare in the region. Through workshops, lectures, and hands-on training, he has built local capacity and empowered Palestinian healthcare workers to manage complex medical situations—an especially critical need in Gaza, where medical resources are often severely limited due to the ongoing blockade and war.

### Gaza 2023: Courage Under Fire

Dr Abu-Sittah's most impactful and widely recognized work came during the Israeli bombardment of

Gaza in October 2023. As the Head of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at the American University of Beirut Medical Center, he made the courageous decision to travel to Gaza at the height of the conflict. For over 40 days, Dr Abu-Sittah worked tirelessly at Al-Ahli and Al-Shifa hospitals, performing countless surgeries under extreme conditions, including severe shortages of medical supplies, power outages, and the constant threat of bombardment. His expertise in treating complex war injuries was pivotal in saving the lives and limbs of many Palestinians trapped in the conflict. His daily updates on social media provided a window into the dire situation in Gaza's hospitals, humanizing the conflict and drawing global attention to the suffering of civilians and medical workers.

One of the most harrowing experiences he recounted was the evacuation of Al-Shifa Hospital, where he described the heartbreaking decisions faced by medical staff over which patients to evacuate and which to leave behind, due to Israeli attacks.

### Advocacy for the Palestinian Cause: Speaking Truth to Power

Beyond his work in the operating room, Dr Abu-Sittah is a vocal advocate for Palestinian rights. He has made it his mission to raise awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and other occupied Palestinian territories, frequently appearing in international media outlets like Al Jazeera, BBC, and CNN, to highlight the dire conditions faced by Palestinians and the impact of the Israeli occupation and blockade on public health.

In his interviews and public appearances, Dr Abu-Sittah consistently calls for a political solution to the crisis, advocating for an end to the occupation and speaking out against human rights abuses, war crimes, and the collective punishment of Palestinians. His voice has been vital in countering misleading narratives and ensuring the Palestinian perspective is heard on the global stage.

Dr Abu-Sittah has also taken his advocacy to political arenas, including the UK Parliament, where he provided compelling testimony on human rights and international law violations as well as the devastating impact of the blockade on life in Gaza. His testimonies challenge policymakers to reconsider

their positions on the Palestinian issue and to adopt a more just and ethical approach to the conflict.

### **Banned in Germany and Legal Victories Against Opponents**

Dr Abu-Sittah's advocacy for Palestinian rights has not been without controversy. His outspoken stance on Israeli policies and the human rights situation in Gaza has made him a target of political opposition. In May 2024, he was banned from giving a seminar in Germany, a move criticized as an attempt to silence a prominent Palestinian voice. The ban sparked outrage among human rights activists and academics worldwide, who saw it as an infringement on free speech and academic freedom.

Undeterred, Dr Abu-Sittah fought back. He faced legal challenges from groups such as UK Lawyers for Israel, who sought to discredit his work and prevent him from speaking publicly. However, in a landmark case, Dr Abu-Sittah won, reaffirming his right to speak freely on issues of human rights and justice. This victory was also a triumph for free speech advocates and defenders of academic freedom everywhere.

### **Recognition and Honours Amidst Challenges**

On 11 April, 2024, Dr Abu-Sittah was elected as

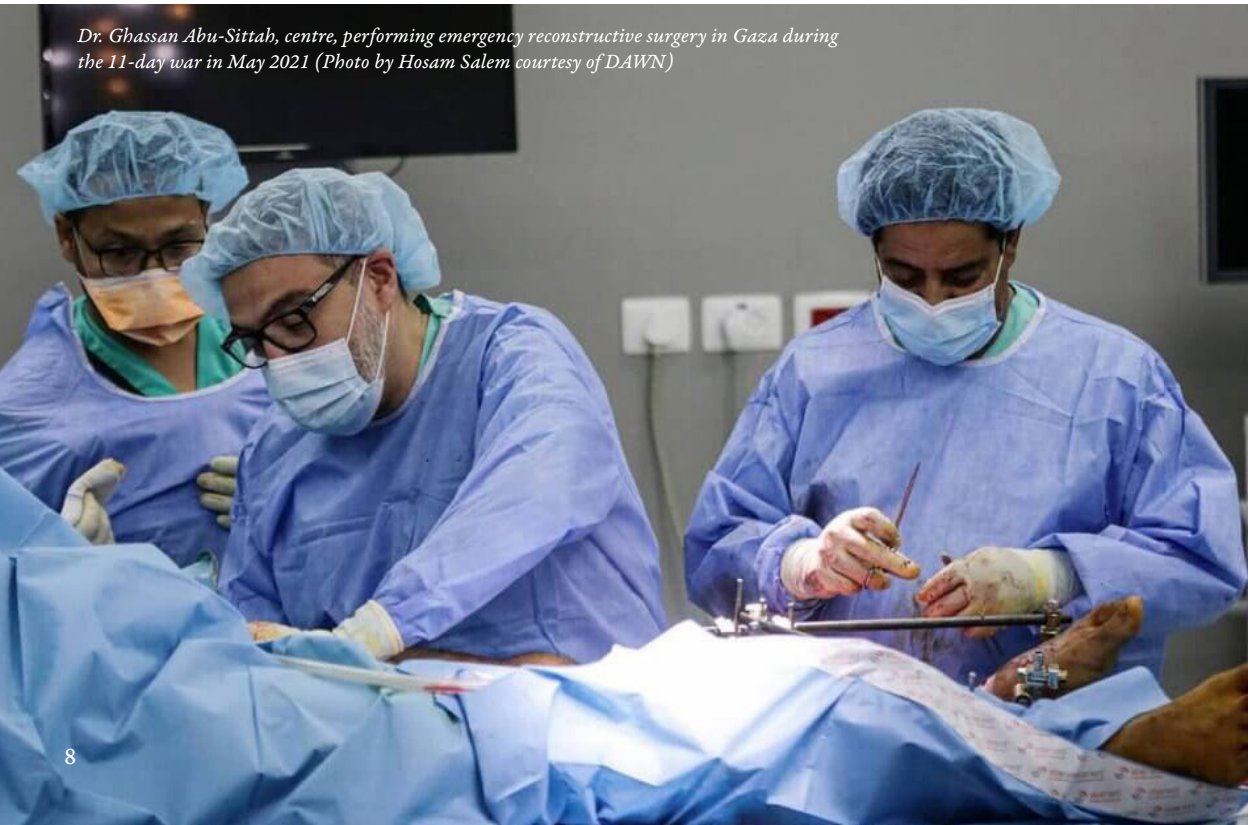
the Rector of the University of Glasgow, a position nominated and elected by the university's students. He secured over 80% of the votes, marking a record turnout. He has also been honoured by international medical organizations, with recognition from groups like Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and Amnesty International for his relentless pursuit of justice and dedication to providing care under the most difficult circumstances imaginable.

In 2019, he received the *Palestinian Order of Merit* for his exceptional service to the people of Gaza and his continued advocacy for their rights. His efforts have made him a symbol of resistance and compassion, embodying the spirit of resilience that characterizes the Palestinian struggle.

### **Man of the Year: A Symbol of Resilience and Advocacy**

Dr Abu-Sittah is celebrated as Man of the Year not only for his courageous medical work, but also for his unwavering advocacy for justice for Palestinians. Despite facing threats, bans, and attempts to discredit his work, he remains steadfast in his commitment to the cause. His resilience serves as an inspiration to all who believe in the fundamental right of every human being to live in peace and dignity.

*Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah, centre, performing emergency reconstructive surgery in Gaza during the 11-day war in May 2021 (Photo by Hosam Salem courtesy of DAWN)*



# A SELECTED SURVEY OF THE MUSLIM WORLD

By Professor Mustafa Abu Sway

## INTRODUCTION

This year has been one of unrelenting horror, marked by the grotesque daily imagery of mass violence: babies and children literally torn apart, civilians crushed beneath the rubble of their homes, starved, displaced, tortured, and raped. The indiscriminate bombings, the siege, and the blockade of Gaza have created a humanitarian disaster unparalleled in recent history. These brutal acts of inhumanity have been live-streamed and broadcast to the world in real-time, turning global suffering into a chilling spectacle, a brutal reality show. It is hard to imagine how the world can remain unchanged after such relentless displays of cruelty and suffering.

## THE GENOCIDE IN GAZA (see special report on p.25)

The term "mowing the lawn" has been used by Israeli military officials to describe their repeated military campaigns in Gaza. These include:

- Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009) which led to the deaths of over 1,400 Palestinians, along with massive destruction of infrastructure.
- Operation Pillar of Defense (2012): This

eight-day military campaign resulted in over 160 Palestinian deaths and widespread destruction.

- Operation Protective Edge (2014): This 50-day offensive resulted in more than 2,200 Palestinian deaths, including 500 children, and left large parts of Gaza in ruins.
- Periodic Escalations (2018-2021): numerous rounds of violence

The use of the term highlights the moral desensitization to the recurring violence in Gaza, where mass killings, the bombing of homes, places of worship, schools, and hospitals, and the displacement of thousands of people are spoken of in bureaucratic, almost flippant terms. Perhaps this partial background of the situation in Gaza can help people understand the complete dehumanisation of the Palestinian people by large segments of Israeli society and thus explain the horrors of what has happened this year.

The most significant event marking 2024 has been Israel's ongoing onslaught on Gaza, which has escalated into a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. The Gaza Strip has witnessed a systematic assault, including massacres of civilians, predominantly women and children, the destruction of critical infrastructure such as universities, schools, hospitals, mosques, churches, bakeries, and water reservoirs. The deliberate targeting of these essential places has been



compounded by the use of starvation as a political weapon, creating unlivable conditions and a humanitarian disaster unprecedented in the 21st century.

The conflict escalated on October 7, 2023, when Hamas (The Islamic Resistance Movement) and Islamic Jihad launched coordinated air, sea, and ground operations across Israel's southern border. These actions resulted in the deaths of approximately 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians, while an estimated 240 Israelis were taken as hostages and prisoners of war. In retaliation, on October 27, Israel began its ground invasion of Gaza, with devastating consequences. Over the past year, more than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed (this is widely acknowledged to be a gross undercount of the true figure), with over 90,000 wounded. The overwhelming majority of the casualties are women and children, and thousands more are presumed to be buried under the rubble across Gaza.

Throughout the year, Iran-backed Shiite militant groups, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen, have launched attacks on Israeli targets in solidarity with Gaza. They demand that Israel end its onslaught on the Gaza Strip in order for them to stop their attacks. The Houthis, for example, have attacked shipping routes in the Red Sea, targeting vessels headed for Israel. They have also clashed with American warships that intervened to protect these routes, leading many ships to reroute via the Cape of Good Hope to avoid the volatile Red Sea region.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, Israeli military operations have resulted in the deaths of close to 600 Palestinians, with additional fatalities caused by settler violence. On average, a Palestinian child has been killed every two days in the West Bank during this

period.

By September 2024, the conflict had extended beyond Gaza to Lebanon, where Israel launched major airstrikes on southern regions, including the predominantly Shiite neighbourhoods of Beirut.

A prelude to the airstrikes were what has been called a game-changer for terrorism and warfare. Israeli intelligence booby-trapped everyday communication devices including pagers, mobile phones and Icom walkie-talkies, which are largely used by hospital staff. These devices were then detonated, all simultaneously. The explosions, which occurred on September 17 and 18, killed some Hezbollah members, but the majority of the 42 people killed were innocent civilians and children, and likewise for the thousands with life-altering injuries.

Israel then started airstrikes on Lebanon. These strikes killed over a thousand people and displaced over a million within the first few days. Israel also undertook a massive assassination campaign targeting top Hezbollah leaders, including the group's leader, Seyed Hassan Nasrallah. Nasrallah's assassination prompted a response from Iran, which launched a retaliatory strike of about 200 ballistic missiles aimed at military targets. Not one civilian in Israel was killed from these strikes, which caused significant damage to various airbases and other military targets. It shows that precision targeting doesn't have to involve the massacre of civilians and carpet-bombing of residential areas. The likelihood of a broader regional war involving multiple states and non-state actors is now much more likely.

Despite the military, political and mainstream media dominance of the Israeli Zionist narrative, we have witnessed an inspiring surge of public support for the Palestinian cause. Across the globe, Muslims and non-Muslims alike have taken to the streets in unprecedented numbers, their voices united in protest against the injustices being perpetrated. The digital realm, too, has become a battleground for truth, with millions rallying online to share information, express solidarity, and counter the narratives pushed by those who would seek to justify the unjustifiable. As is often said "all colonized people see themselves in Palestine ... and all colonizers see themselves in Israel."

This groundswell of support underscores a fundamental truth: the Palestinians are not merely victims, but an oppressed indigenous population fighting for their very existence against an imperialistic project. It is why the ethnic cleansing and persecution they face are not just crimes against humanity, but affronts to





the very principles of justice and compassion that lie at the heart of Islam.

## AL-AQSA – THE HEART OF THE MATTER

### **The Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Haram Al-Sharif: A Target of Escalating Violations**

Since August 2024, the Jerusalem Awqaf Department has repeatedly raised the alarm about the imminent threats facing the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Systematic provocations, particularly from extremist settlers, have intensified, particularly in the eastern part of the holy site, which is feared to be at risk of being converted into a Jewish synagogue. These provocations occur regularly, from Sunday to Thursday, and have escalated in both number and severity.

For over 1,400 years, Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif has been an exclusively Muslim holy site, safeguarded under the Hashemite Custodianship. Since 1924, the Hashemite royal family has taken care of both Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Awqaf Department operates under the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and emphasizes the importance of preserving the sanctity of Al-Aqsa for all Muslims worldwide. HM King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein is the Custodian of Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

Despite the official custodianship and the clear legal frameworks in place, the Israeli occupation authorities continue to send conflicting messages.

While publicly affirming the status quo of the holy sites to the international community, Israeli authorities are allowing extremist settlers to blatantly violate it. Jewish settlers routinely perform prayers, blow the Shofar, study the Talmud, and perform Jewish rituals inside the Al-Aqsa compound, accompanied by Israeli flags and Zionist songs, which violate the site's legal status quo and its historical and religious standing.

These escalations are not isolated incidents. Settler gatherings, often loud and intimidating, occur frequently at night near Al-Aqsa's gates, with particular focus on the Cotton Market Gate (Bab al-Qattanin), which is the closest gate to the Dome of the Rock. One such gathering on August 12, 2024, saw settlers attempting to breach the gates of the mosque.

The role of the Israeli police, as the de facto authority, has been particularly troubling. They restrict the entry of Muslims—especially young Palestinian men and visiting pilgrims—and have denied permits to over 30 Awqaf employees. Essential renovation projects are also being blocked under the pretext of protecting so-called “Temple Mount heritage,” with proposed Knesset laws threatening prison sentences for any unauthorized renovations. Such laws would not only undermine the historical role of the Jerusalem Awqaf but also change the religious fabric of the site, laying the groundwork for further Jewish claims over it.

The Israeli Ministry of Heritage has further exacerbated tensions by financing Talmudic tours, aimed at promoting Zionist narratives about Al-Aqsa



Mosque. This initiative seeks to embed myths about the mosque in the minds of visitors, further distorting the historical truth. Israeli National Security Minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, has also made provocative visits to the mosque, where he publicly called for equal rights for Jews to pray there and even suggested the construction of a synagogue on the site.

Despite these provocations, Jordan remains firm in defending the historical status quo of Al-Aqsa Mosque /Al-Haram al-Sharif. The Jordanian Foreign Ministry has issued formal protests to Israel, condemning the violations and demanding that Israel cease its attempts to alter the historical and legal framework of Al-Aqsa. Organizations such as Ir Amim, an Israeli NGO focused on Jerusalem affairs, have released reports documenting the severity of these violations, warning that 2024 marks an unprecedented breach of the status quo at Al-Aqsa.

The international community and Muslim world must act swiftly to safeguard the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The site remains not just a Palestinian or Jordanian concern, but a matter of significance for the entire Muslim Ummah.

## MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

### Abraham Accords

The controversial Abraham Accords, which began in 2020 with the normalization of relations between Israel and several Arab states, continued to influence regional politics throughout the year. While proponents argue that these agreements pave the way for stability and economic cooperation, many in the Muslim world view them as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause. The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan have faced both internal and external pressure regarding their decisions to normalize relations with Israel. This has led to a complex realignment of alliances in the region, with some nations doubling down on their commitment to the accords, while others have shown hesitance in light of the ongoing situation in Gaza.

### Gulf Economies

The oil-rich Gulf states have continued their efforts to diversify their economies away from fossil fuel dependence. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 program, along with similar initiatives in other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, has led to significant social and economic reforms. These changes, including increased opportunities for women in the workforce and the development of non-oil sectors, have

been met with both enthusiasm and concern within the Muslim world.

While many celebrate the economic progress and modernization, others worry about the preservation of Islamic values and traditions in the face of rapid change. This tension between progress and tradition reflects a broader debate within the ummah about how to navigate the challenges of the modern world while staying true to our Islamic principles.

### Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has seen sweeping transformations in 2024, across political, economic, and societal spheres. The kingdom continues its departure from the strict ultraconservative Wahhabism that shaped its identity for decades, and is embracing a more open and dynamic societal model. This shift is evident in the cultural scene, where pop concerts featuring Western artists have become common, symbolizing the new social openness.

Politically, Saudi Arabia was perceived to be on the cusp of formalizing diplomatic relations with Israel, a monumental shift in regional dynamics. However, the ongoing war in Gaza has stalled the normalization process. Saudi Arabia has instead positioned itself as a key player in demanding an immediate ceasefire and the establishment of a Palestinian state. During the 2024 United Nations General Assembly, Saudi Arabia, alongside other Arab nations, led a coalition advocating for Palestinian sovereignty, underscoring its stance on the issue.

Economically, Vision 2030 remains central to Saudi Arabia's future ambitions. The plan seeks to diversify the kingdom's economy away from its dependence on oil. At its core is Neom, a futuristic city designed as a 170-kilometre linear structure, set to rise 500 meters above the ground, with zero carbon emissions. Despite being hailed as a revolutionary urban design, practical challenges have led to the initial phase being scaled down to a more manageable 2.5 kilometres by 2030. Foreign investment remains crucial for the realization of such ambitious projects, with Saudi Arabia actively seeking global partnerships.

The kingdom is also making strides in promoting Mada'in Saleh, the second-largest Nabatean site after Petra, as part of its bid to boost international tourism—a first for a nation traditionally closed to foreign visitors.

On the domestic front, unemployment among Saudi nationals dropped by 1.5% in 2024, reflecting policies aimed at replacing foreign workers with

Saudi citizens in various sectors. This reduction is part of broader reforms targeting the workforce to foster self-sufficiency and reduce reliance on expatriates.

In the realm of international relations, while Saudi Arabia once enjoyed close ties with former U.S. President Trump, relations with the Biden administration have been more cautious. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman notably rejected President Biden's request to increase oil production following the global energy crisis triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, signaling a more assertive and independent foreign policy.

These ongoing transformations highlight Saudi Arabia's complex balancing act—reforming at home while navigating shifting geopolitical landscapes abroad.

### **The Ongoing Syrian Crisis and Refugee Situation**

The Syrian conflict, now in its second decade, continues to be a source of immense suffering for millions of Muslims. While large-scale military operations have decreased, the humanitarian crisis persists. Millions of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries like Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan face uncertain futures, straining resources and testing the limits of the Islamic principles of hospitality and brotherhood.

The international community's waning attention to this protracted crisis has placed an additional burden on Muslim-majority countries to support their Syrian brothers and sisters. This situation serves as a stark reminder of the need for long-term solutions to conflicts that displace millions and the importance of Islamic values in guiding our response to such crises.

### **Yemen**

In Yemen, the devastating civil war, now entering its ninth year, continues to ravage the country. The conflict between the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthi rebels has resulted in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with millions facing famine and disease. The peace process remains stalled, with both sides unwilling to compromise, and regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia continuing to use Yemen as a proxy battlefield for their broader geopolitical rivalry. The people of Yemen remain the primary victims of this endless conflict, living under the constant threat of airstrikes, famine, and disease. Yemen's support for Gaza has made it a target for USA, UK and Israeli airstrikes, all of whom have targeted the ports, power plants and other facilities.

### **Libya**

Libya remains fractured, with rival factions vying for control of the country. The Government of National Unity (GNU) in Tripoli continues to struggle against the forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar, who controls much of eastern Libya. The country remains deeply divided, with militias holding significant power and the central government weak and ineffective. The international community has largely turned its attention elsewhere, leaving Libya to spiral further into chaos. However, the country's strategic location and vast oil reserves mean that it will remain a key player in regional geopolitics.

### **Iran**

Over the past year, Iran has faced increasing pressure, particularly from Israel, which has seemingly sought to provoke the country into a broader conflict. Throughout 2024, Israel has intensified military actions aimed at targeting Iranian assets and its allies across the region. Israeli airstrikes have frequently targeted Iranian militias in Syria, aiming to weaken Tehran's military presence in the country. These attacks, part of Israel's "campaign between wars," have been framed as necessary to curtail Iran's expanding influence. The assassination of Iranian military commanders and the sabotage of Iran's nuclear facilities through cyberattacks have only escalated the tension, with Israeli officials often remaining cryptic about their involvement while implying threats to Tehran.

A particularly crucial moment came when Seyed Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, was assassinated in September 2024 by Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon. Hezbollah, widely regarded as Iran's most powerful proxy, has long been at the centre of Israel's security concerns. The assassination sent shockwaves through the region and was viewed by many as a direct provocation toward Iran, given the deep strategic and ideological ties between Tehran and Hezbollah. The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas's chief negotiator, earlier in the year in Iran, added to the growing list of Iranian-aligned figures targeted by Israel. These assassinations have been seen by Iran as attacks on its regional influence and as moves designed to force Tehran into retaliatory action.

Despite facing numerous provocations, Iran had initially shown restraint in its military responses. However, on October 1, 2024, the situation escalated significantly when Iran launched an estimated 200 ballistic missiles targeting key military sites in Israel. The majority of these missiles bypassed Israel's advanced defense systems, making direct impact with



their intended military targets. Iran's decision to retaliate in this manner marked a turning point in the ongoing conflict, showcasing its missile capabilities and significantly raising tensions in the region. The attack underscored Iran's readiness to respond with force, following a prolonged period of caution amidst escalating hostilities.

### **The Unfolding Crisis in Sudan**

Sudan continues to be gripped by an intense internal conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). This conflict, which erupted in April 2023, has wreaked havoc on the country. By April 2024, the SAF had lost control of most of the capital, Khartoum, to the RSF. Despite ongoing international efforts to mediate peace, the war has escalated. In late September 2024, the Sudanese army launched a major offensive in Khartoum, further intensifying the 17-month civil war.

The humanitarian toll of this conflict is staggering. Nearly 26 million Sudanese—half the population—are suffering from acute food insecurity. Over 10.5 million people have become displaced refugees, forced to flee their homes due to the violence. For many months, the SAF blocked critical aid shipments via a crucial border crossing controlled by the RSF between Chad and Darfur, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. However, in August 2024, the SAF agreed to resume allowing aid through this crossing. The RSF promised to facilitate delivery of aid in the areas it controls, though the effectiveness of these efforts remains uncertain.

The SAF has accused the RSF of looting humanitarian supplies, while also preventing aid from

reaching the besieged city of El-Fasher in North Darfur. Conditions in Darfur are particularly dire. In August 2024, a group of UN-backed experts declared that famine conditions were present in the Zamzam camp, home to displaced people near El-Fasher. The camp's residents face a severe shortage of food and basic supplies.

The war in Sudan has also been marred by widespread human rights abuses, particularly sexual violence. A UN inquiry revealed that, while both sides are guilty of atrocities, large-scale sexual violence was overwhelmingly committed by the RSF and its allied militias. These acts amount to serious violations of international law. The UN report also documented incidents of rape and threats of rape by members of the Sudanese army.

The conflict's intractability is rooted in the sheer size and strength of the SAF and RSF, combined with a steady supply of weapons from international and regional Arab powers. The vast geography of Sudan complicates any military resolution, rendering a decisive victory for either side highly unlikely. Tragically, it is the Sudanese people who bear the brunt of this prolonged war, enduring unimaginable suffering in a seemingly endless cycle of violence and instability.

Sudan's vast natural resources, including oil, gold, and fertile agricultural land, have played a significant role in fueling the conflict. The struggle for control over these resources has exacerbated tensions and complicated efforts at resolution. As Sudan's conflict drags on, the international community continues to call for peace, but the path to a lasting solution remains uncertain, leaving millions in dire need of assistance.

## Egypt, Ethiopia, and Somalia: A Complex Geopolitical Triangle

The geopolitical landscape in the Horn of Africa and its neighbouring regions was marked by intensifying disputes between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Somalia. A primary point of contention remains the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), a massive hydroelectric project on the Blue Nile River, which Ethiopia has been constructing since 2011. For Egypt, a country that relies on the Nile for 90% of its water needs, the dam is seen as an existential threat. Ethiopia, however, views GERD as crucial for its development, asserting its sovereign right to utilize the Nile's resources.

The diplomatic dispute surrounding GERD reached new heights in 2024 as Ethiopia completed the fifth phase of filling the dam. Despite Egypt's persistent objections and attempts to dissuade Ethiopia, the latter moved forward with filling the dam, fueling fears in Egypt about significant reductions in downstream water flow. Cairo has often hinted at the possibility of military action to protect its vital water resources, though it has so far focused on diplomatic and legal channels, including bringing the case to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Tensions have been exacerbated by Ethiopia's recent agreement with Somaliland, the self-declared breakaway region of Somalia. Ethiopia's landlocked geography has made access to the sea a critical issue. In a significant development, Ethiopia secured a lease for access to the Berbera seaport on the Red Sea, in exchange for offering a stake in Ethiopian Airlines to Somaliland. This move not only enhances Ethiopia's commercial reach but also positions it strategically along a crucial global shipping route near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. By engaging Somaliland, Ethiopia is also implicitly recognizing Somaliland's claims to independence from Somalia, an issue that has long been a point of contention in the region.

For Egypt, the Ethiopia-Somaliland pact poses additional challenges beyond GERD. The proximity of Ethiopia's new base on the Red Sea raises concerns in Cairo, particularly the prospect of an Ethiopian military presence near the Bab el-Mandeb, a strategic chokepoint for global shipping and a vital passage for Egypt's economic interests. This agreement has increased Egyptian fears of Ethiopia's growing influence in the region and its potential control over critical maritime routes.

In response to these developments, Egypt has sought to bolster its ties with Somalia. A new security cooperation agreement signed between Egypt and

Somalia allows for the deployment of two Egyptian brigades in Somali territory, a clear signal of Cairo's intention to counter Ethiopia's expanding regional footprint. Shortly after the agreement, Egypt dispatched military equipment to Somalia, marking the beginning of a deeper military presence. This move has raised eyebrows in Addis Ababa, where it is perceived as a direct pressure tactic by Egypt to strengthen its hand in the GERD negotiations.

The situation has also raised concerns about broader regional instability. Somalia, already grappling with the militant group Al-Shabaab, now faces new dynamics as Egyptian forces enter the scene, joining the existing African Union peacekeeping forces in the country. The deployment of Egyptian troops could create friction with Kenya, which has approximately 4,000 soldiers in Somalia and maintains strong relations with Ethiopia. The entrance of new foreign forces complicates an already fragile security landscape, with fears of a potential proxy conflict emerging between Egypt and Ethiopia, played out on Somali soil.

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

### South Africa

In a landmark move, South Africa brought a case against Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on December 29, 2023, accusing the state of genocide due to its actions in the Gaza Strip. The lawsuit followed the devastating events after October 7, 2023, when Israel launched a large-scale military offensive in response to attacks by Hamas. This offensive resulted in the deaths of at least 41,000 Palestinians within a year, with 90,000 injured, and countless civilians trapped under the rubble. The sheer scale of destruction and human loss prompted South Africa to pursue legal action, framing Israel's actions as genocide under international law.

South Africa's initiative to bring the case was



pivotal because, as a non-state actor, Palestine could not bring Israel before the court directly. South Africa, which itself endured decades of Apartheid, invoked a long-standing solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Nelson Mandela had famously stated, “We South Africans cannot consider ourselves free until the Palestinian people are free,” underscoring the historic bond between the two struggles.

The case centers around Israel’s occupation, apartheid policies, and its 16-year blockade of Gaza, which South Africa argues violates the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention, to which both Israel and South Africa are signatories. The ICJ, the highest legal body of the United Nations, was petitioned to take immediate action to stop Israel’s military campaign and to prevent further acts of genocide.

On January 11 and 12, 2024, two days of public hearings were held at the Peace Palace in The Hague\* where South Africa presented its arguments. In a provisional ruling, the ICJ concluded that it was plausible that Israel’s actions in Gaza could amount to genocide, ordering provisional measures that required Israel to take all necessary steps to prevent acts of genocide. However, the ICJ stopped short of mandating a complete suspension of Israel’s military operations, a decision that drew criticism from humanitarian organizations and states supporting Palestine. The ICJ also expressed grave concern about the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the fate of hostages held by Hamas.

Despite these provisional measures, Israel did not comply, continuing its military campaign and further restricting the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. By February 2024, organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International issued statements accusing Israel of violating the ICJ’s orders, with Amnesty asserting that blocking the entry of essential aid amounted to war crimes.

The case has garnered international support, with several countries joining South Africa’s lawsuit. These include Türkiye, Nicaragua, Palestine, Spain, Mexico, Libya, and Colombia, alongside organizations like the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). However, the case has faced political resistance, particularly from the United States, which dismissed the claims as “unfounded.”

Adding to the weight of the case, Israeli officials made inflammatory public statements, calling for the starvation of Palestinians and referencing Biblical analogies that some interpreted as justifications for genocide. Such rhetoric has amplified concerns about the complete dehumanization of the Palestinian

people and intensified international outrage over the ongoing crisis.

The ICJ case marks a significant moment in the global discourse on Israel’s treatment of Palestinians, and while the legal proceedings may take years, the implications for international law and accountability are profound. South Africa’s case not only underscores the global moral and legal battle over Gaza but also reflects a wider call for justice and an end to impunity for violations of international humanitarian law.

### **Nigeria**

Nigeria, home to Africa’s largest Muslim population, continues to grapple with complex issues at the intersection of religion, security, and governance. The ongoing threat posed by Boko Haram and its offshoots in the northeast remains a significant concern, not only for Nigeria but for the entire region. However, the past year has seen some progress in counter-insurgency efforts, with increased cooperation between the government and local communities.

The election of Bola Tinubu as president in 2023 brought both hope and controversy. As a Muslim southerner married to a Christian, his presidency has the potential to bridge some of the religious and regional divides that have long plagued Nigerian politics. However, allegations of electoral irregularities have cast a shadow over his mandate, highlighting the ongoing challenges to democratic consolidation in Africa’s most populous nation.

The implementation of Sharia law in some northern states continues to be a topic of debate, raising questions about the role of Islamic law in a multi-religious society. Muslim leaders and scholars in Nigeria are at the forefront of discussions on how to harmonize Islamic principles with the realities of a diverse, modern nation-state.

### **Mali and the Sahel**

The Sahel region, particularly Mali, has faced ongoing security challenges from jihadist groups. The withdrawal of French forces and the increasing presence of Russian mercenaries have altered the security landscape, with implications for the broader Muslim world. Islamic leaders in the region have been vocal in condemning extremist violence, emphasizing that such actions are antithetical to the teachings of Islam.

The political situation in Mali remains fragile following the 2020 coup and subsequent transitions. Muslim civil society organizations have played a crucial role in advocating for a return to democratic

governance while ensuring that Islamic values are respected in the political process.

## ASIA

### India

In 2024, the lives of Muslims in India have been marked by increasing challenges under the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The rise of Hindu nationalism has continued to influence government policies and societal attitudes, leading to widespread marginalization and violence against the Muslim minority, who make up roughly 14% of India's population.

Mob violence and lynchings of Muslims, often linked to accusations of cow slaughter or "love jihad" (a baseless conspiracy theory accusing Muslim men of converting Hindu women through marriage), have become more common. According to reports, incidents of vigilante justice carried out by self-proclaimed "cow protectors" and nationalist groups have not only led to deaths but have also fostered a culture of impunity, with perpetrators rarely facing legal consequences. Human Rights Watch and other organizations have documented a surge in hate crimes against Muslims, with law enforcement often failing to take adequate action.

Politically, anti-Muslim rhetoric has become more mainstream, with senior BJP leaders often making inflammatory statements. The environment has normalized hate speech against Muslims, fueling an atmosphere of fear and exclusion. In some cases, Muslim religious practices and symbols, such as the hijab, have been targeted. In Karnataka, for example, the banning of the hijab in schools in 2022 was upheld

by courts, igniting protests across the country and raising concerns about religious freedoms.

In 2024, restrictions on the Muslim community's mobility and freedom of expression have been observed, especially in areas like Jammu and Kashmir. Since the revocation of Article 370 in 2019, which stripped the region of its special autonomy, there have been sustained military crackdowns, arbitrary detentions, and communications blackouts, disproportionately affecting the region's Muslim-majority population. The armed forces' presence remains heavy, and incidents of human rights violations have been reported regularly.

### Pakistan

Pakistan's political scene remains volatile following the dismissal of Imran Khan, who once enjoyed immense public support. Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party saw mass protests after his removal, accusing the military and political rivals of orchestrating his ousting. His arrest in May 2023 and subsequent legal battles only added fuel to the fire, leading to widespread unrest across the country.

In 2024, the military's pervasive role in politics remains a major issue. Despite nominal civilian leadership under the current government, real power continues to reside with the military establishment. This has led to increasing distrust between civilian leaders and the army, as well as scepticism from the public. Many believe that the military's interference is stalling meaningful democratic progress, making governance less transparent and accountable.

Pakistan's economic crisis has deepened in 2024, with inflation soaring to record levels, causing immense hardship for ordinary citizens. The country



faces a near-unprecedented rise in prices of essential goods, driven by a combination of factors such as mismanagement, global economic pressures, and natural disasters. Food inflation has hit poor and middle-income families particularly hard, leading to widespread food insecurity. The government, grappling with financial challenges, has struggled to provide effective relief.

Pakistan's foreign debt has reached staggering levels, forcing the government to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for assistance. In 2024, the country is under immense pressure to implement tough economic reforms as part of a new IMF bailout package

### **Bangladesh**

In 2024, Bangladesh witnessed a pivotal moment in its history with the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, leader of the Awami League, and the country's longest-serving head of government (1996-2001, 2009-2024). Hasina's tenure had been marked by both significant political control and controversy, with increasing discontent simmering across different sections of society. This year's events were largely triggered by the reinstatement of a controversial policy regarding government job quotas, and the subsequent mass uprising led by students signalled a powerful shift in the nation's political landscape.

The spark for the 2024 protests came from the government's decision to reinstate the pre-2018 quota system, which reserved 30% of government jobs for the descendants of those who fought in the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 and for ethnic minorities. While this quota system was intended to recognize the contributions of freedom fighters, it was also viewed by many as unfairly skewed in favour of certain groups. The Supreme Court had previously scaled back the law but stopped short of abolishing it entirely, which left the door open for this year's reinstatement.

The 2024 protests were not the first time students had risen up against the quota system. Similar protests took place in 2013 and 2018, but this year's demonstrations reached a boiling point. By July, protests had escalated into a nationwide movement, with tens of thousands taking to the streets to voice their frustration not only over the quota issue but also against authoritarianism, corruption, and poor governance. Security forces responded with brutal force, leading to widespread clashes. Over 300 protesters were killed, and more than 20,000 were injured. One of the most notable incidents occurred in the town of

Enayetpur, where 11 police officers were killed during clashes at a local police station.

As the protests swelled, the situation became untenable for Sheikh Hasina. On August 5, 2024, she fled to neighbouring India, marking the end of her lengthy rule. Her departure signified a profound shift in Bangladesh's political climate and left a leadership vacuum that the student-led movement was quick to address.

In the aftermath of Hasina's departure, the students called for Dr. Muhammad Yunus to be appointed as interim Prime Minister to oversee the transition and preparation for new elections. Yunus, an economist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, is best known for founding Grameen Bank in 1976, a pioneering institution that introduced microfinance as a tool to alleviate poverty by offering small loans without collateral. Yunus' model, which serves 10.6 million borrowers—97% of whom are women—has been replicated worldwide. With deep-rooted respect for his achievements and commitment to poverty reduction, the movement viewed Yunus as the ideal figure to guide the nation during this turbulent period.

Dr. Yunus was sworn in as Chief Advisor of the interim government three days after Sheikh Hasina's resignation. His appointment offered a glimmer of hope to a nation burdened by political instability, poverty, and economic dependency. Bangladesh remains one of the poorest countries globally, and despite some progress over the years, it continues to face deep structural challenges. One such issue is the country's garment industry, which employs around 4 million workers and accounts for 82% of the nation's exports. For years, these workers endured inhumane working conditions in sweatshops. The collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in 2013, which claimed over 1,000 lives and injured 2,500 more, brought international attention to these abuses. While some reforms were made in the aftermath of that tragedy, the industry remains plagued by unsafe conditions and low wages.

In addition to its internal challenges, Bangladesh also grapples with the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis. The country hosts approximately one million Rohingya refugees, most of whom fled persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine State in 2017. These refugees reside primarily in the Cox's Bazar region, where they are heavily reliant on international humanitarian aid. Despite these efforts, the Rohingya refugees face increasing violence and exploitation by criminal gangs. Bangladesh's authorities have struggled to protect the refugees, many of whom are living in



deplorable conditions as they await the possibility of repatriation.

The humanitarian challenges in Bangladesh are exacerbated by the country's vulnerability to natural disasters, which frequently disrupt development efforts. The year 2024 has been no exception, with floods, cyclones, and other natural calamities striking various regions. For a country with such a large population—174 million, plus the million-strong Rohingya population—the pressure on resources, infrastructure, and governance is immense.

Dr. Yunus faces a formidable task in stabilizing the nation, restoring confidence in its institutions, and preparing for free and fair elections. With a population eager for change and students playing a central role in the demand for reform, Bangladesh stands at a critical crossroads. The year 2024 will undoubtedly be remembered as a turning point in the nation's history, as it marks the end of Hasina's authoritarian rule and the beginning of a new chapter led by a figure renowned for his commitment to economic empowerment and social justice.

## China

The persecution of Uyghur Muslims in China's Xinjiang region continues to be one of the most pressing human rights crises of our time. Over the past several years, credible reports have revealed the Chinese government's systematic efforts to repress Uyghur culture, religion, and identity. These efforts include mass detention in so-called "re-education camps," forced labour, surveillance, and forced assimilation, with the ultimate goal of eradicating Uyghur cultural and religious expression. This campaign has sparked global outcry, with various human rights organizations, journalists, and survivors documenting evidence of widespread abuses.

In Xinjiang, more than a million Uyghur Muslims are believed to have been detained in camps, where they reportedly face indoctrination, forced renunciation of their religious beliefs, and even physical and psychological abuse. Forced labour is another key aspect of the repression, with Uyghurs reportedly coerced into working in factories under harsh conditions, producing goods such as textiles and electronics that are then exported globally. Women have also been subjected to forced sterilizations, as part of a broader effort to reduce the Uyghur population.

The Chinese government's persecution is not limited to physical repression; it also includes a deliberate campaign to undermine Uyghur culture. Traditional Uyghur practices, such as speaking the Uyghur

language and observing Islamic customs, have been restricted. Mosques have been demolished, and the Chinese Communist Party has attempted to co-opt religious figures to propagate state-approved interpretations of Islam that align with the government's agenda. The Chinese government frames these policies as part of its counterterrorism efforts, but the scale and nature of the actions suggest a broader objective of cultural genocide.

Despite the gravity of the situation, the Muslim world's response has largely been muted. Many Muslim-majority countries have chosen to maintain silence or even express support for China's policies, prioritizing economic and diplomatic ties over human rights concerns. China's Belt and Road Initiative, which involves significant investments and infrastructure projects in many Muslim-majority countries, is a key factor influencing this response. For example, countries like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Egypt have been reluctant to condemn China's actions, instead focusing on strengthening their economic partnerships with Beijing.

## EUROPE

### Türkiye

One of the most significant moves by Türkiye was its formal application to join BRICS. This shift comes amid the backdrop of Türkiye's frustration with the EU's stalling of membership talks, alongside its growing geopolitical and economic interests aligning with BRICS nations, particularly as a member of the G20 and the 17th largest economy globally. Its rapid economic growth has continued despite internal struggles, making it an increasingly important player in global economic dynamics.

On the geopolitical front, Türkiye remains a crucial NATO ally, even while balancing delicate relations with Russia and supporting Sweden's NATO membership bid in 2024. This aligns it more closely with Western interests, despite its complex relationship with Western powers. However, Türkiye's support for Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its continued military operations against Kurdish militants in Iraq and Syria highlight its independent regional agenda. These military actions have been a key aspect of Turkish foreign policy, with Türkiye viewing the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as a significant security threat.

Türkiye's stance against Israel included suspending all trade with Israel. Additionally, it joined South Africa in a lawsuit at the International Court of Justice

(ICJ) to accuse Israel of genocide, further demonstrating its leadership in condemning the violence in Gaza.

Domestically, Türkiye also faced significant challenges in managing the presence of approximately 4 million Syrian refugees. In a reflection of growing tensions, anti-Syrian riots erupted in the Kayseri region, prompting a swift response from Turkish authorities.

### **Muslim Minorities in European Countries**

Across Europe in 2024, Islamophobia and xenophobia have surged, creating a hostile environment for Muslim communities. Far-right political movements have gained traction, exacerbating tensions and fueling anti-Muslim sentiment. The rise of these populist parties has translated into discriminatory policies and increasing acts of violence, with Muslims and their places of worship frequently targeted.

In countries such as France, Austria, and Germany, far-right parties have made significant electoral gains by capitalizing on fears related to immigration, security, and cultural identity. In France, Marine Le Pen's National Rally continues to promote a staunchly anti-Islamic agenda, contributing to the political discourse that seeks to ban the hijab and restrict the building of mosques. Austria saw the Freedom Party (FPÖ), known for its anti-Muslim rhetoric, gain support in local and national elections. These far-right movements have normalized Islamophobic narratives, which argue that Muslims threaten European identity and values.

This rise in far-right influence has resulted in policies that directly target Muslim communities. For instance, in France, laws banning religious symbols in schools, such as the hijab, have made it difficult for Muslim women to balance their religious obligations with their rights to public participation. Similarly, Austria's "Islam Map," which publicly listed mosques and Islamic organizations, has been widely criticized as an invasion of privacy and a potential catalyst for targeted attacks.

The rise of far-right political movements has been accompanied by an alarming spike in hate crimes against Muslims across Europe. In the UK, tensions reached a boiling point in 2024 with riots targeting mosques. In Leicester and Birmingham, mosques were attacked during waves of anti-Muslim demonstrations, where far-right groups exploited social unrest. These attacks on religious centres have left Muslim communities feeling increasingly vulnerable and unsafe, particularly in places that have historically

been multicultural.

In Germany, there were multiple incidents in which far-right extremists attacked mosques. In early 2024, arson attempts on mosques in Berlin and Hamburg shocked the nation. These incidents were part of a broader trend of hate crimes against Muslims, which saw a marked increase during the year. According to a report published by the German Ministry of the Interior, hate crimes targeting Muslims rose by nearly 20%, with many involving physical assaults, vandalism of mosques, and harassment of women wearing the hijab.

This rise in Islamophobic violence reflects a broader societal shift, where Muslim communities are increasingly perceived as "outsiders" or even security threats, despite the fact that many have been integral to European society for generations.

Despite these obstacles, Muslim communities across Europe have demonstrated resilience and a growing sense of civic engagement. Organizations such as the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) and the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) have been at the forefront of challenging Islamophobic policies and providing legal support to victims of hate crimes. In Austria, local Muslim leaders have actively advocated against the "Islam Map," working to protect their community from discrimination and stigma.

## **NORTH AMERICA**

American Muslims continue to face significant levels of Islamophobia in 2024, driven in part by lingering biases from the post-9/11 era and more recent political rhetoric that frames Islam as a security threat. Hate crimes against Muslims have persisted, and many report being subjected to discriminatory practices in schools, workplaces, and public spaces. In particular, the rise of far-right movements and political figures who propagate anti-Muslim sentiments has worsened feelings of alienation within the community.

As the 2024 presidential election approaches, American Muslims find themselves facing a complex dilemma: neither major political party fully addresses the concerns of the Muslim community. On the one hand, the Democratic Party, with its progressive wing, tends to support policies promoting religious freedom, diversity, and social justice, which resonates with many Muslim voters. However, the Democrats' support of the Israeli genocide has left American Muslims feeling disillusioned.

On the other hand, the Republican Party, which traditionally emphasizes religious freedom and conservative values, has in recent years become associated with more hardline stances on immigration, national security, and counterterrorism—issues that disproportionately impact Muslims. The Republican rhetoric around "radical Islamic terrorism" during the 2016 and 2020 elections, along with policies such as the 2017 Muslim Ban, have alienated many Muslim voters. Though some Republican candidates have distanced themselves from overt Islamophobic language in 2024, the lingering association with policies perceived as hostile to Muslims makes it difficult for the community to rally behind them.

American Muslims are deeply concerned about preserving their civil liberties in the face of rising Islamophobia and discriminatory policies. The Patriot Act and its surveillance programs, which disproportionately targeted Muslims after 9/11, remain fresh in the collective memory of the community. In 2024, the expansion of digital surveillance and facial recognition technologies, combined with ongoing racial and religious profiling, is a key issue for Muslim voters.

Immigration continues to be a major concern for American Muslims, many of whom are immigrants or have close ties to immigrant communities. The Trump-era Muslim Ban and its consequences still resonate. While the Biden administration rolled back some of these policies, the fear of their reintroduction under a future Republican government keeps immigration reform high on the priority list for Muslim voters.

U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and broader Muslim world continues to be a critical issue. Many American Muslims feel that the U.S. has played a role in destabilizing regions like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine, leaving Muslim populations to suffer the consequences. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is particularly sensitive. Despite broad American Muslim support for Palestinian rights, there is a growing sense of disillusionment with the U.S.'s failure to play an even-handed role in peace negotiations. Candidates' stances on human rights violations in places

like China (Uyghurs), India (Muslim minority persecution), and Myanmar (Rohingya crisis) will heavily influence how Muslims vote.

As the 2024 election looms, American Muslims are grappling with a sense of political disillusionment. Neither major party fully addresses their multifaceted concerns, and the political landscape is fraught with difficult choices. The Muslim community is increasingly vocal and politically active, but the challenge remains to find candidates who can represent their interests, not only in terms of domestic civil rights but also on the global stage.

## CONCLUSION

The past year has been a tumultuous and devastating one for the Muslim world, marked by escalating conflicts and humanitarian crises that have captured global attention. The ongoing genocide in Gaza, where Israeli forces have unleashed widespread destruction, killing tens of thousands of civilians and targeting essential infrastructure, has brought the region to the brink of catastrophe. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon, combined with the relentless bombing of Syria, has added layers of instability to an already volatile Middle East, dragging these countries into deeper conflict and further straining their civilian populations.

Iran, after exercising restraint, launched a significant retaliatory strike on Israel in October, with hundreds of ballistic missiles striking military targets. This escalation raised the spectre of a broader regional war that could easily extend beyond the Middle East. With Russia's involvement in supporting Syria and aligning with Iran, the geopolitical landscape has grown increasingly complex, signalling the potential for a wider conflict with global repercussions. The intersections of these events have underscored the precariousness of peace in the region and highlighted the urgent need for diplomatic interventions. The stakes have never been higher, and the resilience and leadership of influential figures in the Muslim world will be crucial in navigating the uncertain and dangerous road ahead.



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**MUSLIM 500 SPECIAL FEATURE**

# GAZA

**THE ABOMINABLE  
DESOLATION**

# CONTENTS

THE ABOMINATION OF THE  
DESOLATION OF GAZA 25

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GAZA 26

## PEOPLE

Civilians 28

Children & Infants 29

Journalists 30

Medics 32

PLACES OF WORSHIP 34

UNIVERSITIES 38

HOSPITALS 40

INFOGRAPHIC 44

OTHER 45

TREATMENT OF  
PALESTINIAN PRISONERS  
AND ISRAELI HOSTAGES 46

A LITANY OF LIES:  
EVERY ACCUSATION IS A  
CONFESSION 48

GAZA TIMELINE 51



# THE ABOMINATION OF THE DESOLATION OF **GAZA**

Since October 2023, Israel has been accused of ever-increasing violations of international law during its military operations in Gaza. These violations include:

- 1. Targeting of civilians:** Israeli airstrikes have led to large-scale civilian casualties, with hospitals, schools, and residential buildings being struck. This is considered a violation of international humanitarian law, which requires distinguishing between military targets and civilians.
- 2. Blocking humanitarian aid:** Israel has restricted the flow of essential humanitarian supplies such as food, water, and medical aid into Gaza. Human rights organizations have criticized the blockade and restrictions as disproportionate and unlawful, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.
- 3. Use of collective punishment:** High-ranking Israeli officials have publicly stated their intent to deprive civilians in Gaza of basic needs as part of their military strategy. Denying essential services to civilians as a form of collective punishment violates the Geneva Conventions.
- 4. Destruction of infrastructure:** Multiple



civilian infrastructures, including medical facilities, places of worship, and universities, have been damaged or destroyed in Israeli strikes, further worsening the humanitarian situation.

These actions have drawn widespread condemnation from the international community, including calls for investigations into potential war crimes.



# A Brief History of Gaza

The name “Gaza” is derived from the Semitic root “zz,” which means “strong” or “mighty,” reflecting its ancient strategic and military significance. The city has been known by various names throughout history, including “Ghazzah” in Arabic and “Azzah” in Hebrew. The ancient Egyptians referred to it as “azzat,” while the Greeks called it “Gaza.”

Gaza is located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, bordered by Israel to the north and east, and Egypt to the south. The Gaza Strip is approximately 41 kilometres long and 6-12 kilometres wide, covering an area of about 365 square kilometres. As of 2024, the population of the Gaza Strip is approximately 2 million, making it one of the most densely populated areas in the world. The majority of the population consists of Palestinian refugees and their descendants, who were displaced during the 1948 war.

## Brief History

Gaza’s history dates back to ancient times, with evidence of habitation as early as the Bronze Age (around 3000 BCE). The city’s strategic

location along the Mediterranean coast made it a key trade hub, linking Africa and Asia. The city’s early inhabitants were likely Canaanites, and it later became a vital part of the Philistine Pentapolis, a group of five Philistine cities mentioned in the Bible.

Throughout its history, Gaza has been ruled by various empires and civilizations, including the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Arabs. After the Muslim conquest in the 7th century, Gaza became an important Islamic city, flourishing under the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. During the Ottoman period (1517-1917), Gaza was part of the Empire’s administrative region of Palestine. It became a vibrant centre of trade and culture, especially during the 18th and 19th centuries. By the 1930s, Gaza was part of the British Mandate for Palestine, with a population that was predominantly Arab Muslim, alongside Christian and Jewish communities.

## 1948

The 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which followed





the declaration of the State of Israel, marked a turning point in Gaza's history. The war led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, many of whom fled to Gaza, significantly increasing its population. The influx of refugees transformed Gaza into a densely populated area, setting the stage for future conflicts and challenges.

### **1948 - 1967**

During the Egyptian administration of Gaza (1948-1967), Gaza remained a focus of regional tensions. The territory was subject to frequent cross-border skirmishes and military operations between Israel and Egyptian-controlled Gaza. This period also saw the rise of Palestinian nationalism, with the Gaza Strip becoming a hotbed for political activism and resistance against Israeli occupation.

### **1967- October 7, 2023**

Following the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel occupied Gaza, a situation that persists despite international calls for a two-state solution. The Oslo Accords in the 1990s led to limited Palestinian self-rule in Gaza, but the region remained volatile. In 2007, Hamas took control of Gaza after a brief civil conflict with Fatah, leading to an Israeli-Egyptian blockade that severely restricted the movement of goods and

people. This blockade, along with repeated conflicts between Hamas and Israel, has led to humanitarian crises in Gaza. The population has endured repeated military operations, economic hardship, and a dire humanitarian situation.

### **October 7, 2023**

Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel from Gaza, resulting in widespread casualties among both civilians and military personnel. The Israeli military response operated under the controversial Hannibal Directive, a military policy intended to prevent soldiers from being taken hostage, even at the cost of their lives. Of the approximately 1,200 Israelis killed that day, around one-third were military personnel, while another third were killed by Israeli fire. Following the attack, Israel responded with an aggressive military campaign against Gaza, resulting in extensive destruction and loss of civilian life. The military campaign was accompanied by a blockade, restricting humanitarian aid and creating conditions of starvation. Despite international condemnation, including findings by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC), the genocide has persisted.

# Civilians

At least 42,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli attacks, most of them civilians, with unknown thousands more buried under rubble. Credible reports (e.g. the Lancet) estimate the direct and indirect killings to be in the range of 4 - 10 times the current confirmed killings; so between 200,000 to 400,000 people killed, from a population of 2.1 million.



# Children & Infants

Of those killed, at least 12,000 are children. In a document released by Gaza's health ministry in September 2024, more than 100 pages of the 649-page document are victims under the age of 10; and the first adult name does not appear until page 215. As from September 2024, 169 babies born after 7 October have been killed.



State of Palestine  
Ministry of Health

وزارة الصحة  
دولة فلسطين

تلفظ رقم (1) أسماء الشهداء المسجلين بعدد الجماعي 6747 (بشكل 281 من مجموع الجاني)

تاريخ الميلاد	الاسم	العمر	ملاحظات
1	94527174	22	محمد محمود احمد الانصاري
2	97859107	22	محمد محمود عثمان الانصاري
3	95529987	20	وائل خالد محمد الانصاري
4	93375134	19	سليم وائل محمود عثمان الانصاري
5	90198922	19	مسامح مسامح عثمان الانصاري
6	91934795	19	عبد الله نور محمد الانصاري
7	92605607	17	محمد رمزي عبد القويوم الانصاري
8	91701196	17	سليم وائل محمود عثمان الانصاري
9	95706549	17	سليم وائل محمود عثمان الانصاري
10	97694736	17	عبد الله نور محمد الانصاري
11	94763149	17	محمد رمزي عبد القويوم الانصاري
12	95221701	17	سليم وائل محمود عثمان الانصاري
13	90031466	17	سليم وائل محمود عثمان الانصاري
14	90082482	17	سليم وائل محمود عثمان الانصاري
15	90082350	17	عبد الله نور محمد الانصاري
16	90137879	16	محمد وائل احمد الانصاري
17	90078982	16	عيسى محمد احمد الانصاري
18	90069959	15	محمد علي احمد الانصاري
19	90316896	15	الطالبة انور محمد عثمان الانصاري
20	90351190	14	حمدي محمد رانيا الانصاري
21	90351652	14	رانيا محمد رانيا الانصاري
22	93158404	14	زين العابدين الانصاري
23	93092119	13	امير محمد احمد الانصاري
24	80027313	12	هاني وائل محمد الانصاري
25	80181140	12	هاني وائل محمد الانصاري
26	90591774	12	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
27	80191851	11	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
28	90590989	11	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
29	80238714	11	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
30	80314363	11	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
31	80272009	11	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
32	80326025	10	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
33	80340702	10	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
34	41057884	9	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
35	40196853	9	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
36	40220411	9	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
37	40540825	8	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
38	40272999	7	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
39	41094430	6	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
40	40512852	6	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
41	40512225	4	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
42	40686502	3	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
43	40697536	2	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
44	44512175	1	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
45	44434364	1	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
46	44464055	1	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
47	44435104	1	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري
48	44464142	1	محمد وائل محمد الانصاري

Its first 14 pages contain the names of babies under the age of 1 who were killed during the onslaught, for which Israel is on trial for genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

# Journalists

In its effort to systematically suppress all independent news coverage from Gaza and scrutiny of its military crimes, Israel has openly targeted journalists and media institutions. Over 165 journalists have been killed, including 120 Palestinians, three Lebanese and two Israelis. In addition, Al Jazeera offices in Gaza and the West Bank were shut down in order to ensure a total news blackout and reliance on IDF-crafted news bulletins and propaganda.

## 165 journalists killed

in Israeli-Palestinian conflict



# 165

Since October 7, 2023


August 1, 2024. Source: Local Government Media Office in Gaza, Committee to Protect Journalists, Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said the war zone in Gaza was the “most dangerous ever” for reporters. The Israeli military has on multiple occasions killed journalists and then claimed they are “terrorists”—allegations that have been debunked by experts and independent investigations.

Despite protections for media workers under international law, Israel has continued its campaign of targeting journalists, and their families, through airstrikes, arrests and snipers.

**“[We] must work collectively to ensure that journalist killers are brought to justice ... and that the public’s right to be informed is protected from those whose power is threatened by the scrutiny of reporting.”**  
— Jodie Ginsberg, CEO, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)



Palestinian journalist Wael Dahdouh praying the *janazah* (funeral) prayer over his family members, who were targeted and killed in an Israeli airstrike on October 26, 2023.

Palestinian journalist Salma al-Qadoumi was shot in the back while she was covering Israel’s invasion of Khan Younis on August 19, 2024. Over 21 women journalists have died since Israel began its hostilities.



Mohammad Balousha, a Palestinian journalist and the administrative and financial manager of the Gaza office of the local news TV channel Palestine Today, was killed in an Israeli airstrike on the Al-Saftawi neighborhood in northern Gaza on October 17, 2023.

A relative bids farewell during the funeral of Palestine TV journalist Mohamed Abu Hatab and 11 family members, the day after they were killed in an Israeli bombardment of Khan Yunis in November 2023.



# Medics

As of September 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) and humanitarian organizations report that since October 2023, Israel has attacked over 500 healthcare facilities, resulting in the deaths of more than 800 healthcare workers, with 1,100 injured and 130 ambulances destroyed or heavily damaged. Additionally, over 350 Palestinian health workers are still detained by Israeli forces.



*Above Photo:* Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) volunteers killed since October 2023 by Israel: (from left to right) Mohammed Al Ahel, Alaa Al Shawa, Ahmad Al Sahar, Mahmoud Abu Nujaila, and Reem Abu Lebdeh.

“Hospitals, medical staff, and civilians all have protected status under international law, law that the Israel military has flagrantly ignored every day through its repeated targeting of healthcare facilities and staff.”

— Rohan Talbot, Medical Aid for Palestine (MAP)



**Hammam Alloh**, an internal medicine physician and nephrologist, took turns with other doctors to care for patients at Gaza's Al-Shifa Hospital, despite nearby bombardments. He was killed with 26 members of his family when his home was bombed in November 2023.



**Adnan Al Bursh**, head of Orthopedics at Shifa Hospital, was tortured to death in an Israeli prison. He was detained in northern Gaza for “national security reasons”.



**Amer Shoaib**, a decorated British military veteran and consultant orthopaedic surgeon, was targeted in Gaza by a guided missile while working.



**Ziad Eldalou**, internal medicine physician at the Shifa Hospital in Gaza, was detained by Israeli forces on March 18, 2024, during a raid on the hospital. He died three days later, on March 21, while in Israeli detention.



**Dima Abdullatif Mohammed Alhaj**, 29 years old, who worked with the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s Trauma and Emergency Team, died during an Israeli airstrike on her family home in southern Gaza on 21 November 2023.



# Places of Worship

Over 880 mosques and three churches, including ancient ones over 1,000 years old, have been completely destroyed in Gaza, with over 200 additional mosques damaged



## **Byzantine Church of Jabalia**

*October 2023*

Over 1,700 years old, this site has witnessed the reign of 24 Byzantine emperors and 14 Muslim caliphs from both the Abbasid and Umayyad dynasties throughout its history.

## **Al-Sousi Mosque**

*October 2023*

Struck by a missile, causing significant damage to the mosque's main prayer area and surrounding facilities.

## **Al-Katiba Mosque**

*October 2023*

Severely damaged during an airstrike that also impacted surrounding residential buildings, leading to partial destruction of the mosque's roof and walls.

## **Al-Amin Muhammad Mosque**

*October 2023*

Hit by an airstrike, causing extensive damage to the structure and resulting in the destruction of parts of the prayer hall and minaret.

## **Al-Omari Mosque**

*October 2023*

Al-Omari Mosque, dating back to the Mamluk era, was heavily damaged by airstrikes.

## **Al-Gharbi Mosque**

*October 2023*

Al Gharbi Mosque in Gaza City was destroyed in an Israeli airstrike.

## **Ahmed-Yassin Mosque**

*October 2023*

Ahmed Yassin mosque was levelled by Israeli airstrikes.

## **Imam Shafi'i Mosque**

*October 2023*

Imam Shafi'i Mosque, a significant religious site in Gaza City, was hit by airstrikes. The main prayer area and surrounding facilities were severely damaged, leading to the complete closure of the mosque.

## **Saint Porphyrius Orthodox Church**

*October 2023*

Saint Porphyrius Orthodox Church, one of the oldest churches in Gaza, was damaged by a nearby airstrike.



### **Al-Nour Mosque**

*October 2023*

Al-Nour Mosque was destroyed in an airstrike targeting areas in Rafah. The mosque's main building, including its dome and minaret, collapsed completely. The destruction caused a halt to all prayer services and religious gatherings.

### **Al-Khulafa Mosque**

*October 2023*

Al-Khulafa Mosque was struck by airstrikes, leading to the destruction of its main prayer hall and ablution areas.

### **Al-Sousi Mosque**

*October 2023*

Al-Sousi Mosque was hit by airstrikes and suffered significant damage. The mosque's minaret collapsed, and parts of the roof were destroyed, making it unsafe for worshippers.

### **Al-Faruq Mosque**

*October 2023*

Al-Faruq Mosque, a central mosque in Khan Younis, was struck and severely damaged.

### **Al-Saraya Mosque**

*October 2023*

Al-Saraya Mosque, located in the heart of Gaza City, was hit by airstrikes, resulting in the partial collapse of the building.

### **Al-Taqwa Mosque**

*October 2023*

Al-Taqwa Mosque, a major mosque in Beit Lahiya, was destroyed by airstrikes, causing significant damage to its main hall, dome, and surrounding facilities. The mosque was completely demolished, with no structure left for future use.

### **Al-Abrar Mosque**

*October 2023*

Al-Abrar Mosque was severely damaged by airstrikes. The building sustained substantial structural damage, particularly to its roof and walls. The mosque is now considered unsafe for congregational prayers.

### **Al-Qassam Mosque**

*November 2023*

Struck by an airstrike, causing significant structural damage and destruction of parts of the prayer hall.

### **Al-Masoudia Mosque**

*November 2023*

Damaged by shelling, resulting in the partial collapse of the main prayer hall and damage to the mosque's exterior.

### **Al-Abbas Mosque**

*November 2023*

Attacked by airstrikes, which led to the destruction of the mosque's minaret and severe damage to its interior.



### **Saint Hilarion Monastery**

*November 2023*

The monastery of Saint Hilarion/Tell Umm Amer is one of the oldest sites in the Middle East.

### **Al-Mustafa Mosque**

*November 2023*

The Israeli occupation army bombed this mosque in Sheikh Nasser area of Khan Younis, the 4th mosque destroyed that day.

### **Jaffa Mosque**

*December 2023*

Jaffa Mosque in Gaza City was destroyed in an Israeli airstrike.

### **Al-Farooq Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Mosque**

*December 2023*

Damaged during nearby airstrikes, resulting in shattered windows, damage to the roof, and structural cracks.

### **Sayed al-Hashim Mosque**

*December 2023*

The Sayyed Al-Hashim Mosque, considered one of the most important mosques in the Old City of Gaza because it is thought to hold the tomb of Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him)'s grandfather, Hashim Bin Abd Manaf, was also destroyed.

### **Othman Bin Qashqar Mosque**

*December 2023*

Located in Gaza city, hit by air raids by Israeli forces and destroyed,

### **Holy Family Church**

*December 2023*

The Church of the Holy Family was hit by an Israeli airstrike that partially destroyed the parish school and the pastor's office.



### **Al-Masjid al-Omari al-Kabir**

*December 2023*

Thought to be the first mosque built in the Gaza strip 1400 years ago.

### **Katib al-Wilaya Mosque or Welayat Mosque**

*December 2023*

This small historic mosque was originally built by the Burji Mamluks in 1432. The mosque suffered damage as a result of an Israeli airstrike on the nearby Church of Saint Porphyrius.

### **Al-Nasr Mosque**

*January 2024*

Suffered damage due to shelling that destroyed the mosque's dome and caused extensive internal damage.

### **Al-Shuhada Mosque**

*February 2024*

Partially destroyed by airstrikes, with significant damage to the prayer hall, library, and minaret.

### **Imam Shafi Mosque**

*March 2024*

Damaged in an airstrike that affected both the mosque and adjacent residential buildings, causing significant structural damage.

### **Al-Rahma Mosque**

*March 2024*

Struck by shelling, resulting in the collapse of the minaret and damage to the surrounding courtyard.

### **Al-Bukhari Mosque**

*March 2024*

The Israeli occupation targeted Al-Bukhari



Mosque in Deir Al-Balah, causing its complete destruction.

### **Al-Riad Mosque**

*March 2024*

Israeli forces have bombarded a neighbourhood in Khan Younis, hitting al-Riad mosque, which was heavily damaged by the attack.

### **Al-Salah Mosque**

*April 2024*

Hit during an airstrike that destroyed the mosque's minaret and caused heavy damage to its interior.

### **Al-Khulafa Al-Rashidin Mosque**

*April 2024*

Severely damaged by an airstrike, leading to the destruction of the main prayer hall and extensive damage to other parts of the mosque.

### **Sheikh Zakaria Mosque in the Daraj**

*April 2024*

Sheikh Zakaria Mosque in Gaza City, which dates back over 800 years, was destroyed by the Israeli military.

### **Bilal Ibn Rabah Mosque**

*May 2024*

Damaged by shelling that led to partial destruction of the mosque's structure and the adjacent community center.

### **Al-Quds Mosque**

*June 2024*

Struck by airstrikes, leading to the destruction of its minaret and severe damage to the mosque's interior and exterior.

### **Al-Omari Mosque**

*June 2024*

Gaza's oldest mosque was hit by an airstrike, causing significant damage to its historical structure, including the main dome and prayer hall.

### **Al Shamaa Mosque**

*July 2024*

An Israeli raid targeting the vicinity of Al-Shamaa Mosque in Al-Zeitoun neighborhood, southeast of Gaza City damaged the mosque which was built in 1315.

### **Ibn Othman Mosque**

*July 2024*

Israeli warplanes fired several missiles at Gazas second largest historical mosque in the Shuja'iyya neighbourhood. The mosque had been standing in Central Gaza for over 600 years and had a location in the neighbourhood's main market.

### **Al-Taqwa Mosque**

*August 2024*

Damaged by shelling that resulted in the destruction of the roof and walls of the mosque, impacting the main prayer area.

### **Al-Karameh Mosque**

*August 2024*

Hit by an airstrike, leading to the destruction of parts of the mosque's structure, including its minaret and prayer hall.

### **Bani Saleh Mosque**

*August 2024*

Israeli soldiers stormed the Bani Saleh Mosque in northern Gaza and burned all the Qur'ans inside it.

### **Al-Rahman Mosque**

*September 2024*

Attacked by airstrikes, causing severe damage to the mosque's structure and nearby residential buildings.



# Universities

More than 80% of educational institutions in Gaza have been severely damaged or destroyed including all of the 19 universities, (affecting 90,000 students).

85% of the 796 schools in Gaza have been destroyed (affecting 625,000 students). The remainder have been repurposed as refuge for the displaced.

## Islamic University of Gaza

*October 2023*

The Islamic University of Gaza, one of the largest and most prominent educational institutions in Gaza, was hit by multiple airstrikes.

## Al-Aqsa University

*October 2023*

Al-Aqsa University sustained severe damage from airstrikes. The university's main campus, including lecture halls, faculty offices, and libraries, was hit, leading to the suspension of all academic activities.

## University College of Applied Sciences

*October 2023*

The University College of Applied Sciences, known for its technical and vocational programs, was damaged by airstrikes.

## Al-Quds Open University

*October 2023*

Al-Quds Open University's Gaza branch was heavily damaged due to airstrikes. Key facilities, including lecture halls, libraries, and computer labs, were destroyed.

## Gaza University

*October 2023*

Gaza University was struck by airstrikes, causing substantial damage to its main buildings, including classrooms and faculty offices.

## Palestine Technical College

*October 2023*

Palestine Technical College, an institution known for its engineering and technology programs, was severely damaged by targeted airstrikes.

## Al-Azhar University - Gaza

*October 2023*

Al-Azhar University, one of Gaza's major academic institutions, sustained heavy damage from airstrikes. Key buildings, including the main administrative block, science and technology faculties, and student housing, were destroyed.

## University of Palestine

*October 2023*

The University of Palestine was targeted by airstrikes that led to the destruction of its main campus facilities.



### **University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS)**

*November 2023*

Targeted by shelling that resulted in damage to its computer science and engineering departments.

### **Al-Quds Open University**

*November 2023*

Damaged during an airstrike in a nearby area, resulting in broken windows, structural damage, and the destruction of some academic resources.

### **Palestine Technical College**

*November 2023*

Suffered damage from shelling, which led to the destruction of parts of its technical training facilities, affecting courses in vocational and applied sciences.

### **Gaza University**

*December 2023*

Attacked by airstrikes, causing significant damage to several buildings, including the main administration building and student facilities.

### **Israa University**

*January 2024*

Destroyed by Israeli military. The IDF had been using the campus as an ad hoc detention facility for interrogating Palestinian detainees before transferring them to an unknown location. Al-Aqsa University

*January 2024*

The main campus in Gaza City sustained damage due to an airstrike, affecting the faculties of humanities and education.

### **University of Palestine**

*January 2024*

Damaged in an airstrike that destroyed parts of its campus, including classrooms and administrative offices.

### **College of Science and Technology - Khan Younis**

*February 2024*

Hit by airstrikes that caused severe damage to laboratories and classrooms, disrupting the academic calendar and affecting the practical training of students.

### **Palestine Polytechnic University (PPU) - Gaza Branch**

*March 2024*

Damaged by shelling, which impacted the faculty of engineering.

### **University of Gaza (newly established)**

*April 2024*

Newly established university campus partially destroyed by an airstrike that led to damage to several buildings, including the main library and administrative offices.

### **Open University of Jerusalem (Al-Quds University) - Gaza Branch**

*May 2024*

Suffered damage from an attack that affected its distance-learning infrastructure and office facilities.

### **Gaza Community College for Tourism Studies**

*June 2024*

Damaged by nearby explosions, impacting the college's hospitality training facilities.

### **Dar Al-Da'wa University College for Humanities**

*July 2024*

Hit by an airstrike, causing significant damage to the main academic block and faculty offices.

### **Al-Ribat University College**

*August 2024*

Suffered damage from airstrikes that destroyed parts of its facilities, particularly the law and public administration departments.



# Hospitals

Over 350 attacks have been recorded on healthcare facilities. These assaults have severely impacted 98 healthcare facilities, including 27 of Gaza's 36 hospitals, causing damage to critical infrastructure.



## **Al-Ahli Arab Hospital**

*October 2023*

80 bed hospital in Gaza City run by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. An Israeli strike killed 471 people and injured 342.

## **Al-Quds Hospital**

*October 2023*

At least 21 people were injured; the hospital's glass was shattered and part of the ceiling collapsed.

## **The Indonesian Hospital**

*October 2023*

Faced heavy damage from shelling and airstrikes. Key areas of the hospital, including emergency and surgical units, were hit, severely restricting its ability to operate.

## **Al-Durrah Pediatric Hospital**

*October 2023*

The hospital, which specialized in children's care, was damaged by Israeli airstrikes. Its infrastructure and critical equipment were affected, severely hampering its ability to provide pediatric emergency and specialized care.

## **Al-Ahli Arab Hospital**

*October 2023*

Run by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, the hospital suffered a direct hit from an airstrike. The blast destroyed parts of the hospital complex, including surgical and pediatric wards, and caused multiple casualties among patients and staff.

## **Beit Hanoun Hospital**

*October 2023*

Beit Hanoun Hospital was heavily damaged by contin-



ous shelling and bombardment. Emergency services, general care wards, and several other sections of the hospital sustained severe damage, forcing a reduction in its medical capacity.

### **Nasser Hospital**

*October 2023*

Nasser Hospital was struck by airstrikes, damaging its emergency and surgical units. The hospital, a key facility in the southern Gaza Strip, saw its capacity to provide critical medical services severely reduced.

### **Kamal Adwan Hospital**

*October 2023*

Kamal Adwan Hospital faced extensive damage from airstrikes. The hospital's emergency care and surgical units were significantly impacted, affecting its ability to serve the northern Gaza population.

### **European Gaza Hospital**

*October 2023*

European Gaza Hospital, one of the largest hospitals in the southern region, was heavily damaged by airstrikes. Critical areas, including intensive care units and surgical departments, were impacted, significantly reducing its operational capacity.

### **Indonesian Hospital**

*October 2023*

Gaza's largest medical facility faced numerous threats and was hit by shelling multiple times, leading to significant damage to its infrastructure, including power outages and compromised medical services.

### **Al-Shifa Hospital**

*November 2023*

The hospital was placed under siege by the Israeli military on 11th November. It held 1500 patients, 1500 medical workers and 15,000 displaced people. There were also over 200 dead bodies placed in the hospital's courtyard.

### **Al-Quds Hospital**

*November 2023*

Hit during shelling, causing significant damage to the building and equipment. The hospital struggled to maintain its operations due to damage and lack of essential supplies.

### **Beit Hanoun Hospital**

*November 2023*

Sustained serious damage from artillery shelling, leading to partial destruction and the evacuation of patients and staff.

### **Nasser Medical Complex**

*November 2023*

Suffered damage from nearby explosions, with several wards impacted, forcing a reduction in services.

### **Rantisi Pediatric Hospital**

*November 2023*

Provides care for children with chronic illnesses like cancer; was damaged in airstrikes. The destruction of vital medical equipment and infrastructure severely impacted its specialized pediatric care services.



### **Al-Shifa Hospital**

*November 2023*

Al-Shifa Hospital, the largest and main hospital in Gaza, sustained severe damage due to airstrikes around the vicinity. As the principal healthcare facility, it has faced significant strain on its services, including emergency care, surgery, and intensive care.

### **Al-Nasir Hospital**

*November 2023*

Al-Nasir Hospital, known for its emergency and pediatric services, was heavily damaged in continued airstrikes. The destruction of key infrastructure has made it challenging for the hospital to provide care, especially for pediatric cases.

### **Al-Shifa Hospital**

*November 2023*

Gaza's largest medical facility faced numerous threats and was hit by shelling multiple times, leading to significant damage to its infrastructure, including power outages and compromised medical services.

### **Indonesian Hospital**

*November 2023*

The Indonesian Hospital, located in the northern Gaza Strip, suffered extensive damage from airstrikes, impacting its ability to operate and provide medical care.

### **Al-Durrah Children's Hospital**

*December 2023*

Damaged by nearby strikes; sections of the pediatric care units were rendered unusable, affecting care for children and infants.

### **European Gaza Hospital**

*December 2023*

Struck by airstrikes, causing significant infrastructural damage and disruptions to its emergency and surgical operations.

### **Al-Rimal Clinic**

*December 2023*

Severely damaged by airstrikes, which led to the suspension of many services offered at the clinic.

### **Helal Al-Emirati Hospital**

*January 2024*

Damaged in an airstrike that hit nearby areas, affecting its ability to provide critical healthcare services.

### **Al-Nasr Children's Hospital**

*January 2024*

Hit by airstrikes, causing damage to the pediatric wards and creating a shortage of essential medical supplies.

### **Al-Wafa Hospital**

*February 2024*

Damaged due to nearby shelling, impacting its rehabilitation services.

### **Kamal Adwan Hospital**

*February 2024*

Sustained damage from aerial bombardment, causing a halt in its surgical and emergency operations.

### **Al-Shifa Hospital**

*March 2024*

Overnight raid and 2 week seige, hundred of dead Palestinians found in and around hospital and hospital mostly destroyed

### **Al-Quds Red Crescent Hospital**

*March 2024*

Damaged in an attack that affected its emergency response and trauma care capabilities.

### **Al-Rantisi Hospital for Children**

*March 2024*

Suffered damage from shelling, affecting specialized services for pediatric patients, particularly those with chronic illnesses.



### **Maternity and Women's Health Hospital**

*April 2024*

Severely damaged due to nearby explosions, affecting its capacity to provide maternity care.

### **Al-Fawwar Medical Center**

*May 2024*

Struck by artillery, leading to extensive damage to its facilities and equipment.

### **Al-Karama Hospital**

*June 2024*

Damaged during a raid, which destroyed parts of the building and interrupted services.

### **Ahli Baptist Hospital**

*July 2024*

Gaza medical teams evacuated the hospital after the Israeli army's warning with Israeli quadcopter drones firing at civilians.

### **Al-Mujamma Medical Center**

*July 2024*

Hit in an airstrike, leading to damage in its surgical and intensive care units.

### **Abu Youssef al-Najjar Hospital**

*August 2024*

In May 2024 Al-Najjar Hospital was evacuated following the Israeli army's announcement that it had taken control of the Palestinian side of the Rafah border crossing, before eventually closing.





**10%**

of the population is either killed, injured, missing, or detained.

**49,032**  
Killed

The killed number includes those presumed dead under the rubble.

Civilians	<b>44,180</b>
Children	<b>16,164</b>
Women	<b>10,399</b>



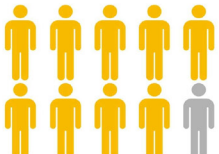
**33%**

of the casualties are children



**21%**

of the casualties are women



**9 out of every 10 people** killed are civilians



**172**  
Journalists killed



**76**  
Civil defense workers killed



**97%**

of the per capita share of water has decreased due to the extensive destruction of water infrastructure



**96%**

of the population face high levels of acute food insecurity<sup>2</sup>. Around 100 Palestinians, including 42 children, have died due to severe malnutrition



**60%**

of organized international humanitarian missions to the northern Gaza Strip have been prevented or obstructed by Israeli authorities

### The Gaza Strip

More than 2.2 million people live in the Gaza Strip, an area of about 365 square kilometers, which is divided into five main governorates: North Gaza, Gaza City, Deir al-Balah, Khan Younis, and Rafah.



### Splitting the strip

On 13 October 2023, the Israeli military issued forced displacement orders to residents of North Gaza and Gaza City, instructing them to move to the central and southern governorates of the strip. A few weeks later, Israel completely separated the northern governorates from the central and southern regions, preventing the displaced from returning to their homes and executing dozens of civilians who attempted to return.

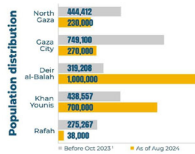
# Genocide in Gaza

On 7 October 2023, following a military attack by Palestinian factions in Gaza on Israel, Israel launched a devastating war on the Gaza Strip. Since then, Israel has committed hundreds of violations that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, which the International Court of Justice has described as a plausible genocide.



**90%**

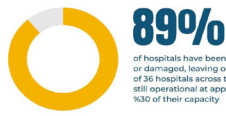
of the population was forcibly displaced. Since 13 October 2023, Israel has issued dozens of forced displacement orders, forcing the vast majority of the population to relocate in schools and makeshift tents. According to the Israeli military, those who don't comply with the orders "may be identified as accomplices of a terrorist organisation"



### Buildings destroyed or damaged

Since the onset of its war on Gaza, the Israeli military has pursued a scorched earth policy, decimating the strip's civilian infrastructure, property, and essential buildings.

Housing units	<b>516,500</b>
Schools	<b>483</b>
Industrial facilities	<b>2,830</b>
Mosques	<b>760</b>
Churches	<b>3</b>
Heritage sites	<b>263</b>
Press headquarters	<b>182</b>



**89%**

of hospitals have been destroyed or damaged, leaving only 32 out of 36 hospitals across the strip still operational at approximately 930 of their capacity



**70%**

of the buildings have been destroyed or damaged



**80%**

of the schools have been destroyed or damaged



**3,600**

Detainees/forcibly disappeared

Euro-Med Monitor conducted interviews with 100 released detainees from Gaza, and documented 42 forms of torture and inhuman, humiliating and degrading treatment practiced against Palestinians in Israeli prisons and detention centers, including:



Rape



Sexual assaults



Electric shocks



Spitting/urinating on detainees



Strip-searches



Willful killing under torture

## Six indicators Israel failed to comply with ICJ ruling

On 26 Jan 2024, the International Court of Justice issued a decision ordering Israel to implement specific provisional measures to prevent the crime of genocide against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. However, Israel has failed to comply with the ruling, as evidenced by six fundamental indicators of its violations of the ICJ's decision:

- 1** Mass killings
- 2** Causing serious physical/mental harm
- 3** Imposing inhuman living conditions
- 4** Using starvation as a weapon
- 5** Imposing an environment meant to prevent childbirth
- 6** Public incitement to genocide

# Other

**Infrastructure** - 60% of Gaza's residential buildings have been damaged or destroyed. 80% of commercial facilities have been destroyed. 65% of road networks have been destroyed. And 65% of cropland has been destroyed.

**Refugee camps** - The Jabaliya camp has been under airstrikes many times, as has Al-Shati camp, Al-Bureij, Al-Maghazi, Nusairat, Shaboura and Tel al-Sultan camps. Of the eight refugee camps in Gaza, five were already bombed by November 2023.

**Places of shelter** - in one single month, Israel attacked 16 shelter centres. And by May 2024, at least 169 UNRWA facilities had been affected by strikes.

**Cultural places** - 200 historic buildings have been damaged or destroyed, along with 12 museums and numerous cultural centres. During the first six months of the war, the Israelis destroyed about 60% of Gaza's cultural heritage sites and monuments.

**Emergency vehicles/aid trucks** - 120 ambulances have been completely destroyed; aid trucks destined for Gaza have been attacked and set on fire by settlers in the West Bank. And there have been at least eight strikes on aid workers' convoys and premises in Gaza since October.

# Treatment of Palestinian Prisoners and Israeli Hostages

Of the 240 hostages taken by Hamas on 7 October, 117 hostages have been returned alive to Israel, 105 of those being released in a prisoner exchange deal; 4 were released by Hamas and 8 rescued by the IDF. Currently, Hamas holds 66 hostages still alive and 35 bodies.

The hostages were treated well, given medical treatment and lived interspersed among homes. This was clearly reflected in their appearance and reactions when they were released as well as in many interviews they gave afterwards.

Over 3,000 Gazans are currently in Israeli jails. On their release they tell of physical torture, sexual abuse, starvation, attacks from dogs, beatings, exposure to the cold for prolonged periods, deprivation of food, sleep,

water, medical attention and subjection to all manners of abuse, including rape. They do not receive medical attention and many are released with life-long scars, traumas and disabilities.

It is thought that 226 Palestinian children are presently in Israeli jails. Reports made to Save the Children tell of children facing increasing hunger and abuse, including sexual violence, with conditions deteriorating and contagious diseases such as scabies on the rise, being forced to stand naked in extreme temperatures and violent beatings. Some are as young as 12 or 13. Most prisoners are held without charge or trial under Israel's policy of administrative detention.



**DEMOCRACY  
NOW!**

Freed Hostage "Treated Well"



**Amit Soussand**  
Israeli



**Noa Argamani**  
Israeli



**Badr Dahlan**  
Palestinian



**Bassem Tamimi**  
Palestinian

## SEXUAL ABUSE AND TORTURE

In August 2024, Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem released a report on systematic Israeli abuse, torture, sexual violence and rape of Palestinian detainees, calling the Israeli prison system a “network of torture camps”. The report includes extensive testimonies from Palestinians.



# A LITANY OF LIES

## EVERY ACCUSATION IS A CONFESSION

Hasbara is a term used to describe Israel's public diplomacy, or propaganda. The word "hasbara" translates to "explanation" in Hebrew, and it often refers to government-sanctioned initiatives, media strategies, and grassroots efforts designed to justify Israeli actions, especially concerning its military activities.

Hasbara seeks to influence international opinion by framing Israel as a victim of aggression, emphasizing its right to self-defense, and highlighting democratic values. It is often described as propaganda by

critics because of its focus on shaping narratives to downplay Israeli human rights violations, occupation policies, or military offensives. The tactics of hasbara include social media campaigns, public relations strategies, and the use of talking points to counter criticism of Israeli actions.

By promoting Israel's perspective, hasbara plays a significant role in softening international backlash and garnering support for Israeli policies.

Date	The Lie	Rebuttal
7 October	Claims of sexual violence and mass rape. Testimonies of Israelis, IDF soldiers.	No evidence, no credible witnesses, despite widespread video footage of the attacks.
7 October	Pregnant woman had belly sliced open and the fetus killed. Testimony of Israeli Citizen	No evidence.
7 October	Hamas massacred over 1500 music festival goers and civilians. Still continues to be reported by mainstream western media although Israeli media itself has debunked this.	IDF were ordered to carry out the 'Hannibal Directive'. Most of the Israeli civilians killed that day were by their own armed forces ( Apache helicopters firing on vehicles which had taken Israelis as hostage or Israeli tanks firing at houses in Kibbutz).
10 October	News Reportings of 40 babies beheaded by Hamas. Reported worldwide, including President Biden claiming he had seen photos of this.	No evidence. Now thoroughly debunked and no claims that it ever happened.
13 October	Israel denies using white phosphorus.	Clear evidence of regular use. Video footage and testimonies from medics treating the burns.
13 October	Israeli military denied attacking a civilian convoy, which was fleeing (as ordered by Israel) on a route they confirmed to be safe,	Amnesty International verified videos of the attack and concluded it was the result of an airstrike.
18 October	IDF release fake audio footage of Hamas Militants, claiming responsibility for Al-Ahli Arab Hospital bombing.	Linguistic experts could not match dialect to those in Gaza. Channel 4 Forensic Analysis found recording to be digitally manipulated.
25 October	Misidentified Mohammed Zendiq as another person, Saleh Aljafarawi and of being a crisis actor.	Various Israeli Social Media outlets, including official Israel X account, and by Eli David.
26 October	UCLA protests chants were claimed to be calling for genocide "Israel, Israel you can't hide, we want Jewish genocide!"	They were actually charging Israel with genocide (true chant was "Israel, Israel, you can't hide, we charge you with genocide"
1 November	Baby cooked in an Oven spread by United Hatzalah volunteer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•No evidence corroborating this</li> <li>•Eli Beer repeated lies</li> <li>•ZAKA confirmed this to be false</li> </ul>

Date	The Lie	Rebuttal
9 November	Woman claiming to be a nurse from Shifa Hospital claiming that Hamas attacked the building and stole the fuel and medicine.	None of the hospital staff claim to have seen this woman Revealed to be actress and influencer, Hannah Abutbul.
10 November	Claimed weapons were being held at the Indonesian Hospital in Gaza, which led to its bombing.	The weapon shown in a video of the hospital circulating online was a baton, commonly used by security, not a rifle. <sup>w</sup>
11 November	Used footage from the production of a Lebanese film, and claimed they were Palestinian crisis actors. Spread by Israeli Prime Minister's spokesperson, Ofir Gendelman.	Shown to be part of a Lebanese film.
11 November	Posted a mistranslated video of a woman who was talking about finding her son that was killed by the IDF & identifying him from his belt. Spread by The Embassy of Israel to US X account.	Fake subtitles suggest she's a prisoner of Hamas and prefers the Jews.
14 November	IDF at Al-Rantisi Hospital showcasing the roster of Hamas terrorists guarding the hostages.	It was a calendar.
1 December	Claim that Gazan man mourning baby is a doll.	The Jerusalem Post later deleted the article, and made a statement, citing they made an error (but kept it vague and didn't clarify what they originally reported).
9 December	Claim to have captured Hamas militant, as seen in a video.	Revealed to be a local Palestinian man (Munir Qesh-ta al-Masry a small business owner). In the footage, an Israeli soldier is heard giving directions in Arabic: "Grab the gun I gave you, but don't shoot it, we don't want trouble, walk slowly and leave it on the ground on the other side."
10 January	Journalist, Hamza al-Dahdouh and cameraman Mustafa Thuraya killed. Claims that al-Dahdouh was linked to Jihadist groups as engineers. IDF showcased a document "found by our troops in Gaza" which included Al Dahdouh's name on a list of Palestinian Islamic Jihad "operatives from the electronic engineering unit".	IDF document released in poor quality, making it hard to assess its authenticity. Two regional experts told BBC Verify the use of English alongside Arabic in the document was unusual. ●Family confirm he had no background in engineering.
27 January	UNRWA employees were involved in October 7 and had links with Hamas.	No substantial evidence to support this. All hires are vetted by Israel before they are allowed to work for UNRWA.
29 January	Israel claimed there was a Hamas tunnel underneath a cemetery.	Resulted in the desecration of said cemetery. No proof provided for this claim.
4 February	Israel claimed they were providing aid to Gaza and provided video footage, Official Israel X account.	Footage was later proven to be from March 2022.
17 February	Hamas is stealing aid.	David Satterfield, the Biden administration's special Middle East envoy for humanitarian issues said that Israeli officials have not presented "specific evidence of diversion or theft".
25 February	IDF denied involvement in the murder of Hind Rajab, alongside her 6 family members and 2 paramedics.	Independent investigations countered these claims.

Date	The Lie	Rebuttal
10 March	Israeli army published footage of a drone targeting two men claiming that one of them was carrying a rocket launcher (RPG).	It emerged that they were carrying a bicycle. "The army apologizes for this mistake," - Israeli army spokesman'. Claims the incident will be investigated by the army.
29 March	Israel denies responsibility for the Flour Massacre and The IDF said fewer than ten of the casualties directly resulted from Israeli fire. Israel claims that multiple deaths were caused by stampede. Reported by Eylon Levy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The BBC reported that the IDF's video proof was edited into four sections.</li> <li>•CNN reported that multiple eyewitness accounts also contradict the IDF's.</li> </ul>
29 August	Israeli Soldier died by suicide after trauma from October 7 in open letter.	Investigation revealed that the letter was fabricated, as reported by Israeli News Channel 13. German ambassador in Tel Aviv has admitted that he spread fabricated propaganda.
5 September	Reports from Israeli "intelligence sources", that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar plans to escape Gaza and smuggle Israeli hostages to Iran.	Israel's Channel 12 refuted the article's claims.
6 September	Claims to have found a document on Sinwar's computer that laid out a Hamas plan to manipulate the international community, "exert psychological pressure" on hostage family members and use a ceasefire to rearm. It claimed that the document was evidence that Hamas does not want a ceasefire and does not care about the suffering of Palestinian civilians. Reported in Bild - Germany's most widely read daily newspaper.	Ynet disputed this. A document was found. Not an official strategy, not penned by Sinwar or any other senior Hamas leader. Nothing stating Hamas was willing to prolong the negotiations as claimed.
General	<p>Hamas uses civilians as human shields.</p> <p>At least 128 members of Congress were targeted by an Israeli-linked operation to spread pro-Israel military content</p> <p>Objectives include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Driving a wedge between Palestinians and African-Americans to prevent solidarity</li> <li>•Targeting Canadian citizens with narratives suggesting that Canadian Muslims are pushing for Sharia Law.</li> <li>•Targeting citizens of Gulf countries and telling them to worry about their own affairs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Amnesty International found no evidence to support this</li> <li>•Human Rights Watch found no evidence to support this</li> </ul> <p>Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs. Websites created appear to covertly target mostly younger, progressive Americans with a pro-Israeli spin on the war in Gaza.</p> <p>Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also claimed the department was establishing a team to promote Israel, specifically on social media (from 2009).</p>



# GAZA TIMELINE

DATE	INCIDENT
October 2023	
7	Palestinian resistance fighters launch a sophisticated attack on Israeli military targets and settlements resulting in an initial rout of occupation defences. Israeli forces respond using the Hannibal Directive, which results in them killing many Palestinians as well as Israelis. Of the 1200 Israelis killed on that day, the majority were soldiers but many were civilians who were attending a music festival and were the victims of indiscriminate shooting by Israeli forces. 200 - 250 Israelis are taken hostage.
7	Retaliatory airstrikes on Gaza begin, along with a total siege.
9	The Yassin Mosque in the Shati refugee camp was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike
12	The Gaza Strip's sole power station ceased operations due to an Israeli blockade, leading to severe consequences for hospitals and other critical infrastructure
13	Israel tells the million residents of Gaza City to move south beginning a process that will uproot the entire population of the Gaza Strip.
14	The Diagnostic Cancer Treatment Centre at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital was severely damaged by Israeli rocket fire.
20	The Grand Al-Omari Mosque, the largest and oldest mosque in Gaza, was first struck by Israeli rockets First set of hostages released by Hamas
21	Some aid trucks pass the Rafah border crossing from Egypt into Gaza, where food, water, medicines and fuel are running out. Forced starvation is an official Israeli policy.
23	Two women, 79 and 85, released, hug Hamas goodbye, criticise Shin Bet and IDF at press conference later Israeli strike kills 15 Palestinians in Gaza school Two more hostages released
24	50 hostages released over 4 days in exchange for 150 Palestinian hostages (many of whom were arbitrarily imprisoned again later)
25	13 released
26	17 Israeli hostages released in exchange for 39 Palestinian hostages
27	Israel launches its ground offensive in Gaza. One hostage released
November 2023	
1	Evacuations begin through the Rafah crossing for an estimated 7,000 foreign passport-holders and people needing urgent medical treatment. The vast majority of Gazans cannot leave.
4	The Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan Mosque in Gaza City was destroyed.
6	The historic Omari Mosque in the Old City of Gaza was significantly damaged by Israeli airstrikes.
15	Israeli troops enter Gaza's biggest hospital, Al Shifa, after a siege of several days.
19	Yemeni Houthis took over an Israeli-linked cargo ship (ship: Galaxy leader) in the Red Sea
21	Israel and Hamas announce a truce, which will last seven days, to exchange hostages held in Gaza for Palestinians detained by Israel, and let in more aid.

DATE	INCIDENT
	Around half the hostages - among them women, children and foreigners - are released in return for 240 Palestinian women and teenage detainees, before war resumes on Dec. 1.
25	The Rashad al-Shawa Cultural Center, a Brutalist building, was hit by Israeli shelling.
26	Child, 13, released
29	Mother released, thanks Hamas
	105 Israeli hostages released by this point and 240 Palestinian hostages freed
December 2023	
4	Israeli forces launch their first big ground assault in southern Gaza, towards the main southern city, Khan Younis.
8	Grand Al-Omari Mosque was struck a second time and further damaged.
16	Israeli forces mistakenly kill three Israeli hostages in Gaza.
	People take to the streets in Tel Aviv to protest killing of their own by IOF
17	The main building of Israa University was destroyed by IDF mines, including its library and national museum.
26	Israeli forces launch a ground assault on areas in the central Gaza Strip, again putting hundreds of thousands to flight, most of them already displaced.
27	Israel's military chief Herzi Halevu stated that the "war" in Gaza would go on for "many more months" after more bombings and shelling of the Gaza strip, particularly on refugee camps and schools.
29	South Africa submitted a case against Israel before the International Court of Justice alleging that Israel had committed and was committing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, contravening the Genocide Convention, including what South Africa described as Israel's 75-year apartheid, 56-year occupation, and 16-year blockade of the Strip.
30	The Central Archives of Gaza City, containing thousands of historically important documents, were destroyed.
30	The Hamam al-Sammara bath in the Zeitoun Quarter of the Old City was destroyed.
30	The Omari Mosque in Gaza City was further damaged, with its rare book collection destroyed.
January 2024	
11	U.S. and British warplanes, ships and submarines launch strikes across Yemen in retaliation for Houthi forces attacking Red Sea shipping.
	Late January: Israeli forces intensify their effort to encircle Khan Younis. Following this campaign, more than half Gaza's population will end up sheltering in Rafah.
21	Netanyahu outright rejected making a deal with Hamas to end the war, despite calls from Israeli politicians for the release of the captives.
	178 Palestinians were killed and 293 injured with Israel's attacks near Khan Younis's Nasser Hospital.
	Taxes collected by Israel bound for Gaza's Palestinian Authority were sent to Norway rather than the PA. The PA refused the partial transfer of money stating that "any deductions from our financial rights ... are rejected by us"
23	Israel reports 24 soldiers killed in Gaza, its worst single-day loss of the war.
26	The International Court of Justice in The Hague, also known as the World Court, orders Israel to prevent genocide but stops short of ordering a halt to fighting.

DATE	INCIDENT
29	Hind Rajab, a six year old Palestinian girl in the Gaza strip, was killed by Israeli forces during an invasion. The IOF also killed her family members and 2 paramedics who came for her rescue. Hind was missing for 12 days before her body was found; The audio of the phone call between the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, and Hind's call for aid was published by the Red Crescent.

By January 2024: Out of 36 hospitals, only 13 remained partially functional due to extensive damage and operational challenges.

## February 2024

11-12	Massive air strikes by Israel, murdering 67 Palestinian civilians, and rescuing 2 hostages.
12	The IOF launched an assault on Rafah, killing over 83 people. The airstrikes destroyed one mosque and multiple inhabited homes. The prosecutor of the ICC (Karim Khan) stated that reports coming from Rafah seemed to be ignoring laws of armed conflict.
15	Israeli troops raid Nasser hospital complex after claims that Hamas had been operating within the hospital. Displaced Palestinians forced to leave with no water or food available.
16	Satellite images shown along Egypt's border with Gaza, claimed to be carried out in preparation for housing Palestinian refugees after Egypt has consistently said it would not open its borders.
20	World Food Programme stops deliveries to northern Gaza despite warning of "looming famine in the north" due to aid convoys enduring complete chaos and violence due to collapse of civil order.
	US vetoes UN's immediate ceasefire call.
29	More than 100 Gazans are killed queuing for aid in the presence of Israeli troops who opened fire, in one of the deadliest incidents of the war. Palestinian authorities say most were killed with heavy machine guns in a "massacre".

## March 2024

10	Despite international pressure on the eve of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month begins with no truce.
12	A ship carrying 200 tons of aid for Gaza leaves Cyprus in a pilot project to open a sea corridor. Aid agencies say sea deliveries and air drops cannot replace supplies over land through checkpoints still restricted by Israel.
	The IPC global hunger monitor says famine is now projected by May in Gaza, where food shortages are the most pervasive it has seen. More than half of Gaza's population - far more than the 20% associated with famine - is already experiencing the worst level of food shortage, category 5 or "catastrophe".
18	Israel launches a new assault on Al Shifa Hospital. Over the next two weeks, Israel will claim to have killed hundreds of fighters in combat there and arrested hundreds of others. Medical staff and Hamas deny fighters are present and say many civilians were killed.
25	U.N. Security Council adopts a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. The United States abstains from the vote rather than veto it, a rare break from Israel.
28	Two-thirds of Gaza's hospitals were deemed non-functional, whilst those which were still open were only 'minimally' or 'partially' functional; the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies declared that the healthcare system in northern Gaza had been largely destroyed and in the south was on the 'brink of collapse'.

## April 2024

1	Israeli air strikes on a convoy kill seven aid workers for the World Central Kitchen charity, drawing a global outcry and increasing pressure to allow in more aid. Israel apologises and later punishes some military commanders.
	Iran's embassy compound in Damascus is hit by a suspected Israeli airstrike that kills several military officers including a top general.

DATE	INCIDENT
13	Tehran responds to the embassy strike by firing hundreds of missiles and drones at Israel, Iran's first ever direct attack on Israel. Most are intercepted with the help of the United States and other allies, and no one is killed. Six days later, drones explode in the central Iranian city of Isfahan in what is widely presumed to be Israel's retaliation.
30	After weeks of pro-Palestinian student protests spreading on U.S. university campuses, police arrest demonstrators who seized a building at Columbia University in New York.  Netanyahu renewed his 'promise' to Israel to launch a ground assault on Rafah in southern Gaza "with or without a deal" to achieve "total victory". Hamas had repeatedly said it would not accept a deal that does not include a permanent ceasefire and a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.
<b>May 2024</b>	
6	Israeli forces seize the Rafah crossing point and prevent aid from entering Gaza
9	Israeli forces launched a ground invasion on the South of Gaza City (Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood) for the 3rd time since November, targeting 4 residential homes, streets and agricultural lands.  Abu Youssef Al-Najjar Hospital, the main medical facility in Rafah Governorate, was shut down.
10	South Africa submitted an "Urgent Request" to the ICJ that Israel cease military operations in the Gaza Strip, and provide humanitarian aid to the population of Gaza.
11	Israeli military issued evacuation orders to Al-Edari, Al-Jneina and Kherbet Al-Adas neighbourhoods and Rafah and Al-Shaboura refugee camps to head to the 'humanitarian zone' in Al-Mawasi  The evacuation of Jabalia (northern Gaza) ordered by Israeli military. Israeli forces invaded Jabalia as well as Israeli airstrikes in this area. Dozens of Palestinians were killed.
21	Israeli forces launched attacks on both Kamal Adwan Hospital and Al-Awda Hospital in the early morning, both being the last functioning hospitals in northern Gaza. Intense aerial and artillery bombardment preceded the forces surrounding the hospitals and shooting anyone moving. These two hospitals were put out of operation
29	Israeli PM's aide (Tzachi Hanegbi) says he expects the 'war' to continue for at least the rest of the year
30	At least 53 Palestinians were killed and 357 wounded including in the bombing and invasion of Southern Rafah
30	UNESCO documented 450 Israeli attacks on Gaza's healthcare system, leading to a total collapse of medical infrastructure.
<b>June 2024</b>	
8	4 hostages released, in good condition and with a friendly departure full of smiles and hugs and thanks to their captors. Their condition reflects good treatment by Hamas.
14	Brazil denounces Israel's strikes on southern Gaza. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's office stated that the political leaders of the democratic world "cannot remain silent in the face of this endless massacre."  Al Mawasi camp was attacked with at least 90 Palestinians killed and 300 wounded; described by the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor as "nothing new". Israel claims the commander of Hamas in Khan Younis is killed in this air strike but no confirmation.  Turkish foreign minister Hakan Fidan urges more pressure on Israel to end the war in Gaza in a joint news conference with Saudi Arabia's foreign minister.
20	After an IOF's top spokesperson said that Hamas is a militant group that cannot be eliminated, Israel's government said that the IOF is committed to the destruction of Hamas.
22	Israeli attack on Shati refugee camp and Tuffah neighbourhood in Gaza City, at least 42 Palestinians killed.

DATE	INCIDENT
	Qatari Foreign Minister said in Doha that Qatar believes that a "Ceasefire in Gaza is the only way to de-escalate conflicts on all fronts."
24	Reports (Save the Children) say up to 21,000 children are estimated to be missing in the chaos of Gaza: trapped beneath rubble, detained or forcibly transferred, buried in unmarked graves or lost from their families.
25	Israeli forces deliberately targeted 5 densely populated displacement camps across Gaza including centres in Gaza City and western parts of Khan Yunis within less than 48 hours.
26	Israeli forces hit southern Lebanon with a drone in the town of ad-Dhahira.
	Yemen's Houthis targeted a large ship in the Israeli port of Haifa with a number of drones. It was a joint military operation with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. Two vessels were sunk and another was seized.
27	Eastern Gaza City hit with an immediate evacuation order, thousands of Palestinians fled for their lives, many of them wounded in the process.
29	Palestinian fighters in North Gaza ambush Israeli troops in the Shujayea neighbourhood a day after tanks and troops rolled in and sent tens of thousands of terrified civilians fleeing. The Israeli military flattened the entire residential area.
5	Nasser Medical Complex at risk of being overwhelmed with shut down of European Hospital after a new evacuation order in Khan Younis. Spread of disease more likely as Palestinians rely on seawater for washing, cleaning and drinking.
8	At least 40 Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip in a strike on a school in Nuseirat.
9	29 Palestinians, mostly women and children, were killed in an attack on a UN-run school in Nuseirat, Khan Younis. This is the 4th school attacked in 4 days by Israel.
	US aid pier reinstalled on the beach to be used to give humanitarian aid to Gaza for a few days before being removed permanently.
10	NATO Summit in Washington DC does not discuss Gaza, and is deemed 'conspicuous' especially when the US announces its resumed shipment plan of 500 pound bombs to Israel.
11	Hamas accuses Israel of stalling over ceasefire negotiations to gain time and thwart the current round of talks.
13	Israeli airstrikes hit the Al-Mawasi area near Khan Yunis, killing at least 90 Palestinians and injuring over 300 more. The targets were in an area that survivors were told was a 'safe zone'. Following the airstrikes, Israeli aircraft opened fire as soon as ambulance and civil defence teams arrived.
19	The International Court of Justice orders Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian territories "as rapidly as possible" and make full reparations. The court also advised other states not to recognise the occupation as lawful or aid or assist it.
20	New road built in the south of Gaza, near Rafah, to support the long-term presence of Israeli troops. Israel also has operational control of the Philadelphia Corridor where Israeli presence has been prohibited since 1979.
by end of July 2024	UNESCO placed the Saint Hilarion Monastery on its list of World Heritage Sites in Danger due to ongoing damage from Israel.
<b>August 2024</b>	
1	At least 15 Palestinians killed by Israeli strike on a school sheltering dozens of displaced families.
4	In Holon, Israel, a stabbing attack results in two deaths and two injuries. The Palestinian attacker is later shot and killed by Israeli police.
4	At least four people are killed and 18 others are injured in an Israeli strike on the al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah in the Gaza Strip.

DATE	INCIDENT
5	Israel hands over 89 decomposed and unidentifiable Palestinian bodies to the Gaza Ministry of Health.
5	The United Kingdom temporarily halts all arms exports to Israel while conducting a policy review.
6	Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announces a visit to Moscow from August 12–14 to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The purpose of the visit is to discuss the peace process regarding the Israel–Hamás conflict and to "strengthen bilateral relations in all areas" between the two countries.
6	In the United States, Massachusetts District Judge Richard Stearns orders that Harvard University must respond to a lawsuit alleging that the university deliberately ignored safety requests from Jewish students amid "severe and pervasive harassment" on campus. The judge also deems the university's argument that antisemitic actions are protected by the First Amendment as "dubious."
6	A court in Berlin, Germany, convicts a woman and imposes a fine on her for "condoning a crime" after she led a chant of "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" at a protest in October 2023.
6	Yahya Sinwar is named the new leader of Hamas, following the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran.
7	Six Palestinians are killed in an Israeli raid on the Maghazi refugee camp and in Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip.
10	At least 93 Palestinians are killed in an Israeli strike on a school and mosque in Gaza sheltering displaced people.
23	Baby contracts Gaza's first case of polio in 25 years, becoming paralysed in one leg.
27	Two hostages released.
31	Palestinian health authorities and UN workers begin large-scale campaign of polio vaccinations.

## September 2024

1	Israeli air strikes on both Gaza City and Bureij refugee camp, murdering 4 Palestinians. 6 Israeli prisoners of war killed by Israeli airstrikes. World Health Organisation started polio vaccination campaign. The campaign was part of an urgent response to prevent the spread of polio after it was detected in Gaza after 25 years of being polio free.
2	5 people killed in Israeli air strikes in Nuseirat and Jabalia refugee camps. Rising cases of Hepatitis A. Hundreds of Israeli protesters marched towards Israel's defence headquarters in Tel Aviv, calling for a deal to release the captives in Gaza.
3	At least 35 Palestinians murdered and 67 injured.
4	IOF kills 42 Palestinians and injures 107, bringing the death toll to 40,861 Palestinians. Mass protests within Israel against Netanyahu and his coalition cabinet to secure a ceasefire deal in Gaza and to see the return of the the 90 or so captives thought to remain in Gaza.
5	Israeli drone murders at least 6 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. Israeli military raid in Tulkarem. Israeli army murders teenager during West Bank raid, and drags the body using a bulldozer.
9	Al-Mawasi, Khan Younis 'safe zone' attacked by 5 missiles (US made, 2000 pound). At least 19 people were killed while many others were missing, a survivor described the bombing as only being able to see 'red and grey'. Türkiye condemns Israel's attack on al-Mawasi. Their foreign ministry says it will continue to stand for Palestinians and "march for justice and freedom".

DATE	INCIDENT
	UN human rights chief Volker Turk accuses Israel of showing "blatant disregard for international law", citing Israel rejecting the ICJ's July opinion that called the Israeli occupation illegal.
10	Norwegian Refugee Council says that repeated attacks on densely populated areas of Gaza demonstrate that [Israeli] "unlawful relocation directives have failed to protect or offer any guarantees of safety for Palestinians."
	The IOF publicly confirmed they killed 3 Israeli hostages in a strike in November.
	At least 19 people are killed in an Israeli strike on a designated "safe zone" on a tent camp in the al-Mawasi area of Khan Younis.
11	ICC prosecutor calls on its judges to issue arrest warrants for Israeli leaders as well as Hamas leaders.
	Israeli strike on a UN-run school in central Gaza kills 18 Palestinians.
15	Houthis 'well-prepared for a long war' with Israel. Netanyahu says Israel will 'exact heavy price' after Yemeni Houthis claim responsibility for ballistic missile attack that reached central Israel.
	Rising tide levels and heavy rainfall causes dozens of displaced people to evacuate from their tents in western areas of Khan Younis.
21	At least 22 Palestinians are killed in an Israeli attack that hit Zeitoun School, which was sheltering displaced people in Gaza City.
22	40 Palestinians were killed and 58 others wounded.
25	Israeli airstrike on a home in the Bureij refugee camp.
26	39 Palestinians were killed in Israeli attacks.
28	At least 52 Palestinians are killed in Israeli attacks within a two day period.
30	Oxfam says that the Israeli military has killed more women and children in Gaza than any other recent conflict in a single year.



# QuranicThought.com

**QuranicThought.com** is a project dedicated to making all the important texts of the Islamic Sciences over the course of history up to the present day available free to everyone in the world, at one trusted address. This massive endeavour, consisting of millions of books and tens of thousands of hours of audio recordings, will be permanently ongoing *in sha Allah*. All texts will be available in Arabic, and English translations will be provided where these are available, God willing.

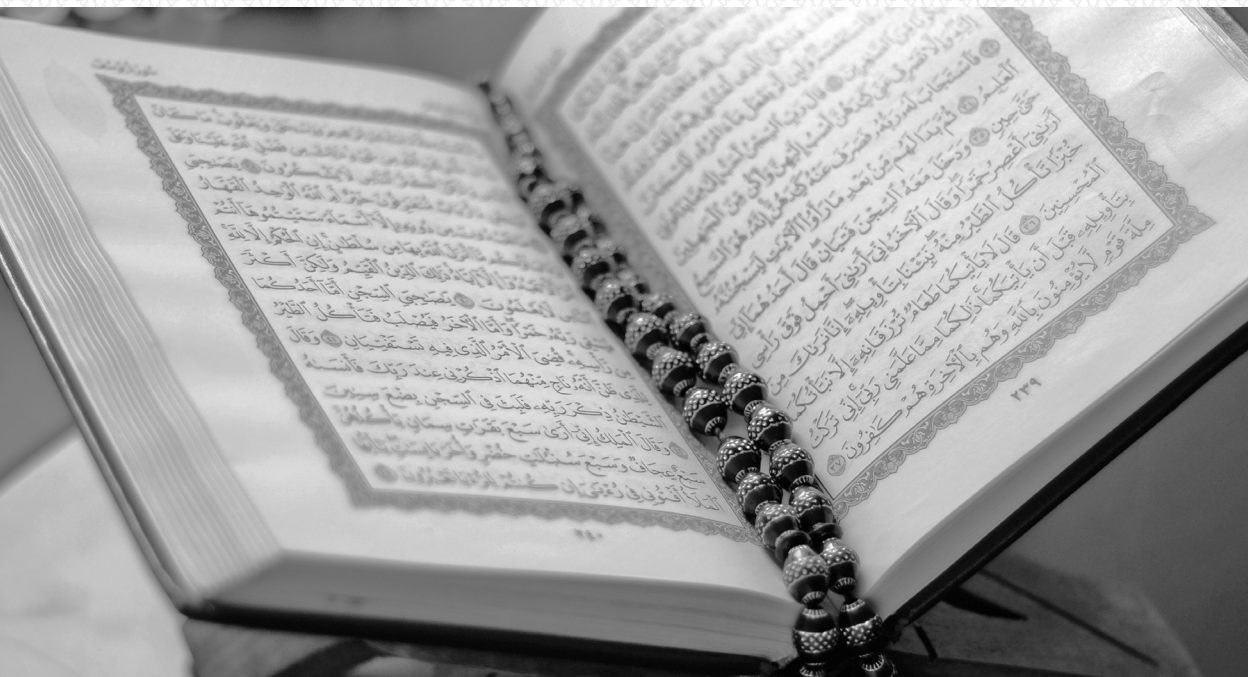
The site is committed to providing all the texts available in a non-political, non-partisan way, promoting all four established Sunni *madhabib* and respecting the other *madhabib* of Islam: Zeidi, Jafari, Thahiri and Ibadhi, as well as the thought of the early imams like Sufyan al-Thawri, Laith Ibn Sa'd and Al-Awza'i.

The materials have been categorized by Qur'an (for listening); *tafsir*; *hadith*, *usul*, *seerah*, *aqidah*, *fiqh*; *ihsan*, and *falsafa*. This is followed by a list of 25 books for the essential texts of all disciplines which all Muslims should know and a section on the 500 most influential books on Sunni Thought (according to the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institution's seminal survey).

Then, there are sections for three pivotal Shafi'i scholars (in association with the Professorial chairs on Razi and Ghazali linked to this website): Ghazali, Razi and Suyuti. Studying the entire thought of one major comprehensive thinker can be far more conducive to real comprehension and to absorbing an Islamic world-view than cherry-picking from many scholars, especially with polymaths like Ghazali, Razi and Suyuti.

Moreover, Ghazali represents a high point in Islamic *usul* (particularly in his *Mustasfa*), a high point in *ihsan* and *'aqida* (in his magnum opus, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*) and a high point in both logic and philosophy in his books on those subjects. Razi represents the high point of Tafsir and Kalam in his *Mafatih al-Ghayb*. Suyuti represents a high point of Tafsir *ma'thur* (transmitted tafsir) in his *Tafsir Al-Jalalayn*, *Al-Durr al-Manthur* and his *Itqan fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an*, a comprehensive survey of *hadith* in his collections of *hadith*, and authoritative exposition of Shafi'i *fiqh*.

This website and app are already the most extensive Islamic book and audio resource on the internet and continue to grow by the Grace of God.





THE HOUSE  
OF ISLAM

# I. THE HOUSE OF ISLAM

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(with the exception of President Obama's speech)

**T**he religion of Islam is based on belief in the One God (who in Arabic is called Allah). It was founded by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (570-632 CE) in the ancient cities of Makkah and Madinah, in the west coast of the Arabian Peninsula (known as the Hijaz). God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ the Holy Qur'an, the Sacred Book of Islam. The religion thus created, however, was not a new message but simply a final restatement of God's messages to the Hebrew Prophets and to Jesus.

The Holy Qur'an says:

*Say ye: we believe in God and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have submitted. (2:136)*

Moreover, the Holy Qur'an did not exclude the possibility of revelations other than those that were given to the Prophets mentioned in the Bible (and thus did not exclude the possibility of other genuine ancient religions other than Judaism, Christianity and Islam). God says, in the Holy Qur'an:

*Verily we have sent Messengers before thee [O Muhammad]. About some of them have we told thee, and about some have we not told thee... (40:78).*

*And verily we have raised in every nation a Messenger [proclaiming]: serve God and shun false gods... (16:36).*

## THE ESSENCE OF ISLAM

The essence and substance of Islam can be easily summed up by three major principles (which are also successive stages in the spiritual life): Islam (meaning 'submission to God's will'); Iman (meaning 'faith in God'), and Ihsan (meaning 'virtue through constant regard to, and awareness of, God'). The second Caliph, the great 'Umar ibn al Khattab, related that:

*One day when we were sitting [in Madinah] with the Messenger of God [the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ] there came unto us a man whose clothes were of exceeding whiteness and whose hair was of exceeding blackness, nor were there any signs of travel upon him, although none of us knew him. He sat down knee upon knee opposite the Prophet, upon whose thighs he placed the palms of his hands, saying: 'O Muhammad; tell me what is the surrender (Islam)'. The Messenger of God answered him saying: 'The surrender is to testify that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger, to perform the prayer, bestow the alms, fast Ramadan and make if thou canst, the pilgrimage to the Holy House.' He said, 'Thou hast spoken truly,' and we were amazed that having questioned him he should corroborate him. Then he said: 'Tell me what is faith (Iman)'. He answered: 'To believe in God and His Angels and his Books and His Messengers and the Last Day [the Day of Judgement], and to believe that no good or evil cometh but by His Providence.' 'Thou hast spoken truly,' he said, and then: 'Tell me what is excellence (Ihsan)'. He answered: 'To worship God as if thou sawest Him, for if Thou seest Him not, yet seest He thee.' 'Thou hast spoken truly,' he said... Then the stranger went away, and I stayed a while after he had gone; and the Prophet said to me: 'O 'Umar, knowest thou the questioner, who he was?' I said, 'God and His Messenger know best.' He said, 'It was Gabriel [the Archangel]. He came unto you to teach you your religion.'<sup>1</sup>*

Thus Islam as such consists of 'five pillars': (1) the Shahadatayn or the 'two testimonies of faith' (whose inward meaning is the acknowledgement of God).

(2) The five daily prayers (whose inward meaning is the attachment to God). (3) Giving alms or Zakat—one-fortieth of one's income and savings annually to the poor and destitute (whose inward meaning is the detachment from the world). (4) Fasting the Holy month of Ramadan annually (whose inward meaning is detachment from the body and from the ego).

1 Sahih Muslim, Kitab al Iman', 1, N. I. (The Hadiths of the Prophet ﷺ, like all sacred texts, are written above in italics).

(5) Making the Hajj (whose inner meaning is to return to one's true inner heart, the mysterious square, black-shrouded Ka'ba in Makkah being the outward symbol of this heart). Thus also Iman as such consists of belief in all the essential doctrines of religion (and the inner meaning of this is that one should not go through the motions of religion and of the five pillars of Islam blindly or robotically, but rather have real faith and certainty in one's heart). Thus, finally, *Ihsan* as such consists in believing that God always sees us, and therefore that one must be virtuous and sincere in all one's actions. In this connection the Prophet ﷺ said: *'By Him in whose Hand is my Life, none of you believes till he loves for his neighbour what he loves for himself'*.<sup>2</sup> In summary, we could say that the essence of Islam is exactly the Two Commandments upon which Jesus said hangs all the Law and the Prophets:

And Jesus answered him, The first of all commandments is...the Lord our God is one Lord; And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy understanding, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second commandment is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.<sup>3</sup>

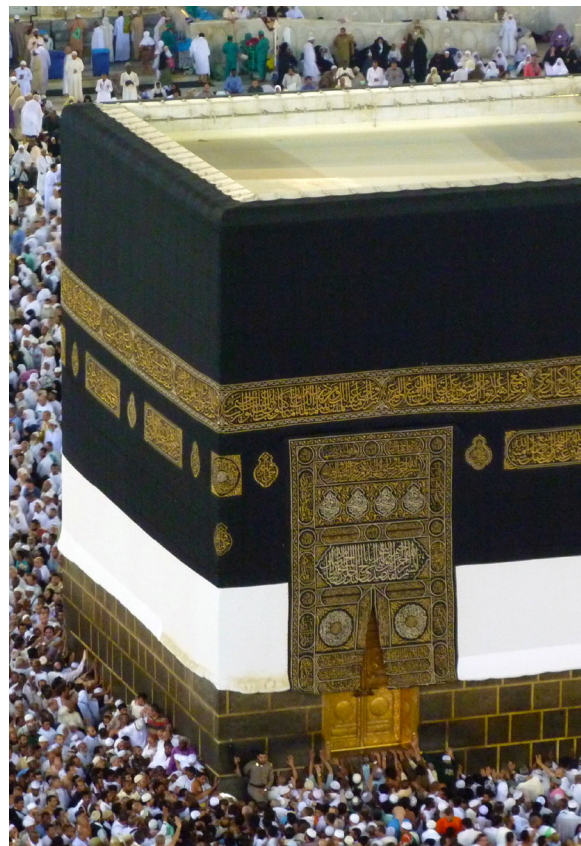
## THE CANON OF ISLAM

Islam does not, like Christianity, have a clergy. There is no temporal or even spiritual institute that holds it together or unifies it. So how has it held together—and indeed, flourished—for the last fourteen centuries approximately, when its scholars and temporal policymakers keep changing and dying out over time? How has it remained so homogeneous that the Islam of 1900 CE was doctrinally exactly the same as the Islam of 700 CE? Where have its internal checks and balances come from?

The answer is that Islam has a traditional canon:<sup>4</sup> a collection of sacred texts which everyone has agreed are authoritative and definitive, and which 'fix' the principles of belief, practice, law, theology and doctrine throughout the ages. All that Muslim scholars (called *ulema* and muftis or sheikhs and imams) have left to do is to interpret these texts and work out

their practical applications and details (and the principles of interpretation and elaboration are themselves 'fixed' by these texts), so that in Islam a person is only considered learned to the extent that he can demonstrate his knowledge of these texts. This does not mean that Islam is a religion of limitations for these texts are a vast ocean and their principles can be inwardly worked out almost infinitely in practice. It does mean, however, that Islam is 'fixed' and has certain limits beyond which it will not go. This is an extremely important concept to understand, because misunderstanding it, and setting aside the traditional canon of Islam, leads to people killing and assassinating others in the name of religion. The traditional canon of Islam is what protects not just the religion of Islam itself, but the world (including Muslims themselves) from terrorism, murder and oppression in the name of Islam. The canon is Islam's internal check and balance system; it is what safeguards its moderation; it is 'self-censorship' and its ultimate safety feature.

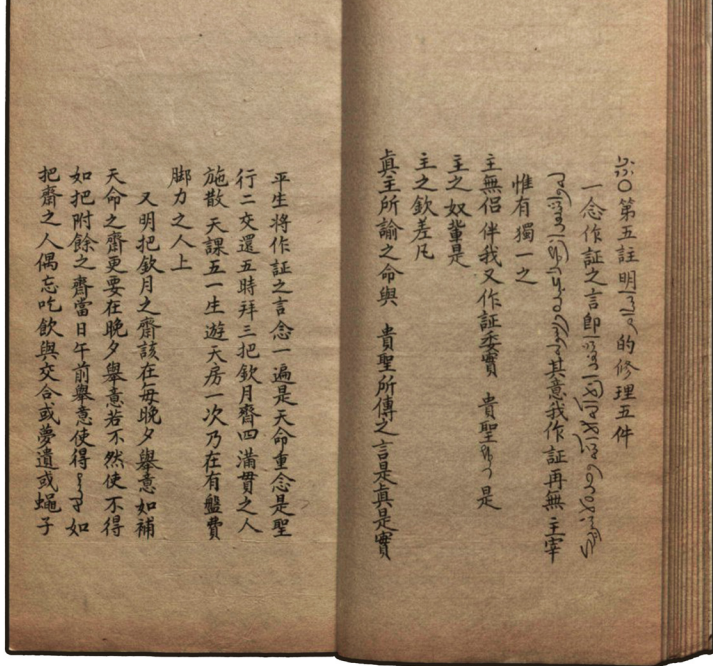
To be more specific, the traditional Sunni Islamic Canon starts with the Qur'an itself; then the great traditional Commentaries upon it (e. g. Tabari;



2 Sahih Muslim, 'Kitab al Iman', 18, n. 72.

3 The Gospel according to Mark 12:29–31. (See also Deuteronomy 6:5; and Matthew 22:37–40).

4 Even the English word 'canon' comes from the Arabic word *kanun* meaning 'law' or 'principle'.



and finally—albeit only extrinsically—Jahiliyya poetry (as a background reference for the semantic connotations of words in the Arabic language). We give a specific (but not exhaustive) list here in order to minimise the possibility of misunderstanding.

## ISLAM IN HISTORY

It is evidently not possible to do justice to the role of Islam in world history, thought and civilisation in a few words, but the following paragraph by Britain's Prince Charles attempts it:

'The medieval Islamic world, from Central Asia to the shores of the Atlantic, was a world

where scholars and men of learning flourished. But because we have tended to see Islam as the enemy, as an alien culture, society, and system of belief, we have tended to ignore or erase its great relevance to our own history. For example, we have underestimated the importance of eight hundred years of Islamic society and culture in Spain between the 8th and 15th centuries. The contribution of Muslim Spain to the preservation of classical learning during the Dark Ages, and to the first flowerings of the Renaissance, has long been recognised. But Islamic Spain was much more than a mere larder where Hellenistic knowledge was kept for later consumption by

Razi; Zamakhshari/Baydawi; Qurtubi; Jalalayn; Ibn Kathir; Nasafi; and al Wahidi's *Asbab al Nuzul*); then the eight traditional collections of Hadith, the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ, (e. g. Muslim; Bukhari; Tirmidhi; Ibn Hanbal, al Nasa'i; Al-Sijistani; Al-Darimi and Ibn Maja); the later Muhaddithin, or Traditionists (e. g. Bayhaqi; Baghawi; Nawawi and 'Asqalani); then the traditional biographical and historical works of Sira (Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Sa'd, Waqidi; Azraqi; Tabari; and Suhayli); the *Risala* of Al-Shafi'i; the *Muwatta'* of Imam Malik; the *Ihya' 'Ulum al Din* of Ghazali; Ash'arite and Maturidian theology; the (original) 'Aqida of Tahawi; Imam Jazuli's *Dala'il al-Khayrat*,

TOP LEFT: Manuscript pages of *A Sketch of the Islamic Law* by Ma Boliang (1640–1711 CE), an influential Islamic scholar from Jining, China. Islamic scholars who authenticated the work include Li Yongshou, Wen Yingshi, Yang Jiu'en, Ma Minggao, and Ma Zhilin.

TOP RIGHT: A manuscript page from *Sahih al-Bukhari* from the National Library of Bulgaria dated 407 AH (1017 CE).

BELOW: Alhambra Palace in Spain



the emerging modern Western world. Not only did Muslim Spain gather and preserve the intellectual content of ancient Greek and Roman civilisation, it also interpreted and expanded upon that civilisation, and made a vital contribution of its own in so many fields of human endeavour—in science, astronomy, mathematics, algebra (it self an Arabic word), law, history, medicine, pharmacology, optics, agriculture, architecture, theology, music. Averroes [Ibn Rushd] and Avenzoar [Ibn Zuhr], like their counterparts Avicenna [Ibn Sina] and Rhazes [Abu Bakr al Razi] in the East, contributed to the study and practice of medicine in ways from which Europe benefited for centuries afterwards.<sup>5</sup>

On 4 June, 2009, US President Barack Obama said the following at Cairo University:

‘As a student of history, I also know civilisation’s debt to Islam. It was Islam—at places like Al-Azhar—that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe’s Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed. Islamic culture has given us majestic arches and soaring spires; timeless poetry and cherished music; elegant calligraphy and places of peaceful contemplation. And throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality.

I also know that Islam has always been a part of America’s story. The first nation to recognise



my country was Morocco. In signing the Treaty of Tripoli in 1796, our second President, John Adams, wrote, ‘The United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Muslims.’ And since our founding, American Muslims have enriched the United States. They have fought in our wars, they have served in our government, they have stood for civil rights, they have started businesses, they have taught at our universities, they’ve excelled in our sports arenas, they’ve won Nobel Prizes, built our tallest building, and lit the Olympic Torch. And when the first Muslim American was recently elected to Congress, he took the oath to defend our Constitution using the same Holy Koran that one of our Founding Fathers—Thomas Jefferson—kept in his personal library.<sup>6</sup>

5 HRH the Prince of Wales, ‘Islam and the West’, a lecture given at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford on October 27th, 1993, pp. 17–18.

6 Barack Obama’s speech in Cairo, ‘Remarks by the President on a New Beginning’ June 4, 2009.



# II. MAJOR DOCTRINAL DIVISIONS WITHIN ISLAM

## Sunni Theology

### 1) ASH'ARI AND MATURIDI SCHOOLS: SUNNI ORTHODOXY<sup>1</sup>

These two schools of doctrine are followed by the bulk of Sunni Muslims and differ only in minor details.

**Ash'ari School:** This school is named after the followers of the 9th century scholar **Abu al Hasan al Ash'ari** (874–936 CE) and is widely accepted throughout the Sunni Muslim world. They believe that the characteristics of God are ultimately beyond human comprehension, and trust in the Revelation is essential, although the use of rationality is important.

**Maturidi School:** This school is named after the followers of the 9th century scholar **Muhammad Abu Mansur al Maturidi** (853–944 CE) and has a wide following in regions where Hanafi law is practiced. They have a slightly more pronounced reliance on human reason.

### 2) SALAFI SCHOOL

This school was developed around the doctrines of 18th century scholar **Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab** (1703–1792 CE). Salafis have specific doctrinal beliefs, owing to their particular interpretation of Islam, that differentiate them from the majority of Sunnis, such as a literal anthropomorphic interpretation of God. Salafis place a great emphasis on literal interpretation of the Qur'an and *Hadith*, with skepticism towards the role of human reason in theology.

### 3) MU'TAZILI SCHOOL

This school was developed between the 8th and 10th centuries. Although it is traced back to **Wasil ibn Ata** (d. 748 CE) in Basra, theologians **Abu al Hudhayl Al-'Allaf** (d. 849 CE) and **Bishr ibn al Mu'tamir** (d. 825 CE) are credited with formalizing its theological stance. Mu'tazili thought relies heavily on logic, including Greek philosophy. Although it no longer has a significant following, a small minority of contemporary intellectuals have sought to revive it. Mutazilites believe that the Qur'an was created as opposed to the Orthodox Sunni view that it is eternal and uncreated. Moreover they advocate using rationalism to understand allegorical readings of the Qur'an.

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<sup>1</sup> Orthodoxy in Islam is based on verse 2:285 of the Holy Qur'an, and has been best defined by the historical 2005 international Islamic consensus on the 'three points' of the Amman Message (see: the Amman Message at the end of this section)

# Shia Theology

## 1) THE TWELVER SCHOOL

The infallibility (*'Ismah*) of the Twelve Imams descended from the family of the Prophet (*Ahl al-Bayt*) who are believed to be the spiritual and rightful political authorities of the Muslim community (*Umma*). The twelfth Imam, the Mahdi, is believed to be in occultation to return in the future.

## 2) ISMA'ILI SCHOOL

The Qur'an and *Hadith* are said to have truths lying with a single living Imam, descended directly from the Prophet. Also known as 'sevens' for their belief that Isma'il ibn Ja'far was the seventh leading-Imam of the Muslim community.

## 3) ZAIDI SCHOOL

The infallibility of the Twelve Imams and the notion of occultation are rejected in favour of accepting the leadership of a living Imam. The Imamate can be held by any descendant of the Prophet (*Sayyid*). Also known as 'fivers' by other Muslims for their belief that Zayd ibn Ali was the fifth leading-Imam of the Muslim community.

# Ibadi Theology

## IBADI SCHOOL

Ibadis believe that God created the Qur'an at a certain point in time, and that God will not be seen on the Day of Judgment. They also believe in the eternal nature of hell for all those who enter it.

# III. IDEOLOGICAL DIVISIONS

## TRADITIONAL ISLAM

(90% of the world's Muslims)

Also known as Orthodox Islam, this ideology is not politicized and largely based on consensus of correct opinion—thus including the Sunni, Shia, and Ibadi branches of practice (and their subgroups) within the fold of Islam, but not groups such as the Druze or the Ahmadiyya, among others.

## ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

(9% of the world's Muslims)  
(8% Salafi; 1% Ikhwan)

This is a highly politicized religious ideology popularised in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through movements within both the Shia and Sunni branches of Islam—characterised by aggressiveness and a reformist attitude toward traditional Islam.

## ISLAMIC MODERNISM

(1% of the world's Muslims)

Emerging from 19th century Ottoman Turkey and Egypt, this subdivision contextualized Islamic ideology for the times—emphasizing the need for religion to evolve with Western advances.

# IIIA. TRADITIONAL ISLAM

## SUNNI

(90% of the world's traditional muslims)

The largest denomination of Muslims referred to as *Ahl as Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah* or 'people of the prophetic tradition and community'—with emphasis on emulating the life of the last Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ.

## SCHOOLS OF SUNNI ISLAMIC LAW

### Hanafi

(45%)

Named after the followers of Imam Abu Hanifa (699–767 CE/ 89–157 AH) in Iraq.

### Shafi'i

(28%)

Named after the followers of Imam al Shafi'i (767–820 CE/ 150–204 AH) in Madinah.

### Maliki

(15%)

Named after the followers of Imam Malik (711–795 CE/ 93–179 AH) in Madinah.

### Hanbali

(2%)

Named after the followers of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (780–855 CE/ 164–241 AH) in Iraq.



## SHIA

(9.5% of the world's traditional Muslims)

The second-largest denomination of Muslims referred to as *Shiatu 'Ali* or 'the party of Ali,' the fourth caliph of Islam and first Imam in Shi'ism.

## BRANCHES OF SHIA ISLAM

### Zaidis (Fivers)

(Less than 1%)

Named after the followers of Imam Zaid ibn 'Ali (695–740 CE) in Madinah.

### Twelvers

(8%)

Named after the followers of Imam Ja'far al Sadiq (702–765 CE/ 83–148 AH) in Madinah.

### Isma'ilis (Seveners)

(Less than 0.5%)

Named after the followers of Muhammad ibn Ismail (746–809 CE/128–193 AH) in Madinah.

## SCHOOLS OF ISLAMIC LAW FOR TWELVER SHIA

### Usuli

99% of Twelvers. This dominant school favors the use of *ijtihad*, independent legal reasoning, with an emphasis on four accepted collections of *Hadith*. Derive legal opinions from living *ayatollahs*, or *mujtahids*, whose rulings become obligatory. *Taqlid*, the practice of following rulings without questioning the religious authority, is a core tenet of this school. The name Usuli is derived from the Arabic term *usul* meaning 'principle'.

### Akhbari

Akhbaris reject the use of *ijtihad* or reasoning, and do not follow marjas who practice *ijtihad*. They also prohibit exegesis of the Qur'an. Derive legal rulings from the Qur'an, Hadith, and consensus. The name Akhbari is derived from the Arabic term *akhbar* meaning 'traditions'. They can trace their roots to the followers of Muhammad Amin Astarabadi (d. 1627 CE). Akhbaris continue to exist to this day, although in small, concentrated pockets, particularly around Basra, Iraq.

### Ibadi

(0.5% of the world's traditional Muslims)

The Ibadi school has origins in and is linked to the Kharijites, but the modern day community is distinct from the 7th century Islamic sect. It was founded after the death of Prophet Muhammad and is currently practiced by a majority of Oman's Muslim population. Also found across parts of Africa.

## MYSTIC BROTHERHOODS

Although reliable statistics are not available for the millions of Muslims who practice Islamic mysticism, it has been estimated that 25% of adult Sunni Muslims in 1900 CE participated in these brotherhoods as either *murids* (followers of the Sufi guide of a particular order) or *mutabarrikîn* (supporters or affiliates of a particular Sufi order).

### SUNNI ORDERS

#### **Naqshbandiyya**

Founded by Baha al Din Naqshband (d. 1389 CE) in Bukhara, modern day Uzbekistan. Influence: popular from China to North Africa, Europe and America.

#### **Qadiriyya**

Founded by scholar and saint 'Abd al Qadir al Jilani (1077–1166 CE) in Baghdad, Iraq. Influence: stretches from Morocco to Malaysia, from Central Asia to South Africa.

#### **Tijaniyya**

Ahmad al Tijani (d. 1815 CE) who settled and taught in Fez, Morocco. Influence: major spiritual and religious role in Senegal, Nigeria, Mauritania and much of Sub-Saharan Africa.

#### **Shadhiliyyah**

Founded by the Moroccan saint Abu'l-Hassan al Shadili (d. 1258 CE). Influence: most influential in North Africa and Egypt.

#### **Kubrawiyya**

(d. 1221 CE) from Khawarzm, modern day Uzbekistan. Influence: mostly present across Central Asia.

#### **Suhrawardiyya**

Founded by Persian scholar Abu Najib Suhrawardi (d. 1168 CE) in Iraq. Influence: a strong presence in India.

#### **Chishtiyya**

Founded by the Persian saint Mu'in al Din Chishti (d. 1236 CE) Khurasan. Influence: highly influential in India.

#### **Mawlawiyya**

A Turkish order founded by the Persian saint and poet Jalal al Din Rumi (d. 1273 CE). Influence: mainly in Türkiye.

#### **Rifa'iyya**

Founded by Ahmad ibn 'Ali al Rifa'i (d. 1182 CE) in southern Iraq. Influence: widely practiced across the Muslim world with a strong presence in Egypt.

#### **Yashrutiyya**

Founded by 'Ali Nur al Din al Yashruti (d. 1892 CE) in Palestine. Influence: strong presence in Syria and Lebanon.

#### **Badawiyya**

An Egyptian order founded by the Moroccan saint Ahmad al Badawi (d. 1276 CE), considered by many as the patron saint of Egypt. Influence: active role in Egypt and the Sudan.

#### **Khalwatiyya**

A Turkish order founded by the Persian saint 'Umar al Khalwati (d. 1397 CE). Influence: wide presence in the Balkans, Syria, Lebanon and North Africa.

### SHIA ORDERS

#### **Irfan**

*Irfan*, which means 'knowing' in Arabic and 'most beautiful and knowledgeable person' in Pashto, is Shia mysticism. **Mulla Sadr al Din Muhammad Shirazi** (1571–1636 CE) from Iran is considered a leading Shia theorist of *Irfan*.

## IIIB. ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

### SUNNI

#### **Muslim Brotherhood**

The Muslim Brotherhood, or Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimeen is a transnational Sunni movement, with no particular ideological adherence. It is the largest political opposition organisation in many Arab states, particularly in Egypt where it was founded in opposition to colonial rule by Hassan al Banna in 1928. Al Banna originally sought to revive Muslim culture from its position of exploitation under colonial rule, through charitable and educational work, to bring Islam into a central role in people's life. Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966 CE) was also a leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 50s and 60s.

#### **Wahhabism/Salafism**

Wahhabism/Salafism are terms used interchangeably to refer to a particular brand of Islam. Salaf, meaning predecessors, refers to the very early practice of Islam by Muhammad and his immediate successors. Salafism seeks to revive the practice of Islam as it was at the time of Muhammad and can be critical of too much emphasis being placed on thinkers from after this period. Muhammad ibn 'Abd al Wahhab (1703–1792 CE) was an important figure in the resurrection of this ideology therefore Salafism is often simply known as Wahhabism.

### SHIA

#### **Revolutionary Shi'ism**

Revolutionary Shi'ism is an ideology, based on the teachings of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989 CE), which shares many similarities with Marxist revolutionary thought. Khomeini believed that the only way to secure independence from colonial or imperial forces was through the creation of a Shia state, under the idea of Velayat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Jurist). This means that all politics is subject to the opinion of the Supreme Leader who is responsible for the continued success of the revolution. It is only practiced in Iran.

## IIIC. ISLAMIC MODERNISM

Islamic modernism is a reform movement started by politically-minded urbanites with scant knowledge of traditional Islam. These people had witnessed and studied Western technology and socio-political ideas, and realized that the Islamic world was being left behind technologically by the West and had become too weak to stand up to it. They blamed this weakness on what they saw as 'traditional Islam,' which they thought held them back and was not 'progressive' enough. They thus called for a complete overhaul of Islam, including—or rather in particular—Islamic law (*sharia*) and doctrine (*aqida*). Islamic modernism remains popularly an object of derision and ridicule, and is scorned by traditional Muslims and fundamentalists alike.

عن أبي عبد الله النعمان بن بشير رضي الله عنه قال سمعت رسول الله ﷺ يقول  
 إن الحلال بياض والحرام بؤرة وبينهما أمور مشتبهاً لا يعلمها إلا الله عز وجل فمن  
 غلبت الشبهة فقد استبرأ الدين وعرضه ووضع في الشبهة وقع في الحرام  
 كاللحم على عظم الحية فلو لم يربط في الكفاك حتى لو أن حيا الله محاربه  
 إلا أن في الجسد ما يغذي أصله صحيح الجسد كله وإن أفسد فسد الجسد كله  
 إلا أن في القلب

On the authority of Al-Numan bin Basheer, who said : I heard the messenger of Allah ﷺ say :

“That which is lawful is plain and that which is unlawful is plain and between the two of them are doubtful matters about which not many people know. Thus he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honor, but he who falls into doubtful matters falls into that which is unlawful, like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Truly every king has a sanctuary, and truly Allah’s sanctuary is His prohibitions. Truly in the body there is a morsel of flesh which, if it be whole, all the body is whole and which, if it be diseased, all of it is diseased. Truly it is the heart.”

Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim

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# THE TOP 50

# The Top 50

1. HM King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein  
King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan,  
Custodian of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem (5)
2. HE Sheikh Al-Habib Umar bin Hafiz  
Scholar and Director of Dar Al Mustafa, Ta-  
rim, Yemen (1)
3. HH Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani  
Emir of Qatar (4)
4. HE Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Ali Khamenei  
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
(3)
5. HM King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud  
King of Saudi Arabia, Custodian of the Two  
Holy Mosques (2)
6. HE Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Usmani  
Scholar and Deobandi Leader (8)
7. HH President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed  
Al-Nahyan  
President of UAE (6)
8. HE President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
President of Türkiye (7)
9. HE Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein  
Al-Sistani  
Marja of the Hawza, Najaf, Iraq (9)
10. HM King Mohammed VI  
King of Morocco (10)
11. Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda  
Scholar and Preacher (11)
12. HRH Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman  
bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud  
Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia (12)
13. HE Sheikh Dr Ahmad Muhammad Al-Tayyeb  
Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar University, Grand  
Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque (14)
14. Maulana Mahmood Madani  
Leader and President of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind,  
India (16)
15. HE Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (Hon  
Men)  
Prime Minister of Malaysia (17)
16. HRE Amirul Mu'minin Sheikh As-Sultan  
Muhammadu Sa'adu Abubakar III  
Sultan of Sokoto (18)
17. HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah  
Scholar and President of the Forum for Pro-  
moting Peace in Muslim Societies (19)
18. HE President Prabowo Subianto  
President of Indonesia (450 lists)
19. Yahya Cholil Staquf  
Chairman of Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama (20)
20. HE President Abdel Fattah Saeed Al-Sisi  
President of Egypt (21)
21. HE Sheikh Dr Ali Gomaa  
Former Grand Mufti of the Arab Republic of  
Egypt (22)
22. Sheikh Habib 'Ali Zain Al Abideen Al-Jifri  
Preacher and Director General of Tabah Foun-  
dation (23)
23. Dr Ibrahim Kalin  
Director of the Turkish National Intelligence  
Organization (24)
24. Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson  
Teacher and Co-Founder of Zaytuna College  
(25)

25. Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Ali Cisse  
Leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi Order (26)
26. Sheikh Usama Al-Sayyid Al-Azhari  
Egyptian Minister of Awqaf (Religious Endowments) (30)
27. Sheikh Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi  
Leader of the Houthi (39)
28. Sheikh Mustafa Hosny  
Preacher (27)
29. HE Sheikh Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Aal Al-Sheikh  
Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (29)
30. HE President Ilham Aliyev  
President of Azerbaijan (31)
31. Al-Habib Luthfi bin Yahya  
Preacher (33)
32. Maulana Tariq Jameel  
Scholar and Preacher (34)
33. Sheikh Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi  
Scholar (35)
34. Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr  
Philosopher and University Professor (36)
35. HE President Samia Suluhu Hassan  
President of Tanzania (37)
36. HH Shah Karim Al-Hussayni  
The Aga Khan IV, 49th Imam of Ismaili Muslims (32)
37. Sheikh Uthman Taha  
Calligrapher (38)
38. HE Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi  
Tunisian Scholar and Politician (40)
39. Mohammed Salah  
Footballer (41)
40. Sheikh Muqtada Sadr  
Scholar and Political (42)
41. Maulana Nazur ur-Rahman  
Amir of Tablighi Jamaat, Pakistan (43)
42. Dr Timothy Winter (Sheikh Abdal Hakim Murad)  
Islamic Scholar (44)
43. HE Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh Al-Hussaini  
Islamic Scholar (45)
44. HE Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada  
Leader of the Taliban (46)
45. Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas Attar Qadiri  
Founder of Dawat-e-Islami Movement (47)
46. Dr Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas  
Scholar (48)
47. Dr Amr Khaled  
Preacher and Televangelist (49)
48. Professor Mustafa Abu Sway  
Scholar (50)
49. HE Yahya Sinwar  
Head of Hamas Political Bureau (new)
50. HE Muhammad Yunus  
Interim Leader of Bangladesh (450 lists)

# THE TOP 50 AND HONOURABLE MENTIONS LISTED BY CATEGORY

Although the influence of the Top 50 straddles many categories and cannot be limited to just one or another category, it can be insightful to place them into more general categories. To the Top 50 we have added the Honourable Mentions and have chosen three general categories into which to place them: 1. Rulers and Politicians, 2. Scholars, Admin of Religious Affairs and Preachers and 3. Social Issues, Science, Arts & Culture, Media and Sports.

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## *Rulers and Politicians*

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1. HM King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein, Jordan
2. HH Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Qatar
3. HE Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Ali Khamenei, Iran
4. HM King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, Saudi Arabia
5. HH President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, UAE
6. HE President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye
7. HM King Mohammed VI, Morocco
8. HRH Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, Saudi Arabia
9. HE Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister, Malaysia
10. HE President Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia
11. HE President Abdel Fattah Saeed Al-Sisi, Egypt
12. Dr Ibrahim Kalin, Director of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization, Türkiye
13. Sheikh Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi, Yemen
14. HE President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan
15. HE President Samia Suluhu Hassan, Tanzania
16. HH Shah Karim Al-Hussayni, France
17. HE Rached Ghannouchi, Tunisia
18. HE Sheikh Muqtada Sadr, Iraq
19. HE Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, Afghanistan
20. HE Yahya Sinwar, Palestine
21. HE Interim Prime Minister Muhammad Yunus, Bangladesh
22. HE President Mahmoud Abbas, Palestine
23. HE President Joko Widodo, Indonesia
24. HE Former Prime Minister Imran Khan, Pakistan
25. HE Sadiq Khan, UK

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## *Scholars, Admin of Religious Affairs and Preachers*

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1. Sheikh Al-Habib Umar bin Hafiz
2. HE Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Usmani
3. HE Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Al-Sistani
4. Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda
5. HE Professor Dr Sheikh Ahmad Muhammad Al-Tayyeb
6. Maulana Mahmood Madani
7. HRE Amirul Mu'minin Sheikh As-Sultan Muhammadu Sa'adu Abubakar III
8. HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah
9. Dr Yahya Cholil Staquf
10. HE Sheikh Dr Ali Gomaa
11. Sheikh Habib 'Ali Zain Al Abideen Al-Jifri
12. Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson
13. Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Ali Cisse
14. HE Sheikh Usama Al-Sayyid Al-Azhari
15. Sheikh Mustafa Hosny
16. HE Sheikh Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Aal Al-Sheikh
17. Habib Luthfi bin Yahya
18. Maulana Tariq Jameel
19. Sheikh Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi
20. Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr
21. Maulana Nazur Rahman
22. Professor Timothy Winter (Sheikh Abdal Hakim Murad)
23. HE Sheikh Ibrahim Salih
24. Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas Artar Qadiri
25. Dr Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas



26. Dr Amr Khalid
27. Professor Mustafa Abu Sway
28. HE Grand Ayatollah Abdullah Jawadi Amoli
29. HE Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ishaq Fayadh
30. HE Dr Aref Ali Nayed
31. Professor Akbar Ahmed
32. Dr Ingrid Mattson
33. HE Alhaji Dr Sanusi Lamido Sanusi
34. Mufti Abul Qasim Nomani
35. Mohamed Bechari
36. Sheikh Nuh Keller
37. Dr Muhammad Al-Arifi
38. Dr Zakir Abdul Karim Naik
39. Sheikh Abdul Rahman Al-Sudais

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*Social Issues, Science, Arts & Culture, Media and Sports*

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1. HE Sheikh Uthman Taha
2. Mohammed Salah
3. Ahd Tamimi
4. Loujain al-Hathloul
5. Malala Yousufzai
6. Sami Yusuf
7. Bisan Owda
8. Sadio Mane
9. Khabib Nurmagomedov

**Country:** Jordan

**Born:** 30 January 1962 (age 62)

**Source of Influence:** Custodian of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

**Influence:** King with authority over 12 million Jordanians; outreach to Traditional Islam

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (5)

2023 (5)

2022 (5)

On September 15th during his official visit to Singapore, HH Pope Francis said (in a historic politically and spiritually unprecedented statement from a Catholic Pope about a Muslim ruler):

*'And I want to say something, this may be a bit of me getting involved in politics: I am very, very grateful to the King of Jordan. He is a man of peace. King Abdullah is a good man.'*

**Over:**

**4.1** million medical cases treated in Gaza by the Jordanian military since the start of the war

**41<sup>st</sup>** generation direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ



1

*His Majesty*

**King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein**

# HM King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein

## King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Custodian of Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem

**Gaza War:** Whilst the King has not been able to stop the war in Gaza to date, despite Jordan's relative poverty he has emerged this year as the most effective Arab and Islamic leader in the world for a number of critical steps he has taken to stop a larger regional war, and bring life-saving aid to the people of Gaza and the West Bank.

1. After the October 7th 2023 attacks on Israel, Hamas did not bother trying to explain their position and their actions to the world, or even in English. This left many in Israel (including in the Knesset and the government itself—as had been fully documented by South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice in Le Hague) calling for Gaza to be obliterated with nuclear weapons and for the 2.5 million residents there to be killed. Figures like US Senator Lindsey Graham publically supported this idea even in 2024. A steady procession of western leaders made political pilgrimages to Tel Aviv, to give Israel the money, the means, the weapons and the cover to do whatever it wanted. Israel also put out a false narrative (thoroughly exposed by Jewish journalist Max Blumenthal on his YouTube Channel The Grayzone) depicting the attacks as even more horrific than they actually were, and falsely accusing Hamas of raping women, beheading babies and burning their victims (which was actually the result the Israeli army's own Hellfire missiles in 'friendly fire'). It fell on King Abdullah to change the opinion of Western decision-makers through shuttle diplomacy—which he tirelessly did thereby avoiding worse responses—just as his wife Queen Rania (see: Woman of the Year on page 55) undertook changing western general public opinion.
2. Short of killing everyone in Gaza, Israel's 'Plan B' led many quarters in Israel to call for forcibly expelling all the remaining population of Gaza to Egypt, and then immediately the population of the West Bank to Jordan. Israeli settlers stepped up their violence and harassment in the West Bank and threatened genocide, leaving maps at night showing routes to

escape to Jordan. King Abdullah along with President Sisi of Egypt made it clear that forcible transfer was a 'red line'. Jordan's feisty foreign minister Ayman Safadi threatened several times that this would lead to war with Jordan. Despite unimaginable suffering—on June 12, 2024 the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres declared that Gaza has 'a unique level of destruction'—the Palestinian populations of the Gaza Strip and West Bank held firm, forcible transfer was avoided. But then 'Plan C' to strangle and starve Gaza was activated.

3. In response to the starvation of Gaza, on November 30, 2023 the King organised an international donors conference in Amman. Whilst many international agencies mobilised aid—most by private donors—almost all of this aid lay rotting on the Egyptian border unable to enter Gaza. Even when it entered Gaza, the Israeli army checkpoints made sure most of it exited again or was dumped on the borders out of reach of Gazans. Moreover, the agencies had no mechanism for co-ordination so many of them had purchased the wrong things or the same things so that critical items like ketamine (an anaesthetic for surgical operations), insulin, baby formula, and fuel for the desalination plants were not being bought at all. The King's conference put a spotlight on this and more effective aid gradually entered Gaza. When even this aid was curtailed, the Jordanian air force started parachuting aid to Gaza on November 6th 2023, with the King himself personally on the aid planes. The Israeli air force was informed but not asked permission and begrudgingly allowed these drops, which continue until this day. Food conveys from Jordan to the North of Gaza were also set up, and formed a critical lifeline, and indeed Jordan also provides a critical lifeline to the entire West Bank in terms of food and medicine. As of July 2024, the Jordanian military had by itself trucked over 30,000 pallets of food, aid and medicine into Gaza alone, comprising some 20,000 metric tons.

This is the third largest military assistance operation in the world since the Berlin airlift of 1948-1949, almost all at Jordan's expense.

4. Jordan has military hospitals in Tal al-Hawa and two in Khan Yunus in Gaza (including a women's and maternity hospital) in addition to a mobile bespoke prosthetics 3D printer which has so far manufactured over 14,000 prosthetic limbs (as well as other military hospitals in Jenin, Ramallah and Nablus in the West Bank). Israel systematically bombed all of Gaza's own hospitals—most infamously the Ahli hospital, killing over 500 civilians—bringing the entire medical system to its knees under the pretext that they harboured 'terrorist tunnels' underneath them. The only effective healthcare that now exists in Gaza are Jordan's two military hospitals—one of which existed before the war—and which Israel harasses but does not destroy. As of September 2024, these have performed 160,000 operations and treated over 4 million cases during the war.
5. 'Plan D': Israel tried repeatedly to drag Iran and the US into a wider regional war. On April 1st they bombed the Iranian Consulate in Syria and on July 31st they assassinated Hamas's political leader Ismail Haniyeh (see page 238) in Tehran. In response to the first, and in co-ordination with allies, Jordan shot down Iranian missiles headed for Israel over Jordan, and in response to the second, the King dispatched his foreign minister to the new, moderate President in Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian (see page 230) to convince him not to respond. The king was at first criticised in the Islamic world, even in Jordan, for both actions, but a wider war has so far been averted, and conflict remains at the level of controlled tit-for-tat attacks between Israel and Iran's regional allies (Hezbollah in Lebanon and Ansarullah in the Yemen) to this day, proving the King right, and keeping the focus on the suffering in Palestine.

**In summary:** though the Gaza war is abominable and has so far killed over 40,000 Gazans (over 25,000 women and children), 1000 Israelis and 1000 Palestinians in the West Bank, in the end Israel is a world nuclear power and a regional superpower, and only the USA can reign it in completely. Yet Jordan's King Abdullah has patiently and shrewdly managed to contain the Gaza war from becoming far worse

and developing into a full scale regional, and possibly world, war.



**The King's Position:** King Abdullah is not the leader of a rich or populous country, nor is he a religious scholar, but what makes his role vital is being the linchpin to the central cause of the Islamic world: the issue of Palestine and Jerusalem, and his being the Custodian of the Muslim and Christian Holy Sites there. There are over 12 million Palestinians in the world, 3 million in Jordan itself, around another 5 million in the Occupied Territories and Israel, and 2 million in Gaza. As Palestine is not recognized as a state by the entire international community, the responsibility for an equitable peace falls largely on its next-door neighbour Jordan, and on King Abdullah II in particular, especially as his family have been the hereditary Custodians of the Holy Sites from before the creation of the state of Jordan itself. Moreover, in the face of attempts to dissolve the very notion of Palestinian identity, dissolve UNRWA and illegally and unilaterally grant Jerusalem to Israel, King Abdullah has been the only influential voice actively—but responsibly—resisting this catastrophe for the Islamic world. Moreover, Jerusalem is one of Islam's three holiest sites and is as holy to Muslims as it is to Jews and Christians, and its loss would represent a grievance based not only on justice but on faith to all the world's 2.1 billion Muslims, a situation with explosive potential consequences, to say the least.

**The King's Lineage:** King Abdullah II is a 41st-generation direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through the line of the Prophet's ﷺ grandson Al-Hasan. The Hashemite Dynasty is the second-oldest ruling dynasty in the world, after that of Japan. As the current bearer of the Hashemite legacy, HM King Abdullah II has a unique prestige in the Islamic world, and is now the longest-serving Arab ruler; having assumed the throne in 1999 and celebrated his Silver Jubilee as king in 2024. His father King Hussein himself ruled for 47 years and was the longest-serving Arab leader when he died in 1999.

**The King's Heritage:** HM King Abdullah II is the Custodian of Al-Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem, the sacred compound which contains Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Indeed, the Hashemite Custodianship of the Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem is essential in safeguarding the pre-1967 Status Quo at the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The Status Quo is a critical insurance against attempts at temporal and spatial division of

Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Judaizing its surroundings. His Majesty is also the custodian of Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem. He has firmly supported the upkeep and renovation of these sites. In 2016 King Abdullah issued a Royal Benefaction to provide for the restoration of Jesus' Tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, at his own personal expense. And in 2018 he helped fund the restoration of the entire Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem from his own funds.

**The King's Reforms:** In 2021, HM King Abdullah II pushed for political modernization and announced the introduction of a new committee of 92 members tasked to modernize the political system and to propose new laws for local governments. The committee proposed draft laws for political parties and elections, as well as 22 amendments to the Jordanian Constitution regarding parliamentary work and empowering women and youth. This year, in 2024, under his guidance, parliamentary democratic elections under a party or coalition system are taking place for the first time.

**The King's Traditions:** 80% of Jordan's laws are based on the Ottoman *Majalla* and hence on traditional Hanafi shariah. Jordan has a Chief Mufti, official muftis in every province, army and police grand muftis and shariah courts for all personal status issues for Muslims. Yet it has Orthodox-Priest-run courts for its native Christian population in Christian personal status issues, and Jordan guarantees Christian seats in the Parliament and de facto at every level of government. It has civil law for all citizens and additional tribal laws and customs for tribesmen and tribeswomen.

**The King's Faith:** In response to growing Islamophobia in the West in the wake of 9/11 and rising sectarian strife, King Abdullah II launched the Amman Message initiative in 2004 (see "www.amman-message.com" on page 148), which was unanimously adopted by the Islamic World's political and tempo-

ral leaderships. King Abdullah II has also initiated many projects which promote traditional Islam such as: Altafsir.com (see page 201); the World Islamic Sciences and Education University (W.I.S.E.) in Jordan (see www.wise.edu.jo); Integral Professorial Chairs for the study of the work of Imam Al-Ghazali at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Imam Al-Razi at the King Hussein Mosque, Imam Al-Suyuti's Work at Al-Husseini Grand Mosque and Imam Al-Nawawi's Work at Al-Salt Grand Mosque and at (W.I.S.E.).

HM King Abdullah II is also lauded as an interfaith leader for his support of the 2007 A Common Word initiative (see page 159). He was also the initiator and driving force behind the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week Resolution in 2010 (see page 190). In 2014 HM King Abdullah hosted HH Pope Francis in Jordan (having previously hosted both HH Pope Benedict XVI and HH Pope John Paul II). In 2015 the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ on Jordan's River Bank was unanimously voted a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Thus, at the same time that DA'ISH was destroying Syria and Iraq's historical and archaeological treasures, King Abdullah was preserving not just Muslim Holy Sites, but Christian Holy Sites and universal historical and religious treasures as well. In 2014 King Abdullah established a fellowship for the study of love in religion at Regent's Park College, Oxford University.

**The King's Protection:** Jordan has around 2 million registered and unregistered refugees from Syria and Iraq and other regional conflicts (such as Libya and Yemen), in addition to around 3 million refugees from the Palestine conflict. Despite its paucity of resources, Jordan has welcomed and accommodated a staggering number of refugees and is seen by many as the most stable country in a turbulent region. It has the highest percentage of refugees of any country in the world.

*'The Blessed Tree', under which the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ sat and rested in the Jordanian Desert*



**Country:** Yemen

**Born:** 27 May 1963 (age 61)

**Source of Influence:** Scholarly, Spiritual leader and Preacher, Lineage

**Influence:** Millions of traditional Muslim followers globally

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni (Shafi'i, Ba-Alawi Sufi)

2024 (1)

2023 (11)

2022 (11)

*"A true Muslim is like rain, wherever it falls, it will benefit"*

15

is the age at which he started teaching and doing dawah

1993

the year Dar Al-Mustafa was founded



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*His Eminence*

Sheikh Al-Habib Umar bin Hafiz

# HE Sheikh Al-Habib Umar bin Hafiz

## Founder and Director of Dar Al-Mustafa

HE Sheikh Al-Habib Umar bin Hafiz, a 39th-generation direct descendant of the Prophet ﷺ, stands as one of the foremost scholars, spiritual guides, and preachers within the Islamic tradition today. His prominent position in the Ba Alawi *Tariqah* further extends his influence over hundreds of millions of Muslims around the globe.

**The Ba Alawi:** The Ba Alawi, derived from “*Banu Alawi*” or “the clan of Alawi”, have called the Hadramaut region in Yemen their home since 4th-century *hijri* (CE 930) when a member of the Prophet’s ﷺ family emigrated there. The Ba Alawi lineage has since produced exceptional scholars and devout individuals, celebrated for their efforts in propagating and revitalising Islamic teachings, anchoring their approach in Imam Al-Ghazali’s renowned work, the *Ihya’ Ulum Al-Din*. They have played a pivotal role in spreading and reviving Islam in various regions, including the Malay Archipelago (Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei) through the revered Wali Sanga (the Nine Saints—eight of whom were from the Ba Alawi), in various regions of India such as Kerala and Gujarat, in East Africa in the 20th century through figures such as Habib Umar bin Sumayt and Habib Ahmad Mashhur Al-Haddad and in general with Habib Abdul Qadir Al-Saqqaf, Habib Muhammad Al-Haddar, Al-Allama Ibrahim bin Aqil and Habib Muhammad bin Hafiz. Habib Umar continues this legacy on a global scale, with tours that extend to the USA, Australia and Europe.

**Dar Al-Mustafa:** Following the unification of Yemen, Habib Umar founded Dar Al-Mustafa in 1993. It is grounded in three fundamental principles: acquiring knowledge from qualified sources through an authentic chain of transmission; purifying the soul and refining character; and engaging in dawah, the call to faith. This institute started with 30 hand-picked students by Habib Umar and now thousands have graduated from it, who upon their return to their home countries, take on the role of influential educators, often by establishing their own educational institutions. In 2001, a sister institution, Dar Al-Zahra, was inaugurated, expanding religious instruction to females. Since then, additional branches have been established in Southeast Asia. Other nearby religious institutions which are closely linked to Dar Al-Mustafa are the Rubat Tarim (est.1886)

and Al-Ahcaff University (est.1995) and Al-Wasatiya Univeristy (est.2016).

**Popular Presence:** Habib Umar is extraordinarily active and frequently conducts gatherings both domestically and internationally. In 2023, a tour of Indonesia attracted over 700,000 attendees to his events. The same year, his tour of Malaysia with Sheikh Ali Gomaa, attracted over 500,000 attendees. His connection to Indonesia is strengthened through his online presence, facilitated through Muwasala. Muwasala is an organization he established in 2007, and which has over 30,000 active members of the Indonesian Sunni scholars. His influence extends even further through the Nahdlatul Ulama, the world’s largest Islamic organization, which boasts a staggering membership of over 90 million. Within this organization, Habib Umar is a reference point for all matters related to religious affairs. His monthly online readings to this vast community reinforce his influence in the Islamic world. Many of Habib Umar’s students have risen to prominence as distinguished teachers in their own right and extend his influence further, such as Habib Ali Al-Jifri, Habib Kadhim Al-Saqqaf and Habib Muhammad Al-Saqqaf who established *Al-Erth Al-Nabawi* (the Prophetic Legacy) satellite channel which broadcasts Habib Umar’s daily classes as well as being a platform for an array of traditional scholars.

**Scholarship:** Habib Umar ranks among the world’s preeminent Muslim academics and scholars. His role as a signatory of “A Common Word Between Us and You” has helped to foster understanding between Muslims and Christians. He has authored a number of works that have been translated into several languages. They include: *Al-Dhakhirah Al-Musharrafah*, a compendium of essential knowledge for every Muslim, three concise hadith collections, and a summary of the third quarter of Imam Al-Ghazali’s *Ihya’ Ulum Al-Din*. Furthermore, his compositions for the *mawlid*, *Al-Diya’ Al-Lami’* and *Al-Sharab Al-Tabur*, are recited at gatherings worldwide. He is the recipient of the King Faisal International Prize for Islamic Studies (2016) and the Sheikh Zayed Award for Human Fraternity (2021), but worth far more than any award is the testimony of many that Habib Umar precisely emulates the character of the Prophet ﷺ.

**Country:** Qatar

**Born:** 3 June 1980 (age 44)

**Source of Influence:** Political

**Influence:** Ruler of richest country per capita in the world

**School of Thought:** Sunni Hanbali

2024 (4)

2023 (3)

2022 (1)

*“How beautiful it is for people to put aside what divides them in order to celebrate their diversity and what brings them together at the same time”*

**\$83** thousand  
GDP per capita

**563** kilometers  
of coastline



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*His Highness*

**Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani**



# HH Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani

## Emir of Qatar

HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani became the Emir of Qatar at the age of 33 after his father, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, abdicated in June 2013. Qatar is the richest country in the world with a GDP per capita of \$84k. It has under 400,000 citizens whilst the rest of its population of 3 million are expatriate workers. It is the top exporter of liquefied natural gas and the site of the third largest natural gas reserves in the world.

**Family:** Sheikh Tamim is Sheikh Hamad's fourth son and was chosen as Crown Prince in August 2003. His mother is the powerful Sheikha Moza, who still plays a prominent public role as an advocate for social and educational causes.

**Education:** Sheikh Tamim completed his studies at a private school in the UK before going on to graduate at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst (in 1998). During his time as Crown Prince (2003-13), Sheikh Tamim had exposure to a wide range of posts including security (he was deputy commander of the armed forces), economics (chairman of the Qatar Investment Authority) and sports. He supervised Qatar's successful bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

**Expectations:** Qatar exploded onto the world scene under his father's reign, and Sheikh Tamim has consolidated these achievements. Packing a punch far above its weight has led to neighbouring countries questioning the purpose of so many initiatives. He has had to repair relations with other Gulf countries over supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and defend Qatar's world image over the treatment of labourers in Qatar.

**Blockade:** In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt, with the backing of the Trump administration, cut all relations with Qatar and imposed trade and travel bans. This drastic action resulted from various claims that Qatar was supporting terrorism and had violated a 2014 agreement with GCC countries. Its good relations with Iran and its hosting Al-Jazeera TV network were also factors in this tense situation which saw foodstuff imported from Iran and Turkish soldiers called in to help safeguard Qatar assets. A further complicating factor in this feud was that Qatar hosts the largest

American base in the Middle East and all the blockade partners are close allies of the US. The 43-month blockade was finally lifted in January 2021, having made little impact.

**Investor:** Qatar continues to increase its influence through major investments globally. The Qatar Investment Authority has over \$475bn in assets ensuring it is a major player in global finance.

**FIFA World Cup 2022:** The 2022 FIFA World Cup was a great success. The vast logistical challenge was met and the actual football produced one of the best world cups in history. In an iconic moment, the Emir of Qatar put a *bisht*, a traditional Arab cloak, on Argentina captain Lionel Messi during the World Cup trophy presentation after Argentina's win over France in the final.

**Peace Broker:** Qatar has positioned itself into the role of peace broker. It hosted the historic signing of a peace deal between the US and the Taliban in 2020 which led to the full withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. It has facilitated the return of prisoners and hostages between Russia and Ukraine. In November 2023, it brokered a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas which led to the release of about 700 Palestinian prisoners and 100 Israeli hostages. Doha has also been home to several rounds of negotiation for a ceasefire in the Gaza war. It has adopted a strong position of proactive engagement through dialogue with regional neighbours.

*Sidra Tree: The national tree of Qatar*



**Country:** Iran

**Born:** 16 July 1939 (age 85)

**Source of Influence:** Political, Administrative

**Influence:** Supreme Leader of 89 million Iranians

**School of Thought:** Traditional Twelver Shia, Revolutionary Shi'ism

2024 (3)

2023 (2)

2022 (3)

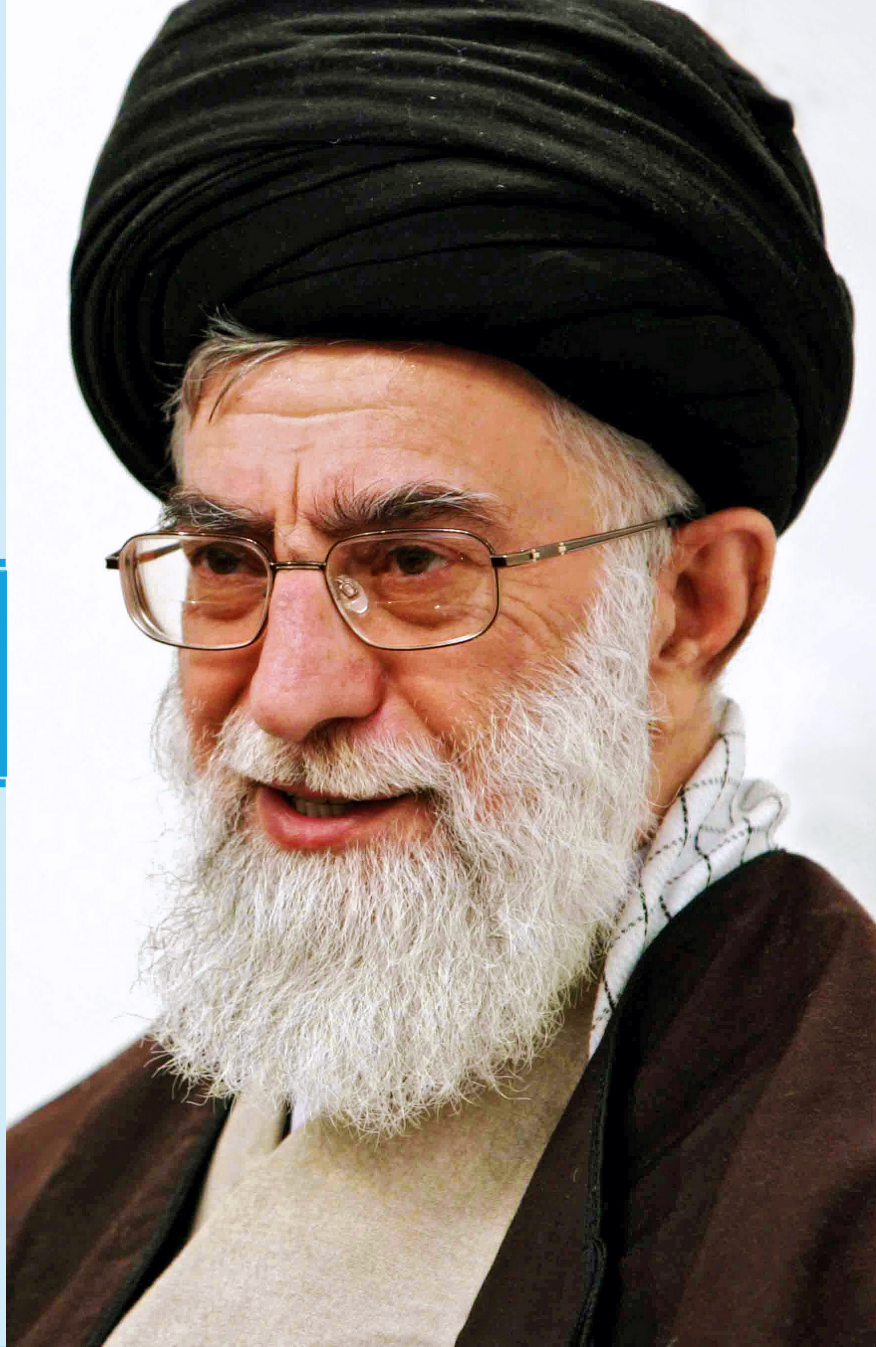
*"The purpose of Hajj is to unify the Islamic Ummah against disbelief, oppression, arrogance, and human and non-human idols."*

15<sup>th</sup>

in nanotechnology research

\$25

billion  
annual military budget



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*His Eminence*

Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Ali Khamenei

# HE Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Ali Khamenei

## Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran

HE Grand Ayatollah Khamenei is the second Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He was born in Mashhad and studied in the leading Iranian religious seminary in Qom before becoming involved in the struggle with the Pahlavi Regime in the 60s and 70s. He was a key figure in the revolution in 1979 and served as President between 1981-1989 before succeeding Ayatollah Khomeini as Supreme Leader upon the latter's death.

**Supreme Leader, *Velayat-e Faqih*:** Khamenei's current influence stems from his powerful position as a religious leader, which gives him a unique role in political affairs. His job is to enact the *Velayat-e Faqih*—the guardianship of the jurist. In real terms this means a system where scholars of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) have a controlling say in the political affairs of the state. The rule of the jurist was a concept created by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, based on ideas that have run through Iranian political history since the time of Shah Ismail—who was the first to make Shia Islam the national religion of Iran in the early 16th century under the rule of the Safavids. It was conceived as a way of safeguarding the Iranian nation from tyranny, giving the final say in all matters to a group of religious scholars, the Council of Guardians. This Council is headed by a chief arbitrator—the Supreme Leader.

**Leader of Shia Revolution:** Khamenei draws much of his influence from his role as a leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran was forged out of the 1979 Revolution. Combating what many saw as the tyrannical rule of the Shah, Khamenei joined the Society of Combatant Clergy that staged demonstrations mobilising many of the protests leading to the Shah's overthrow. After the revolution in 1979, Khamenei was one of the founding members of the Islamic Republic Party, and a member of the assembly of experts that was responsible for drafting Iran's new constitution.

**Sunni-Shia Reconciliation:** On 2 September 2010, Khamenei issued a historic fatwa banning the insult of any symbol that Sunnis hold dear, including but not limited to the Companions and wives of the Prophet ﷺ. This fatwa was received with great appreciation by the Chancellor of Al-Azhar University, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. In 2024, Khamenei led the funeral prayer for the assassinated Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh.

**Sanctions:** Since 1979, the United States has used sanctions to try to influence Iran's policies, including Iran's uranium enrichment program. The sanctions have had a detrimental effect on many aspects of life in the country. In 2015, Iran and the P5+1 (the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany) agreed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which limited Iran's nuclear activities and allowed international inspectors in return for the lifting of economic sanctions. This agreement worked for four years before President Trump unilaterally withdrew from it and subsequently imposed stricter sanctions on Iran and secondary sanctions for countries still buying Iranian oil.

**Current Issues:** On 13 April 2024, Iran launched a missile and drone attack on Israel in retaliation for Israel's bombing of the Iranian embassy complex in Damascus. The attack was Iran's first direct strike on Israel, amid the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza. Iran's response to other acts of aggression has been less direct, as it seeks to avoid a full out war with Israel and its inevitable ally, the USA.

*Cypress Abarkooh: estimated to be between 4,000 and 8,000 years old*



**Country:** Saudi Arabia

**Born:** 31 December 1935 (age 89)

**Source of Influence:** Political

**Influence:** King with authority over 37 million residents of Saudi Arabia and approximately 14 million pilgrims annually

**School of Thought:** Moderate Salafi

2024 (2)

2023 (1)

2022 (2)

*“My primary goal is to be an exemplary and leading nation in all aspects, and I will work with you in achieving this endeavour”*

**\$15** million  
pledged in aid to Rohingya Muslims

**5**  
World Heritages sites



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*His Majesty*

**King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud**

# King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud

## King of Saudi Arabia, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

HM King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud was proclaimed the 7th king of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in January 2015, after the passing of King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz. He had previously held the position of Crown Prince since June 2012. King Salman's influence comes from being the absolute monarch of the most powerful Arab country and its control of: 1. the two holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, which millions of Muslims visit throughout the year; 2. exporting crude oil and refined petroleum products, which ensures its central international role; and 3. propagating Islam through its huge dawah network, which makes its influence felt in all Muslim countries. On 21 June 2017, King Salman appointed his son, Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz as Crown Prince of the Kingdom.

**Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques:** HM King Salman has significant influence in the global Muslim community through his custodianship of the two holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. Makkah is the main pilgrimage site for 2 billion Muslims. Each year approximately 2-3 million pilgrims perform the Hajj. In addition to this, approximately 13 million pilgrims (including Saudi residents and GCC citizens) perform the Umrah, “the lesser Hajj”, throughout the year. A multi-billion-dollar expansion to the two mosques is well under way.

**Oil Reserves:** HM King Salman reigns over a land of massive crude oil reserves—Saudi Arabia has approximately 20% of the world's proven oil reserves—making it a key player in the global petroleum industry. Approximately 63% of the country's revenue still comes from oil, despite long-term strategies to diversify the country's revenue streams.

**Head of the World's Largest Dawah Network:** King Salman is also head of the most extensive dawah network of missionary Muslims in the world, promoting the Salafi brand of Islam. Salafism is historically rooted in Saudi Arabia and owes its global spread to the financial backing of Saudi Arabia.

**Humanitarian:** The King Salman Center for Relief and Humanitarian Aid (KSRelief) was established in 2015 and delivers aid internationally to victims of civil war and natural disasters. KSRelief has funded more than 2,000 projects in 92 countries, spending over \$6 billion. Projects included assisting Syrian patients living in the Zaatari Syrian refugee camp

in Jordan and providing prosthetic limbs to Yemeni civilians wounded during the war. KSRelief also partnered with UNICEF and UNHCR to support families affected by war.

**Vision 2030:** A number of mega projects and initiatives still continue despite a scale back in some of them. The linear smart, zero carbon city with “vertically layered” buildings, NEOM, will now be 2.4km long (reduced from 170 km). The Kingdom has also sponsored an array of sports, including golf and football, which brought attention to its Political and economic strategic changes are also underway as part of the Vision 2030.

**Key Appointments:** The transfer of power from the sons of the founder of Saudi Arabia, King Abdul-Aziz, to the new generation, which some feared would be an issue that would split the country, has been remarkably smooth so far. HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman is the second Crown Prince from the new generation appointed by King Salman. These appointees have brought changes in law which have had monumental social effects, changes such as allowing women in Saudi Arabia to move freely and drive, and the promotion of cinemas and music concerts.

**Normalisation:** Recent years have seen several Arab countries normalise relations with Israel, and Saudi Arabia has been keen to follow suit. The Israeli genocide in Gaza has complicated matters but political will to normalise relations with Israel remains.

*Phoenix palm: national tree of Saudi Arabia*



**Country:** Pakistan

**Born:** 5 October 1943 (age 81)

**Source of Influence:** Scholarly, Lineage

**Influence:** Leading scholar for the Deobandis and in Islamic finance

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni (Hanafi, Deobandi)

2024 (8)

2023 (6)

2022 (6)

*“Modernity is a double-edged sword which can be used for the benefit of mankind and to cut its own throat”*

1866

the year Darul Uloom Deoband was established

143

the number of books he has authored



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*His Eminence*

Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Usmani

# HE Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Usmani

## Leading Scholar of Islamic Jurisprudence and Finance

Justice Sheikh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani is a leading scholar of Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic finance. He is considered to be the intellectual head of the Deobandi School of Islamic learning, as well as an authority outside of the Deobandi School. He served as Judge of the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan from 1982 to 2002.

**Deobandi De Facto Leader:** Usmani is very important as a figurehead in the Deobandi movement—one of the most successful of the Islamic revivalist initiatives of the past century. His views and fatwas are taken as the final word by Deobandi scholars globally, including those at the Deoband seminary in India. Usmani was born in Deoband, India, the son of Mufti Muhammad Shafi (the former Grand Mufti of Pakistan) who founded the Darul Uloom, Karachi, a leading centre of Islamic education in Pakistan. He has authority to teach hadith from Sheikh al-Hadith Mawlana Zakariya Khandelawi amongst others, and he traversed the spiritual path of *tasawwuf* under the guidance of Sheikh Dr Abdul Hayy Arifi, a student of the great revivalist scholar of India, Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanvi. His students in the thousands are spread across the globe as leaders and imams, especially in the Indian subcontinent, central Asia and many Western countries. Deobandis consider themselves orthodox Hanafi Sunnis rooted in a foundation of sufi teaching, but allowing for a broad spectrum of interpretation which accommodates politically passive members of the Taliban.

**Leading Islamic Finance Scholar:** Usmani's other influence comes from his position as a global authority on Islamic finance. He has served on the boards, and as chairman, of over a dozen Islamic banks and financial institutions, and currently leads the International Sharia Council for the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) in Bahrain. He is also a permanent member of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, one of the highest legal bodies in the Muslim world.

**Writer:** He has translated the Qur'an into both English and Urdu. He is the author of a six-volume Arabic hadith commentary on Sahih Muslim. He is the Chief Editor of both the Urdu and English monthly magazine *Albalagh*, and regularly contributes articles to leading Pakistani newspapers on a range of issues.

His legal edicts (fatwas), written over a period of 45 years, have been published in four large volumes. He has authored more than 143 books in Arabic, English, and Urdu.

**New Works:** He is directly supervising *The Hadith Encyclopaedia*, a masterful, pioneering compilation which will provide a universal number to each hadith in a manner that will make referencing any hadith as easy as it is to refer to a verse of the Qur'an. The Encyclopaedia will be over 300 volumes. A second major work recently published is entitled *The Jurisprudence (Fiqh) of Trade*. The book concludes with a proposed Code of Islamic Law of Sale of Goods and Transfer of Property, which serves as a powerful call to action for regulators and standard-setting organizations alike.

**Assassination Attempt:** On 22 March 2019, as Mufti Taqi was on his way to deliver a Friday sermon, gunmen on three motorbikes opened fire on his and an accompanying car. The Mufti, his wife and two grandchildren (a girl aged seven and boy aged five) miraculously survived the shower of bullets untouched, but two people lost their lives and a further two were severely injured. The Prime Minister of Pakistan condemned the attack as did scholars and politicians across the board. As of yet, no one has claimed responsibility for carrying out the attack. He was once again a target for assassination in 2021 and again in 2022.

**Honoured:** In 2019 Usmani was honoured with the Sitara-i Imtiaz (Star of Excellence) by the President of Pakistan. The Sitara-i Imtiaz is an honour and civilian award in the State of Pakistan, which recognizes individuals who have made an "especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of Pakistan, world peace, cultural or other significant public endeavours".

**Gaza:** Mufti Usmani has repeatedly affirmed Hamas's right to fight the occupation and called on Muslims globally to help in any way they can, especially through boycotts and donations.

Close-up of *Cedrus deodara* leaves, national tree of Pakistan



**Country:** UAE

**Born:** 11 March 1961 (age 63)

**Source of Influence:** Administrative, Development, Philanthropy

**Influence:** Military and political leadership

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (6)

2023 (8)

2022 (8)

*“The UAE and tolerance are two sides of the same coin and is an embodiment of people’s lifelong endeavour to achieve through history”*

1<sup>st</sup>

Abu Dhabi ranked safest city in the world

11%

of the population are Emirati citizens



7

*His Highness*

President Sheikh Mohamed  
bin Zayed Al-Nahyan



# HH President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan

## President of the UAE

HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan became the President of the UAE after his brother, Sheikh Khalifa, passed away in May 2022. He is the third son of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the widely respected first President of the UAE who ruled from independence in 1971 until his death in 2004.

**Military Leadership:** Sheikh Mohamed has transformed the military capabilities of the UAE not only through buying military hardware (over 80 F-16 jets), but also by developing the UAE's own military industry, both in terms of hardware and special forces. All of these have also been deployed in various conflicts, including Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya and Yemen. The UAE is an important centre for global weapons' trading, hosting the world's largest defence expos.

**Global Player:** Sheikh Mohamed has enjoyed excellent personal relationships with previous US presidents, managing to have his views heard on Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood, Palestine, and the support of a young Saudi prince. Further, Sheikh Mohamed has shown that he is his own man by following policies that the US does not support publicly: the support of Libyan general Khalifa Haftar; and the blockade on Qatar. Involvement in other key issues shows that the UAE is punching above its weight in international affairs. Its involvement in Yemen remains complex with a split with Saudi policy, meaning their respective proxies on the ground are fighting each other as well as local forces and proxies of Iran. The conflicts and humanitarian disasters in Yemen and Sudan are of immense magnitude with many voices squarely laying the brunt of the blame on the UAE.

**Abraham Accords:** The UAE (along with Bahrain) normalised relations with Israel by signing the Abraham Accords Peace Treaty at the White House in September 2020 with the Israeli Prime Minister and the former American President Trump in attendance. An Israeli embassy was opened in July 2021 with the

President of Israel in attendance as the UAE pushes ahead with a full normalisation strategy which has outraged Palestinians and their supporters.

**Economic Development:** With Abu Dhabi sitting on a 10th of the world's proven oil reserves, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan maintains immense political influence in the Muslim World as a leading member of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company—which directs development efforts for the UAE's role in the oil and gas industries. He also controls one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds (\$968bn). He has overseen a construction boom which includes man-made islands, entertainment parks and museum franchises of the Louvre and the Guggenheim.

**Sustainable Development and Conservationist:** Sheikh Mohamed has been a champion of sustainable development in Abu Dhabi as an advocate for the implementation of green technologies. He pledged \$15 billion for the development of clean energy through solar, wind and hydrogen power. He is also a keen falconer and is committed to protecting falcons and other species in the region.

**Philanthropy and Tolerance:** Sheikh Mohamed has donated billions of dollars to various causes, including AED 55 million to the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, and purchasing vaccines in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Abu Dhabi Fund for Development celebrated its 50-year anniversary in 2021; it has given over AED 150 billion in development funding and investments in 97 countries. The UAE is home to a diverse workforce and has been keen to show respect to other religions and cultures. It has allowed various houses of worship to be built, and three synagogues have already been completed. In addition, in 2023, the Abrahamic Family House was inaugurated. Encompassing a mosque, a church, a synagogue and a forum for gathering and dialogue, this space welcomes people from all walks of life to exchange knowledge and practice faith.

*Close-up of the Ghaf Tree (Prosopis cineraria) branch, national tree of UAE*



**Country:** Türkiye

**Born:** 26 Feb 1954 (age 70)

**Source of Influence:** Political

**Influence:** President of 86 million Turkish citizens

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (7)

2023 (4)

2022 (4)

*“If we look at history, we will see that regimes which persecute [their people] do not remain standing”*

**2,023** metre  
the world's longest suspension bridge

**52%**  
of the vote won by Erdoğan



*His Excellency*

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

# HE President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

## President of the Republic of Türkiye

HE Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the Prime Minister of Türkiye for 11 years, winning three consecutive elections with a majority (2002, 2007 and 2011), before becoming Türkiye's first popularly elected president in August 2014. He secured a second term in the 2018 election and then won a hard-fought 2023 election. During his terms, Türkiye has seen unprecedented economic growth, constitutional reform, and its re-emergence as a major global power. All this, combined with his unapologetic voice on the world stage and support of Muslim issues, have won over Muslims worldwide.

**Elections:** Erdoğan secured 52.1% of the vote in the second-round run-off in the 2023 presidential election. This was a continuation of his remarkable popularity and success at the ballot box over the past two decades. During his time as President he has pushed for more powers for his post, criticised by many as signs of wanting excessive power, and lost support from key members of his own party. The March 2024 local elections saw the opposition increase its hold on Istanbul and Ankara and saw the AKP relegated to second-party status for the first time since its 2001 founding.

**Challenges:** "Erdomonics", as the President's unorthodox, economic policies are referred to, have driven down the lira 80% over the last few years, resulting in inflation problems. The appointment of Mehmet Şimşek and his more orthodox economic policies have started to regain the confidence of foreign investors as well as locals.

**Failed Coup Ramifications:** The ramifications of the failed coup of 15 July 2016, which led to about 200 deaths, still continue. Erdoğan squarely laid the blame of orchestrating the coup on Fethullah Gülen, and has led an all-out attack on Gülen's organizations and supporters. There has been a major crackdown on many sectors with about 160,000 civil servants being dismissed in various state institutions, with over half from the education sector. Also, 50,000 people remain in detention with this number continually rising as authorities press ahead with regular raids.

**Between the US and Russia:** Ties with the US have strained considerably since Türkiye decided to purchase the Russian S-400 defence system instead of the Patriot surface-to-air missile system. The US responded by suspending Türkiye from the F-35 jet programme and holding

up other arms deals. Türkiye is playing a balancing role with Russia following the latter's war with Ukraine, and is key for Europe's energy flow.

**Hagia Sophia:** Hagia Sophia, built in 537 CE as the patriarchal cathedral of Constantinople, was converted into the Fatih Mosque after Sultan Mehmed II conquered the city in 1453. In 1935, and in line with his effort to erase Türkiye's Islamic identity, Atatürk converted Hagia Sophia into a museum. In July 2020, Erdoğan reversed Atatürk's decision and reclassified Hagia Sophia as a mosque—a decision celebrated by most Muslims.

**Soft Power:** The soft power of the Turkish film industry has played a large part in growing Türkiye's influence throughout the Muslim world. Historical dramas about Sulayman the Magnificent and Sultan Abdul-Hamid II were hugely popular in the Arab world, but the drama about Ertuğrul, (*Diriliş: Ertuğrul*), the legendary father of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, has intensified and broadened this influence. Leaders of other Muslim countries have not only urged their citizens to watch it, but have also taken it as a model with which to develop their own indigenous dramas.

**Name Change:** In 2022 an official request for Turkey to be changed to Türkiye (tur-key-YAY) as it is spelled and pronounced in Turkish was accepted by the UN. The country has called itself Türkiye since its declaration of independence in 1923.

**Gaza:** Erdoğan's rhetoric on the Gaza war has been tough at times, and Türkiye severed trade with Israel in May 2024. Erdoğan also met with the late Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and supported South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the ICJ. Despite these measures, Erdoğan faces continued criticism for not doing enough, particularly regarding the supply of Azerbaijani oil to Israel via Türkiye and the Kürecik radar base which was established in 2012 for use by NATO.



Turkey Oak (*Quercus laevis*): national tree of Türkiye

**Country:** Iraq

**Born:** 4 August 1930 (age 94)

**Source of Influence:** Scholarly, Lineage

**Influence:** Highest authority for 21 million Iraqi Shia, and also internationally known as a religious authority to Usuli Twelver Shia

**School of Thought:** Traditional Twelver Shia, Usuli

2024 (9)

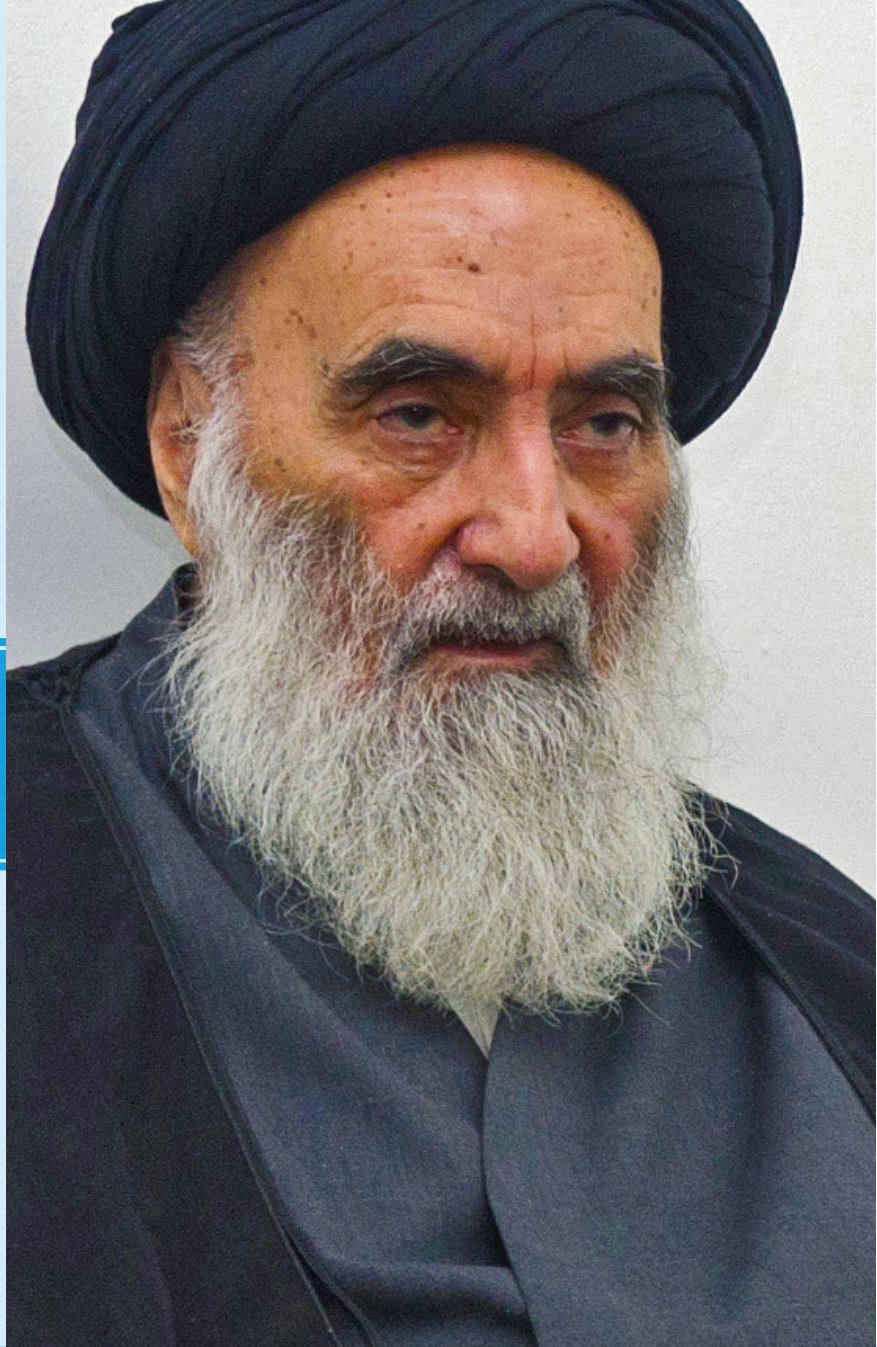
2023 (9)

2022 (9)

*“Women who go forth to the polling centers on election day are like Zaynab, who went forth to Karbala”*

**49** thousand. number of students his office supports

**1960** the year he became a mujtahid



۹

*His Eminence*

**Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Al-Sistani**

# HE Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Al-Sistani

## *Marja* of the Hawza

Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Al-Sistani is the prime *marja*, or spiritual reference, for *Ithna Ashari'a* (Twelver) Shia Muslims, signifying his esteemed status as a source of emulation for Shia Muslims worldwide. He is widely recognized for his profound religious scholarship and spiritual leadership within the Shia Islamic tradition. His influence extends far beyond the religious sphere, encompassing a broad spectrum of social and political matters. He is the leading sheikh of the Hawza Seminary in Najaf, Iraq, and the preeminent Shia cleric globally.

**Preeminent Shia Cleric:** Sistani is descended from a family of religious scholars and was educated in the leading institutions of Iran. He later went to Najaf, Iraq, to study under the Grand Ayatollah Abu Al-Qasim Al-Khoei. Upon Al-Khoei's death in 1992, Sistani took over as Grand Ayatollah, inheriting Khoei's following. He soon rose to become the leading cleric in Iraq.

**Marja Taqlid:** Sistani's influence in the Twelver Shia sect stems from his scholarly lineage and education, which have enabled him to reach the status of *marja taqlid*—the highest status in the *usuli* branch of Twelver Shia Islam. *Marja taqlid* means literally one who is worthy of being emulated—placing Sistani in a position of great authority over Twelver Shia Muslims. He is followed by an estimated 21 million Twelver Shia Muslims, making him the most influential *marja taqlid* in the world. He oversees a network of over 2,000 religious schools and seminaries in Iraq and around the world.

**Financial Influence:** Sistani also has very significant financial clout. As a *marja* his followers give him a religious tax (*khums*, Arabic for one-fifth). The redistribution of this tax for the common good is one of the key roles of a *marja*. Much of this remittance is redistributed through the Al-Khoei Foundation—

the largest Twelver Shia development organization in the world that maintains a network of educational and humanitarian establishments for both Shia and non-Shia Muslims. In 2022 it spent over \$100 million.

**Quietest Influence:** Significantly, Sistani is against the idea of *Velayat-e Faqih*, suggesting Shia clerics should not get involved in politics. Paradoxically, this approach has afforded him very strong influence as a religious leader unsullied by politics. Sistani has used his position of quietist authority to wield influence also as a peacemaker in turbulent, post-invasion Iraq. His comments about the political scene have been credited with bringing about stability at key moments. He has identified eliminating political corruption and improving public services as the main issues of the day. He has also issued strong statements against DA'ISH, calling on Iraqis to unite against the militants.

**Protecting Minorities:** Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani has played a significant role in Iraq's post-Saddam Hussein era, advocating for democracy and the protection of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities. His guidance has been instrumental in shaping the country's political landscape and promoting peaceful coexistence among its diverse population.

**Meetings:** Sistani rarely meets officials but made an exception for Iran's former President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif in March 2019. Pope Francis also visited Sistani's home in Najaf in March 2021 during the Pope's visit to Iraq.

**Gaza:** Al-Sistani has specifically addressed the Muslim world, calling for unified efforts to stop the Israeli genocide in Gaza and to provide greater support to Palestinians. The cleric has criticised the lack of international accountability for Israel's crimes and blamed certain world powers for this failure.



Date Palm Tree (*Phoenix dactylifera*): national tree of Iraq

**Country:** Morocco

**Born:** 21 August 1963 (age 61)

**Source of Influence:** Political, Administrative, Development

**Influence:** King with authority over 37.8 million Moroccans

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni, Maliki

2024 (10)

2023 (7)

2022 (7)

*“The Kingdom of Morocco is keen to remain a model state, in which the followers of the monotheistic religions coexist in an environment of fraternity and security”*

1999

the year he ascended the throne

Over  
5<sup>th</sup>  
wealthiest monarch in the world



👑 10 👑

*His Majesty*

King Mohammed VI

# HM King Mohammed VI

## King of Morocco

HM King Mohammed VI is a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his family has ruled Morocco for close to 400 years. He is also constitutionally the *Amir Al-Mu'minin*, or Commander of the Faithful, thereby combining religious and political authority. King Mohammed VI is lauded for his domestic reform policies and pioneering efforts in modernising Morocco and countering terrorism. He tackles issues of poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion at home, and has improved foreign relations. King Mohammed VI influences the network of Muslims following the Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence and is a leading monarch in Africa.

**Four-Hundred-Year Alaouite Dynasty:** The 400-year-old Alaouite dynasty traces its lineage back to the Prophet Muhammad. It takes its name from Moulay Ali Cherif, who became Prince of Tafilat in 1631. It sees itself as a continuation of the Andalusian Golden Age of Islam, which was characterised by peaceful co-existence, intellectual and cultural exchange and development.

**Influence on Maliki Network:** Morocco is home to the oldest university in the world, Al-Karaouine. This university is the centre of the Maliki school of jurisprudence. Since early in his reign, King Mohammed VI has implemented the Mudawana family law code that gives rights to women in divorce and property ownership, as well as citizenship to children born from non-Moroccan fathers. He has also commissioned the Islamic Affairs Ministry to train women preachers, or *morchidat*, who are now active chaplains to Moroccans across the globe.

**Huge Influence over Muslims in Africa:** King Mohammed VI leads the largest African monarchy, with a population of 37.8 million. Besides political links, Morocco maintains strong spiritual ties with Muslims all over Africa. Morocco is the site of the tomb of a highly revered Sufi sheikh, Mawlana Ahmed ibn Mohammed Tijani Al-Hassani-Maghribi (1735-1815 CE), the founder of the Tijaniyya Sufi order, whose shrine attracts millions from across the continent. Morocco is also recognized as a source for the spread of Islam through West Africa.

**The Marrakesh Declaration:** The King invited hundreds of the Islamic world's leading scholars to gather for a three-day summit in Marrakesh in January 2016

to address the question of the treatment of religious minorities in Muslim-majority communities. Basing themselves on the Charter of Medina, also known as the Constitution of Medina, which was drawn up by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself, they issued calls for Muslim-majority communities to respect minorities' "freedom of movement, property ownership, mutual solidarity and defence". HM King Mohammed delivered the inaugural address and pointed to the history of Islam's co-existence with other religions. This showed how Islam has enshrined the rights of religious minorities and promoted religious tolerance and diversity. (see page 162)

**Support for Jerusalem (Al-Quds):** The King and indeed all Moroccans show strong support for Palestinians and for Jerusalem. The Moroccan link with Jerusalem has been strong since Salah Al-Din's son endowed the Magharbeh Quarter, next to the Buraq Wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, to North African pilgrims in 1193. This 800-year-old quarter was demolished by the Israeli authorities in 1967 after they captured East Jerusalem.

**Reform:** King Mohammed VI implemented major reforms in response to the Arab Spring protests. These included a new constitution which transferred many powers to a freely and fairly elected government. The King's gradual reforms were hailed as a model for other Arab countries to follow.

**Football:** Morocco will co-host the 2030 football world cup along with Spain and Portugal. This follows the ground-breaking performance of the Moroccan football team which saw them reach the semi-finals of the 2022 world cup and win a historic bronze medal at the 2024 Olympics.

**Gaza:** Morocco, which normalised relations with Israel in 2020 under the Abraham Accords, has seen numerous demonstrations in support of Palestine, including large protests across the country after the Israeli assassination of Hamas's political leader in August 2024. The Moroccan government has attempted to balance its ties with Israel and support for Palestinians, officially denouncing Israeli actions while maintaining diplomatic relations. The docking of an Israeli naval ship in Tangier provoked significant protests and criticism from anti-normalization groups.

**Country:** Saudi Arabia

**Born:** 14 December 1956 (age 69)

**Source of Influence:** Scholarly, Media

**Influence:** 53 published books, supervised IslamToday.net, and reached millions through TV

**School of Thought:** Moderate Salafi

2024 (11)

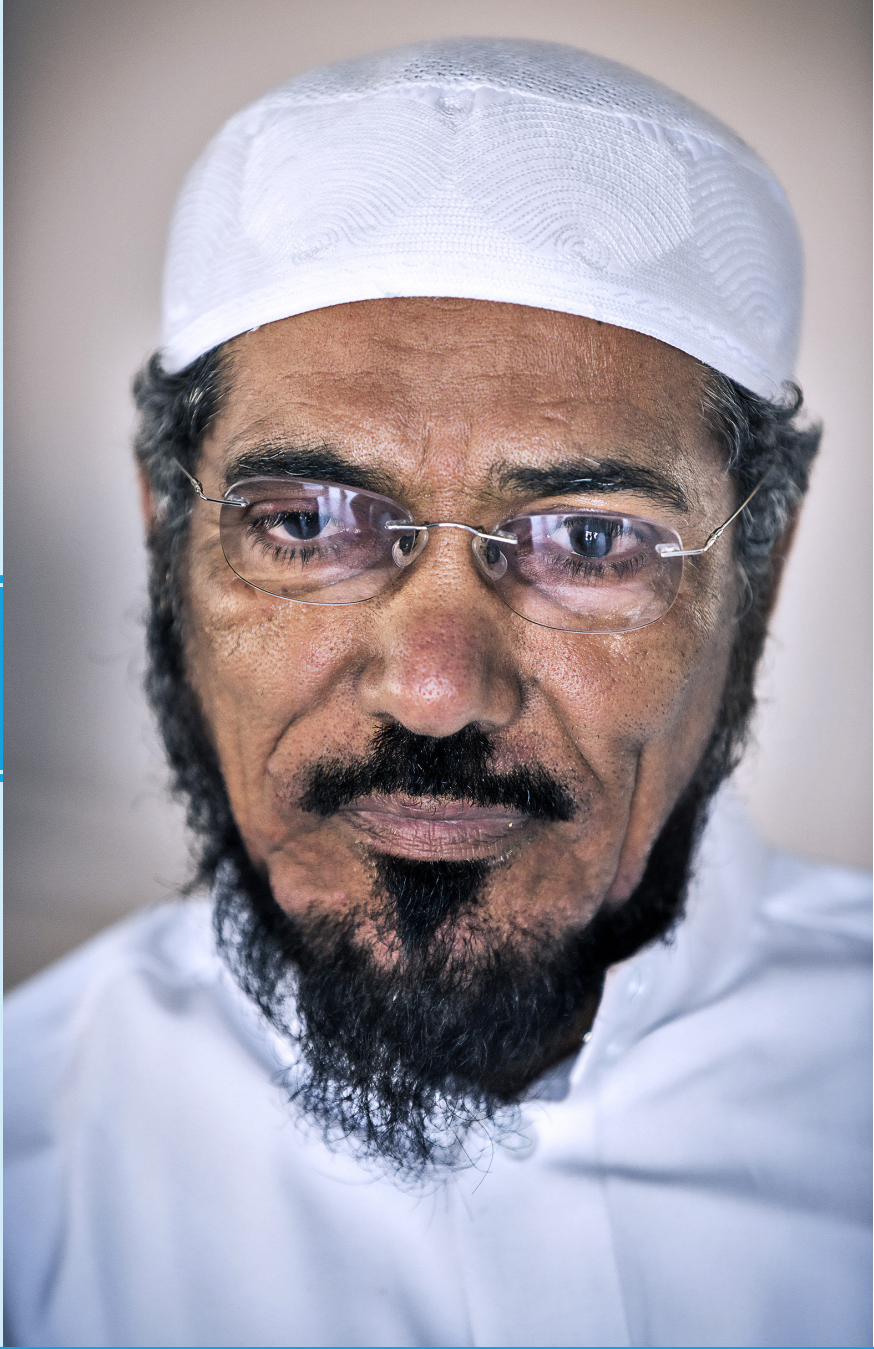
2023 (12)

2022 (12)

*"I am grateful to some pens that are as sharp as a sword edge; they taught me how to go on calmly and smiling."*

**7** number of years so far in second imprisonment

Over **50** number of books authored



11

*Sheikh*

Salman Al-Ouda



# Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda

## Saudi Scholar and Educator

A leading Saudi sheikh, Salman Al-Ouda is a former hard-line cleric turned advocate of peaceful coexistence. He became hugely influential due to his innovative reach in the Muslim world propagated via IslamToday.net and his persistent efforts at ministering to the needs of the global Muslim community. In September 2017, Al-Ouda was arrested by Saudi authorities along with 20 other Saudi clerics for tweets that were seen as offensive to the State. He is still imprisoned and endures months of solitary confinement.

**Key Scholar of Salafi Network:** Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda is a leading scholar of the Salafi movement, having notable influence in the movement due to his use of multiple modes of education (the Internet, audiovisual media, and print) to educate the large body of Salafi Muslims in Islamic sciences. Sheikh Al-Ouda's website brings together a diverse range of Islamic scholars and educators to provide guidance in Islamic thought. He was imprisoned between 1994-1999 for calling for reforms within the Saudi Arabia but softened his stance upon his release. He is identified with the Sahwa movement, calling for peaceful political reform, a bigger role for the clergy in politics, and opposition to western troops based in the Arabian Peninsula. His hugely influential website, IslamToday.net—a website dedicated to providing Islamic educational resources in English, Arabic, French and Chinese—has been shut down. He was active on social media until his arrest and until that time had 22 million followers.

**Ambassador of Non-violence:** In an effort to distance himself from alleged connections to perpetrators of terrorism, Al-Ouda is outspoken about the importance of inculcating love and mercy as opposed

to violence (except in valid cases of self-defence) in the daily lives of Muslims. As a prominent member of the International Union for Muslim Scholars, he led the delegation in talks with Arab heads of state regarding the need for them to unite in opposition to Israel's siege of Gaza in early 2009. He strongly condemned DA'ISH and also called for peace and unity between members of the GCC and Qatar.

**Arrested on Charges Against the State:** Al-Ouda was arrested in September 2017 and charged for what ostensibly seems to be nothing more than tweets urging Saudi Arabia and Qatar to end a diplomatic rift. He had earlier voiced concerns about Saudi Arabia's human rights record, but perhaps his true crime has been not to publicly endorse and support the recent changes happening in the Kingdom. Al-Ouda has been held in punishing conditions, often in solitary confinement and detained incommunicado.

**Unjust Arrest:** With the public prosecutor calling for the maximum penalty to be implemented, there have been serious fears that Al-Ouda could be executed at any time. There has been outcry from a whole range of organizations about what is seen as a grossly unjust imprisonment, trial and sentence. The International Union of Muslim Scholars, the European Muslim Forum and Amnesty International have all called on the Saudi government to release Al-Ouda and his two compatriots, Sheikh Ali Al-Omari and Sheikh Awad Al-Qarni.

**Health Concerns:** Al-Ouda's son, Abdullah Al-Ouda, stated that his father had "lost almost half of his ability to hear and see" in prison. He said that due to years of abuse and isolation, his father's physical and mental condition has been declining at an increasingly greater pace.



*Phoenix palm—national tree of Saudi Arabia*

**Country:** Saudi Arabia

**Born:** 31 August 1985 (age 39)

**Source of Influence:** Political

**Influence:** De facto ruler of Saudi Arabia

**School of Thought:** Moderate Salafi

2024 (12)

2023 (10)

2022 (15)

*“All success stories start with a vision, and successful visions are based on strong pillars”*

**200** thousand  
years of human habitation in  
the kingdom

**\$500** billion  
the cost of NEOM



12

*His Royal Highness*

Crown Prince Mohammed bin  
Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud

# HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud

## Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia

HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud is the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia and is widely acknowledged as the de facto ruler of the Kingdom.

**Rapid Appointments:** At the beginning of 2015, Prince Mohammed bin Salman was largely unknown in political and diplomatic circles. Since his father's accession to the throne in January 2015, Prince Mohammed was swiftly appointed to a number of powerful positions. In June 2017, he was appointed as Crown Prince of the Kingdom following his father's decision to remove Prince Mohammed bin Nayef from all positions. In 2022, he was appointed Prime Minister, a post traditionally held by the King.

**International Relations:** Diplomatic progress has been made with regards to Yemen, Syria and Iran. The Crown Prince has also successfully managed relations with the West despite issues surrounding the Khashoggi murder and the Ukraine War. The Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund has spent \$6.3 billion in sports deals since early 2021, investing heavily in golf, football and sporting events. Saudi Arabia welcomed the world's athletic elite into its pro league clubs, such as Cristiano Ronaldo in Al-Nasr football club. It has also solidified its place a regular stopover on the international sporting circuit. Some have levelled accusations of reputational whitewashing or "sportswashing", whilst others have welcomed this engagement.

**Catalyst of Change:** The Crown Prince has been linked to major changes taking place in the Kingdom: allowing women to drive, hold their own passports and move independently. Cinemas were (re) opened and top western and middle eastern pop artists held concerts in the Kingdom. There was also a crackdown on corruption (including the arrest of princes and prominent businessmen), and a proposal to float Saudi Aramco—which has been called "the most profitable company in the history of the world."

**Vision 2030:** As Chairman of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched "Vision 2030", a comprehensive, multi-year plan for the future of Saudi Arabia. The ambitious plan seeks to revitalise the Saudi economy by bolstering the Kingdom as a global investment powerhouse, and moving away

from oil-dependency as the largest source of national income. It also seeks to strengthen government efficiency and the promotion of a "tolerant, thriving and stable Saudi Arabia that provides opportunity for all". Various mega projects have been initiated in support of the vision.

**The Khashoggi Assassination:** Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi was a prominent journalist and Saudi Arabian dissident who was assassinated at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul on 2 October 2018. Although the Saudi government denied any knowledge of the murder, they were later forced to admit that their officials had been involved but didn't go as far as the CIA who concluded that Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman had ordered Khashoggi's assassination.

**Donations:** The Crown Prince oversees donations to causes both home and abroad. In 2019, he donated \$1 billion to the Misk Foundation to support youth empowerment and social development in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world. In 2022 he donated \$13 million to the National Platform for Charitable Work (Ehsan) in Saudi Arabia, \$203 million to Jordan as a host of refugees and over \$500 million to support the UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen.

**Gaza:** Saudi Arabia's insistence on Palestinian statehood aligns with the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which the Kingdom still supports. This, alongside normalisation with Israel, U.S. commitments to Saudi security, nuclear program assistance, and investment, are all part of the negotiations.



*Edible sweet fruit from the Phoenix palm*

**Country:** Egypt

**Born:** 6 January 1946 (age 78)

**Source of Influence:** Administrative

**Influence:** Highest scholarly authority for the majority of Sunni Muslims, runs the foremost and largest Sunni Islamic university

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (14)

2023 (14)

2022 (14)

*“The tolerant teachings of Islam honored man, preserved women’s rights, criminalized extremism and racism, and established the values of mutual respect and coexistence among all human beings”*

**2** million

Al-Azhar students in Egypt

**970**<sup>CE</sup>

the year Al-Azhar University was founded



﴿ 13 ﴾

*His Eminence*

Sheikh Dr Ahmad Muhammad Al-Tayyeb

# HE Sheikh Dr Ahmad Muhammad Al-Tayyeb

## Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar University, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque

Sheikh Ahmad Muhammad Al-Tayyeb was appointed as Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar in March 2010, after the passing of his predecessor, Dr Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi. Al-Tayyeb was formerly the president of Al-Azhar for seven years and, prior to that, served for two years as the most powerful cleric in Egypt as its Grand Mufti.

**Leader of Al-Azhar University:** Sheikh Al-Tayyeb leads the second-oldest university in the world, where teaching has continued without interruption since 975 CE. Al-Azhar represents the centre of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence. It is a key institution that issues authoritative religious rulings and has provided extensive Islamic education to Egyptian and international students since its inception over a millennium ago. This history makes it a bastion of Sunni traditionalism. The university is considered one of the most prominent Islamic educational institutions and the foremost centre of Sunni Muslim scholarship worldwide.

**Administers Al-Azhar Education Network:** Al-Azhar is currently the largest university in the world, having risen from a group of three schools in the 1950s to its current state with 72 feeder schools, with close to 300,000 students studying there at any one time. Including schools that are part of Al-Azhar *waqf* initiatives, there are close to 2 million students. The graduates of Al-Azhar inspire great respect as religious leaders within the Muslim community, and it enjoys a powerful alumni organization, which makes the head of Al-Azhar an extraordinarily powerful and influential person.

**Scholarly Influence:** His scholarly influence as a

leading intellectual of Sunni Islam spans the globe. He has served as the Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Aswan, and the theology faculty of the International Islamic University in Pakistan. He has also taught in universities in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. This influence is disseminated popularly through his online presence, with over 20 million followers on social media.

**Advocate of Traditional Islam:** Sheikh Al-Tayyeb has emphasised his mission to promote traditional Islam since becoming Grand Sheikh. He has stressed the importance of teaching students about Islamic heritage—considering Al-Azhar graduates as ambassadors of Islam to the world. In an age where claimants to authoritative Islam seem to be on every corner, Sheikh Al-Tayyeb has both the institute and the personal skills to authentically claim to be a representative of traditional Islam—Islam as practised by the majority of Muslims throughout the ages. Sheikh Al-Tayyeb has defined the Sunni community (Ahl Al-Sunnah wa Al-Jama'ah) as those who follow Imam Abul-Hasan Al-Ash'ari and Imam Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi and the scholars of Hanafi, Maliki, and Shafi'i jurisprudence, as well as the moderate scholars of the Hanbali school. He also included the Sufis following the way of Imam Al-Junayd.

**Interfaith Initiative:** The International Day of Human Fraternity is an annual UN-designated celebration of interfaith and multicultural understanding which was established by Pope Francis and Sheikh Al-Tayyeb in 2020. He subsequently visited the Vatican in 2022.



*Doum Palm (Hyphaene thebaica): national tree of Egypt*

**Country:** India

**Born:** 3 March 1964 (age 61)

**Influence:** Scholarly, Political, Administrative. 12 million members of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (16)

2023 (15)

2022 (27)

*"We Muslims are being portrayed as if we have come from another world"*

**12** million

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind followers

**2006**

the year he became Member of Parliament



﴿ 14 ﴾

*His Excellency*

Maulana Mahmood Madani

# Maulana Mahmood Madani

## President of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind

Maulana Mahmood Madani is the President of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH) where he also served as secretary-general for 13 years. He has gained influence for his forthright condemnations of terrorism and unflinching support of the Indian Muslim community.

**Lineage:** Maulana Mahmood's grandfather, Maulana Syed Hussain Ahmad Madani, was a great scholar of Islamic theology, teaching hadith in Madinah, and Deoband. He was the president of the JUH until his death in 1957 and was then succeeded by his son Asad Madani (Maulana Mahmood's father), who was president until his death in 2006.

**Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH):** JUH was established in 1919 by leading Deoband scholars who argued for the concept of composite nationalism, believing that a nation should not be formed on the basis of one factor only (e. g. religion, ethnicity etc), but rather should be based on many factors. Maulana Mahmood has strived to keep this concept alive amid all the turmoil of nationalistic politics in India. After graduating from Deoband in 1992, he became actively involved in the JUH, organising conferences and meetings across the country which saw a rapid rise in membership. He became the General Secretary of JUH in 2001 and continued to invigorate the organization. When his father passed away in 2006, a dispute arose between him and his uncle around the leadership of the organization leading to

a bifurcation.

**Activism:** He has advocated for Muslim rights in India and has been outspoken in his opposition to the misuse of the term "jihad" as a tool of terrorism in India. Following fatal bomb blasts in 2008, he mobilised Darul Uloom Deoband institutions to host events condemning terrorism as inherently un-Islamic. This had a major impact on the community. He has been at the forefront of relief work (earthquakes in Gujarat and Kashmir), health and social development (Kashmir).

**Legal battles:** Maulana Madani leads numerous legal battles in various courts of the country fighting to secure the rights of Indian Muslims in cases covering Right to Citizenship, Right to Practise Religious Duties, as well as defending those Muslims who have been falsely implicated in terror cases.

**Combating Islamophobia:** With RSS ideology growing ever menacingly, Maulana Mahmood Madani has supported a number of initiatives to counter the impact of hatred and religious-based crime against Indian Muslims. The JEIM (Justice and Empowerment Initiative for Indian Muslims) records cases of Islamophobia in a systematic manner and provides advocacy and other forms of assistance to the victims. This is the first such attempt by Indian Muslims to record such cases and present them to human rights organizations.



*Indian banyan (Ficus benghalensis), national tree of India*

**Country:** Malaysia

**Born:** 10 August 10 1947 (age 77)

**Source of Influence:** Prime Minister of Malaysia

**Influence:** Political

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (17)

2023 (Hon Men)

2022 (Hon Men)

On Gaza: *“Where have we thrown our humanity, why this hypocrisy?”*

20<sup>th</sup>

Prime Minister of Malaysia

1981 year he entered student politics



15

*His Excellency*

Anwar Ibrahim



# HE Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim

## Prime Minister of Malaysia

HE Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim assumed office as Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister in November 2022, leading the Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope) coalition. This marked the culmination of a political journey that spanned three decades, during which he faced imprisonment, exile, and political challenges before returning to the helm of government.

**Beginnings:** Anwar's early life was rooted in Penang, Malaysia, where he was born to a Muslim Malay family. His parents' involvement in politics exposed him to the field at a young age. His political journey began during his years as a student at the University of Malaya in the late 1960s, where he gained recognition for his leadership qualities. In 1971, he founded and became the president of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia.

**Political Success:** Anwar's political career took off in 1982 when he accepted an invitation from then-Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamed to join the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). He quickly rose through the ranks, holding various ministerial positions, including Minister of Youth, Culture, and Sports (1983), Minister of Agriculture (1984), Minister of Education (1986-1991), and Minister of Finance (1991-1998). He also served as Deputy Prime Minister from 1993 to 1998.

**Trials and tribulations:** Anwar Ibrahim's political journey has been a turbulent one, marked by both triumphs and setbacks. As a key figure in Malaysia's economic boom of the 1990s, he clashed with then-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad during the 1997 financial crisis, leading to his dismissal in 1998. In 1999, Anwar was jailed on charges of corruption and sodomy, though his sodomy conviction was overturned in 2004 due to insufficient evidence. Despite

being repeatedly imprisoned and released over the next two decades, including during his tenure as Leader of the Opposition from 2008 to 2015, Anwar remained resilient. A literary enthusiast, he found solace in reading Shakespeare's complete works four times in prison and survived through reading and singing.

**Royal Pardon:** Anwar was finally released through Royal Pardon in 2018, a "travesty of justice" being cited as the reason. He almost immediately returned to Parliament and won a by-election by a huge majority, and again was Leader of the Opposition from 2018-2022 before becoming Prime Minister in November 2022.

**Academic life:** Beyond his political career, Anwar has made contributions to academia, holding positions at institutions such as St. Anthony's College, Oxford, Johns Hopkins University, and Georgetown University. He is also a co-founder of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) established in the United States in 1981. Furthermore, he served as the Chancellor of the International Islamic University Kuala Lumpur from 1983 to 1988, and has received honorary degrees from institutions in Indonesia and the Philippines.

**Gaza:** Ibrahim has been a vocal supporter of the Palestinian right to resist occupation. His meetings with Hamas officials (including the late assassinated Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh) have drawn criticism from the USA. His social media posts offering condolences after the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh were taken down, prompting him to say: "Let this serve as a clear and unequivocal message to Meta: cease this display of cowardice and stop acting as instruments of the oppressive Zionist Israeli regime."



*The Merbau (Malacca tree): national tree of Malaysia*

**Country:** Nigeria

**Born:** 24 August 1956 (age 68)

**Source of Influence:** Lineage, Development, Administrative

**Influence:** Central figure for 107 million Nigerian Muslims

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni, Maliki; linked to the Qadiriyyah Sufi order by lineage

2024 (18)

2023 (18)

2022 (18)

*"Nigerians should abhor violence and live in peace and tranquility"*

20<sup>th</sup>

Sultan of Sokoto

2006

Year he ascended position



❧ 16 ❧

*His Royal Eminence*

Amirul Mu'minin Sheikh As-Sultan  
Muhammadu Sa'adu Abubakar III

# HRE Amirul Mu'minin Sheikh As-Sultan Muhammadu Sa'adu Abubakar III

## Sultan of Sokoto

Amirul Mu'minin Sheikh As-Sultan Muhammadu Sa'adu Abubakar III is the 20th Sultan of Sokoto. As Sultan of Sokoto, he is the head of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Nigeria (SCIAN), which is the umbrella body for all Muslim organizations in the country, and is considered the spiritual leader of Nigeria's 108 million Muslims, who account for roughly 50% of the nation's population. Although the position of Sultan of Sokoto has become largely ceremonial, the holder is still a central figure for Nigerian Muslims.

**Military Man:** Sa'adu Abubakar succeeded his brother, Muhammadu Maccido, who died in a plane crash in 2006. Prior to this he served in the military, including commanding African peacekeepers in Chad. He retired as Brigadier General and was serving as Defense Attache to Pakistan when he became Sultan.

**Lineage Back to Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio:** The Sultan of Sokoto is the spiritual leader of Nigeria's enormous Muslim community. He gains this position by lineage. Abubakar is the 20th heir to the two-century-old throne founded by his ancestor, Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio. Dan Fodio (1754-1817 CE) was a scholar, leader of the Maliki school of Islam and the Qadiri branch of Sufism, and Islamic reformer of the 19th century. Dan Fodio believed that Islam should have a more central role in the life of the people of West Africa and led an uprising to institute the changes he sought. His figure and his writings are a very important chapter in the history of Islam in West Africa, and Abubakar, by lineage, holds a key place in West-African Islam, and particularly for the

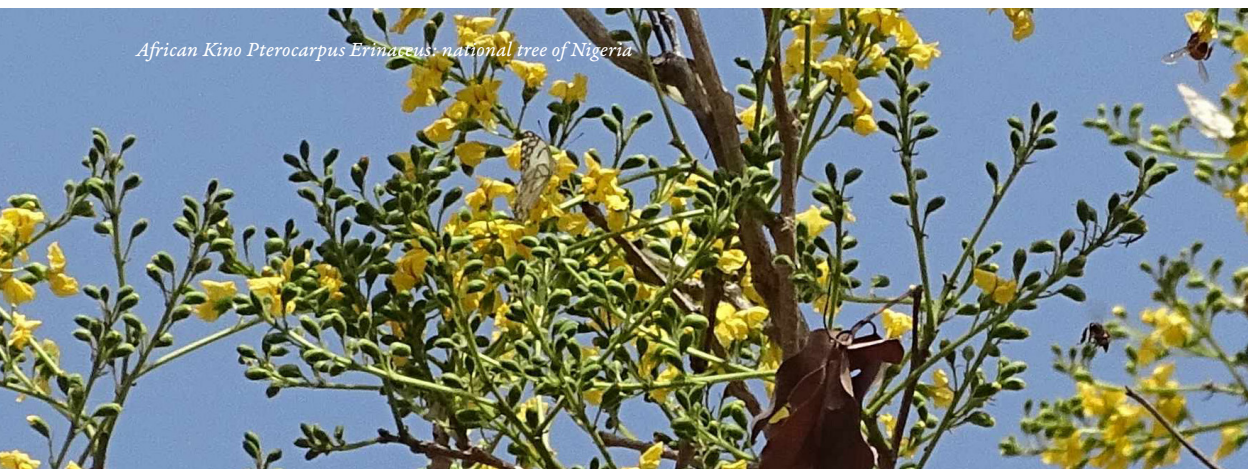
Fulani and Hausa people who followed Dan Fodio.

**An Illustrious Family:** The position currently does carry with it some weight—though largely ceremonial since British colonial rule diminished its political significance. Much of this clout is derived from the respect that was earned by Siddiq Abu Bakar Dan Usman—17th Sultan and father of Abubakar—who held the Sultanate for over 50 years. The rule of Abubakar's father from 1938 to 1988 earned the position significant social capital and popularity with ordinary Muslims.

**Administrative Power:** Abubakar holds important administrative influence in Nigerian religious life. Abubakar is the titular ruler of Sokoto in northern Nigeria and is also the head of the Nigerian National Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. Leadership of this council means that the Sultan of Sokoto remains the only figure that can legitimately claim to speak on behalf of all Nigerian Muslims. This role has become increasingly influential over the years with a rise in interreligious tensions between Nigeria's Muslim-majority north and Christian-majority south. The Sultan of Sokoto is also the Chancellor of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, one of the largest universities in Nigeria, with over 40,000 students.

**Interfaith Initiative:** The Sultan has started many initiatives to counter and reduce the influence of Boko Haram. He has also worked to strengthen Muslim-Christian ties by inviting an international joint Muslim-Christian Delegation to visit Nigeria. In 2019, he was appointed Co-Moderator of the Council of Religion for Peace (CRP).

*African Kino Pterocarpus Erimacrus: national tree of Nigeria*



**Country:** Mauritania

**Born:** 1935 (age 89)

**Source of Influence:** Scholarly

**Influence:** Significant influence as a leading contemporary scholar of Islamic Jurisprudence **School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni (Maliki)

2024 (19)

2023 (16)

2022 (16)

*“Without the other, you cannot deal the full humanity. ‘The other’ is part of the I”*

2

Ministerial posts in the 1970s

2014

launch of The Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies



﴿ 17 ﴾

*His Eminence*

Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah

# HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah

## President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies

Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah's influence is derived from his scholarship, piety and preaching. Uniquely, all of the different Muslim sects and schools respect him as a scholar. A testament to this is the notable fact that whilst he is not a Salafi, the Saudi government promulgates his fatwas as authoritative. He is an instructor at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah and was the deputy head of the Union of Muslim Scholars, having previously been a Judge at the High Court of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Head of Sharia Affairs at the Ministry of Justice. He was appointed chair of the UAE Fatwa Council.

**Education:** Sheikh bin Bayyah was raised in a household famous for its scholars, and his father, Sheikh Mahfoudh bin Bayyah, was the head of the Conference of Mauritanian Scholars established after the country's independence. Sheikh bin Bayyah studied in the Mauritanian centres of learning known as *mahadhir*, in which all the sacred sciences were taught including: jurisprudence, legal theory, syntax, language, rhetoric, Qur'anic exegesis and its auxiliary sciences, and the science of Prophetic tradition.

**Diplomat:** As a member of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy or *Al-Majma' Al-Fiqhi* of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Sheikh bin Bayyah is at the forefront of the legal arm of a dynamic organization with a permanent delegation to the United Nations.

**Author:** Having written numerous texts, Sheikh bin Bayyah's scholarly explorations have gone global through speaking engagements that draw crowds of tens of thousands. He has spoken at length about

the endurance of the Islamic legal tradition and also written extensively on rulings for Muslims living as minorities in foreign lands, or *fiqh al-aqaliyyat*.

**Activist:** In 2013, Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah visited the White House where he met with senior advisers and aides to the then-President Obama. He called for the protection of the Syrian people and the Muslim minority in Myanmar. Also, he met with Bill Gates during the Global Vaccine Summit in Abu Dhabi in April 2013. He initiated the Muslim Council of Elders which embraces leading scholars (including the Sheikh of Al-Azhar), and presided over a large gathering of religious scholars at a forum entitled "Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies", which has now been established as an organization (based in the UAE). He has been criticised for accepting support from the UAE, which is currently involved in several regional conflicts.

**Interfaith Initiatives:** Sheikh Bin Bayyah has convened multifaith gatherings, including the Marrakesh Declaration (2016) (see p. 162) on minority rights in Muslim-majority countries and the New Alliance of Virtue (*Hilf Al-Fudul*) (2019), which call for a shared human society honouring religious and cultural differences. This work promotes the shared values of the Abrahamic faiths, fostering peace and reconciliation. His efforts have inspired organizations like the American Jewish Committee (AJC) to support his vision, translating his declarations to share them with Jewish communities worldwide, particularly in Israel, to encourage interfaith harmony and cooperation.

*Turpentine tree (Pistacia terebinthus): national tree of Mauritania*



**Country:** Indonesia

**Born:** 17 October 1951 (age 72)

**Source of Influence:** Political

**Influence:** Leader of 280 million citizens and residents of Indonesia

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (450)

2023 (450)

2022 (450)

*“Remember, there exists not a power on earth that is lasting if it is not loved from within, loved by its own people.”*

Over:

**300** languages  
spoken in Indonesiamedia

**8**

World Heritage sites



18

*His Excellency*

President Prabowo Subianto

# HE President Prabowo Subianto

## President of Indonesia

President Prabowo Subianto won the Indonesian presidential elections held in February 2024 and started his five-year term in October 2024.

**Background:** Prabowo Subianto, born 17 October 1951 in Jakarta, comes from a prominent Indonesian family. His father, Sumitro Djohadikusumo, was an economist and minister under both presidents Sukarno and Suharto. Prabowo received his early education in Jakarta, London, and Malaysia before attending the Indonesian Military Academy. He rose through the ranks of the Indonesian Army, becoming a lieutenant general and commander of the Army's Strategic Reserve Command. Prabowo was also married to Suharto's daughter, Siti Hediati Hariyadi, from 1983 to 1998, further cementing his ties to Indonesia's political elite.

**Political Experience:** Prabowo's political career began in earnest after his military service. He founded the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra) in 2008 and ran for vice president in 2009. He then ran for president in 2014 and 2019, losing both times to Joko Widodo. In a surprising turn of events, Widodo appointed Prabowo as Defense Minister in 2019, a position he held until his successful presidential campaign in 2024. Throughout his political career, Prabowo has positioned himself as a strong nationalist leader, emphasising economic development, food security, and a more assertive foreign policy.

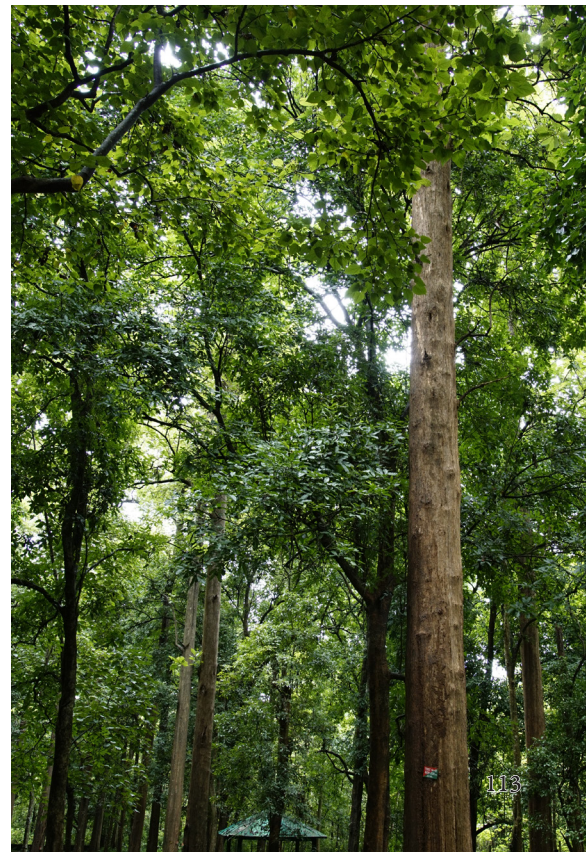
**Past Controversies:** Prabowo's career has been marked by several controversies, particularly related to his military service. He was accused of human rights violations during Indonesia's occupation of East Timor and in the final days of Suharto's regime in 1998. Allegations include the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists and involvement in the violent suppression of protests. These accusations led to his discharge from the military in 1998 and a temporary ban from entering the United States. Prabowo has consistently denied these allegations, and his supporters argue that he has never been formally charged or convicted of any crimes.

**Popularity:** Despite the controversies surrounding his past, Prabowo has maintained significant popularity in Indonesia. His nationalist rhetoric and promises of strong leadership resonate with many Indonesians who desire economic growth and increased global influence for their country. Prabowo's military background appeals to those seeking a firm

hand in government, while his economic policies attract support from various sectors of society. His victory in the 2024 presidential election, after two previous defeats, demonstrates his enduring appeal and ability to build broad coalitions.

**Other Notable Aspects:** Prabowo is known for his charismatic public speaking and his ability to connect with rural and working-class voters. He is also an accomplished equestrian, having represented Indonesia in international competitions. His family's wealth and business connections have been both an asset and a point of criticism throughout his career. As a new president, Prabowo faces the challenge of uniting a diverse nation and delivering on his campaign promises of economic growth and social welfare. His presidency is likely to mark a shift in Indonesia's domestic and foreign policies, potentially redefining the country's role in Southeast Asia and on the global stage.

*Teak (Tectona grandis) : national tree of Indonesia*



**Country:** Indonesia

**Born:** 16 February 1966 (age 58)

**Source of Influence:** Administrative, Political, Education

**Influence:** Leader of approximately 90 million members of the Nahdlatul Ulama

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (20)

2023 (19)

2022 (450)

*“Religion is often used as a justification and even a weapon for conflict”*

**95** million  
members of Nahdlatul Ulama

**98** years  
since Nahdlatul Ulama was founded.



﴿ 19 ﴾

*Sheikh*

Yahya Cholil Staquf



# Yahya Cholil Staquf

## General Chairman of Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama

Yahya Cholil Staquf serves as General Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) (“Awakening of Scholars”) Central Board. As the world’s largest Muslim organization—with over 90 million members and 21,000 madrasahs—the Nahdlatul Ulama adheres to the traditions of Sunni Islam, and teaches that the primary message of Islam is universal love and compassion.

**Personal Education:** Mr Staquf is descended from a long and illustrious line of Javanese ulema and was educated from earliest childhood in the formal and spiritual sciences of Islam. Mr Staquf later became a disciple of the venerated Islamic scholar and head of the NU Supreme Council, KH Ali Maksum (1915–1989), and of long-time NU Chairman and Indonesia’s first democratically elected head of state, KH Abdurrahman Wahid (1940–2009).

**Head of Expansive Network:** The Nahdlatul Ulama boasts an expansive network that covers 30 regions with 339 branches, 12 special branches, 2,630 representative councils and 37,125 sub-branch representative councils across Indonesia. This network practises the doctrine of *Ahl Al-Sunnah wa Al-Jama’ah*, meaning “people of the Sunnah (practices of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) and the community”. They base their practices on the traditional sources of Islamic jurisprudence—mainly the Qur’an, hadith, and major schools of law. Among its aims are the propagation of Nahdlatul Ulama’s message and also an expansion of its already extensive network of members in Indonesia. This is the basis of many of the organization’s social reform efforts. With a solid structure of central and regional boards, branch and

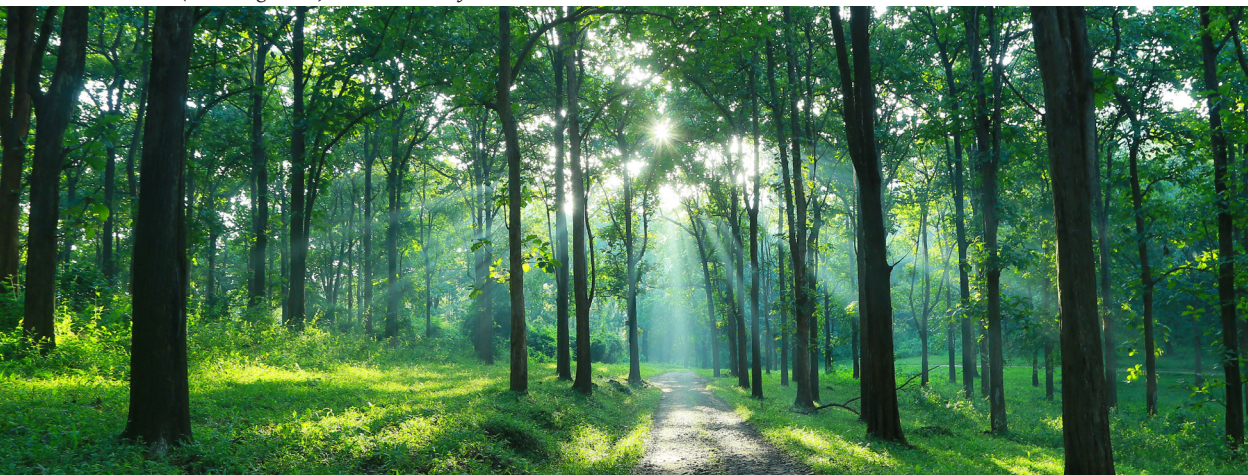
special branch boards, and various advisory councils, Staquf sits at the top of this influential Sunni movement.

**Model of Traditionalism:** With a mainly rural membership base, the Nahdlatul Ulama distinguishes itself from other Islamic organizations in Indonesia by positioning itself as a premier organization of traditional Islam—with an emphasis on education and political engagement based on Islamic principles.

**Social Service:** The Nahdlatul Ulama has made substantial charitable contributions to Indonesian society in the fields of educational development, healthcare, and poverty alleviation. Staquf, like his predecessors, propagates the Nahdlatul Ulama as an organization that is geared toward establishing a secular nation-state, based on a populace of modern and moderate Muslims—with agenda items such as anti-corruption laws and social-reform measures that are deeply rooted in Islamic principles.

**Advisor:** Staquf also served on HE President Joko Widodo’s Presidential Advisory Council, where he advised the President on religious, domestic and international affairs. Staquf co-founded the US-based organization Bayt ar-Rahmah li ad-Da’wa al-Islamiyah Rahmatan li al-‘Alamin (The Home of Divine Grace for Revealing and Nurturing Islam as a Blessing for All Creation), and the Center for Shared Civilizational Values in 2021, both to serve as hubs for the expansion of Nahdlatul Ulama operations in North America, Europe and the Middle East. His work aims to bring the civilizational wisdom of Islam Nusantara to the global stage, countering harsh and violent interpretations of Islam.

*Teak (Tectona grandis) : national tree of Indonesia*



**Country:** Egypt

**Born:** 19 November 1954 (age 70)

**Source of Influence:** Political

**Influence:** President of Egypt

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (21)

2023 (40)

2022 (450 lists)

*"I would never stay in office against the will of the people. My ethics and patriotism do not allow me to do so"*

**6.7** million tonnes  
maximum capacity of Port Said

**116** million  
population of Egypt



20

*His Excellency*

President Abdel Fattah Saeed Al-Sisi

# HE President Abdel Fattah Saeed El-Sisi

## President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Former Field Marshal Abdel Fattah Saeed El-Sisi was sworn into office as the 6th President of Egypt on 8 June 2014, having earlier that year resigned from his post as the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces. As a civilian, and as Deputy Prime Minister, Sisi won the presidential elections held in May 2014.

**Post-Arab Spring:** Former Field Marshal Abdel Fattah Saeed El-Sisi removed Egypt's first democratically elected president (Mohamed Morsi (d. 2019)) from power in 2013 in response to street protests against the Muslim Brotherhood-led government. Outbreaks of violence ensued across Egypt that included the death of many hundreds of protesters at the hands of pro-military police at the Raba'a Al-Adawiya Square in Cairo. Sisi then ran for office himself and was sworn into office as President of Egypt on 8 June 2014.

**Presidential Elections:** Sisi secured a third six-year term, winning 89.6% of the vote in the December 2023 election. This victory extends Sisi's presidency until 2030, after which he is constitutionally barred from running again. He faced minimal competition from three low-profile candidates with the runner-up receiving only 4.5% of the votes. The election was marked by controversy, as leading opposition candidate Ahmed Tantawy withdrew months before the poll, citing intimidation and violence against his campaign. Key issues in the election included Egypt's struggling economy and the ongoing conflict

in Gaza.

**Challenges:** With inflation running at 26%, the currency devalued (1 US dollar is 48 Egyptian pounds compared to 7 pounds when Sisi first came to power) and a huge international debt, economic hardship has been felt by most of the population. Human rights organizations estimate that the number of political prisoners in Egypt ranges between 65,000 to 70,000.

**Mega Projects:** The country's economic hardships have not stopped several mega projects, including the New Administrative Capital, which is in its first phase and has cost over \$45 billion, a new "summer capital" on the north coast, a nuclear power plant, and a sustainable city in the Nile delta, amongst others.

However, critics argue that these initiatives have depleted the country's economic resources and led to unprecedented levels of debt, severely impacting the economy.

**Gaza:** The Rafah Border Crossing is the only crossing point between Egypt and the Gaza Strip and it is heavily guarded as Egypt fears mass displacement of Palestinians from Gaza into Sinai. Egypt, along with Jordan and Qatar, is mediating ceasefire talks between Israel and Hamas. The war has severely affected Egypt's economy, reducing tourism, Suez Canal revenues, and natural gas exports, but it has received major financial support from the UAE, EU and the IMF.

*The Cairo Tower tree, or Zamalek tree, is more than 150 years old. In 1868, Khedive Ismail ordered that it be brought from India and planted there because of its beauty and ability to provide shade. It is one of the oldest Indian trees in Cairo, and according to several sources, it is the only one remaining.*



**Country:** Egypt

**Born:** 3 March 1953 (age 71)

**Source of Influence:** Scholarly, Political

**Influence:** Leading Religious voice in Egypt

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (22)

2023 (20)

2022 (20)

*“Terrorists are criminals, not Muslim activists”*

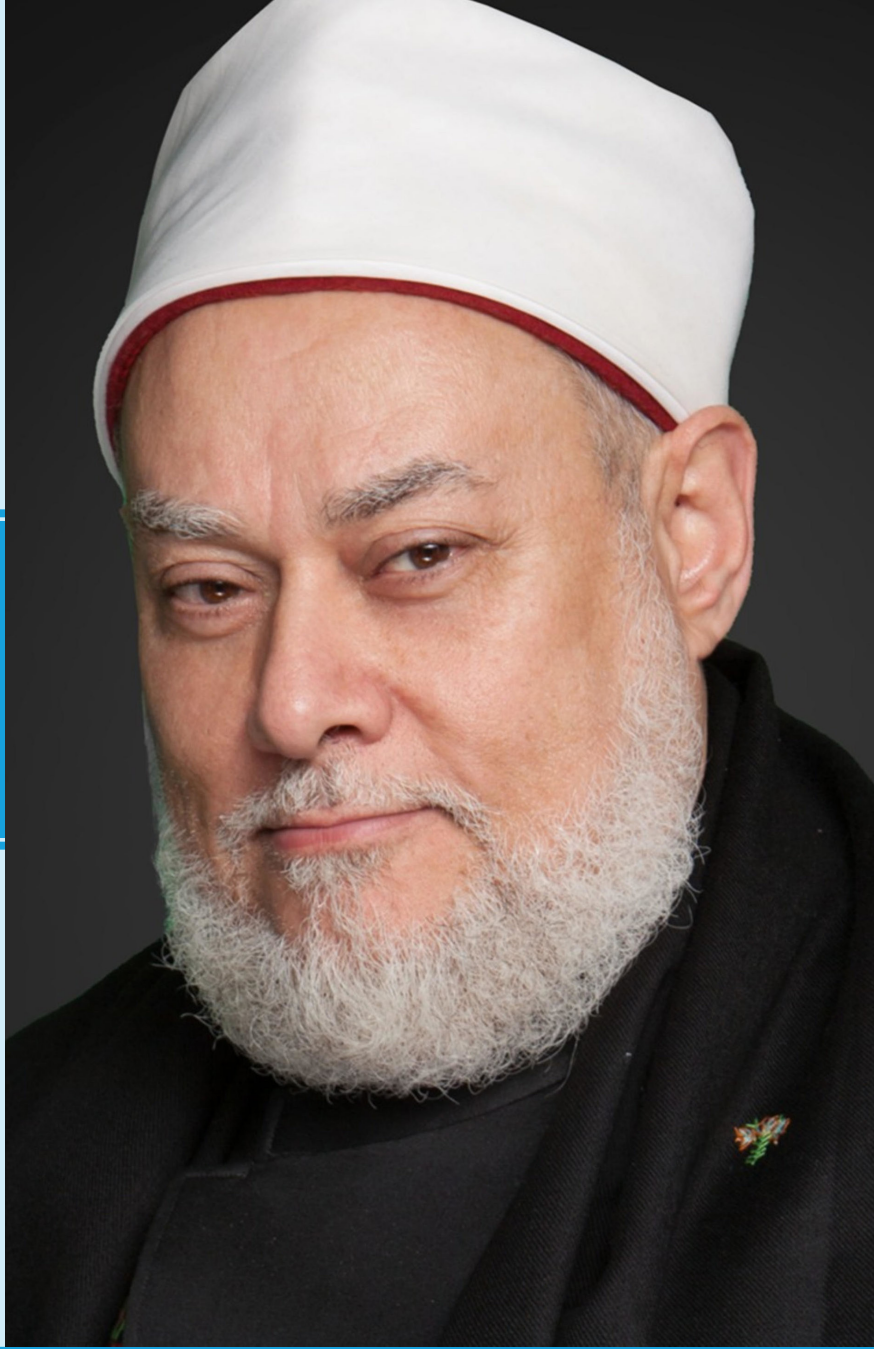
98

million YouTube views

Was  
8<sup>th</sup>

Egypt

Grand Mufti of



21

*His Eminence*

Sheikh Dr Ali Gomaa

# HE Sheikh Dr Ali Gomaa

## Former Grand Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Sheikh Ali Gomaa is the former Grand Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt. He is one of the foremost Islamic scholars in the world. Despite retiring from the post of Grand Mufti of Egypt in 2013, Gomaa has remained active on many fronts and his counsel is more in demand than ever before.

**Egypt's Weight in Islamic Scholarship:** Gomaa's scholarly influence is derived from his position at the centre of many of the most significant institutions of Islamic law in the world. Before becoming Grand Mufti, Gomaa was a professor of jurisprudence at Al-Azhar University—the second oldest university in the world, founded in 975 CE. Gomaa also served as a member of the Fatwa Council. He is currently a member of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy, the highest institute of Islamic law in the Organization of the Islamic Conference—an intergovernmental organization for Muslim-majority countries. Gomaa has authored over 50 books, as well as hundreds of articles. However, in July 2021 the secretariat of the International Union of Muslim Scholars dismissed him, along with Sheikh Abdullah Bin Bayyah and Farouk Hamadeh, from the organization, ostensibly for controversial *fiqh* (jurisprudence) opinions.

**Visit to the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque Controversy:** On 18 April 2012, Sheikh Ali Gomaa, with HRH Prince Ghazi of Jordan, broke what had been a 45-year taboo in some parts of the Islamic World and visited Al-Aqsa Mosque in order to pray there and support the beleaguered Muslim community in Jerusalem. The visit was viewed as controversial in Egypt but set off a change of public opinion in the Islamic World that continues to this day. The Grand Mufti also visited the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which was much appreciated by the Christian community of Jerusalem.

**Personal Popularity:** Gomaa was exceedingly

popular as a mufti and remains ever-popular since his retirement, although some of his political statements and pro-military government stance after the Egyptian Revolution have dampened this support somewhat. Apart from appearing on popular broadcasts and satellite television programmes, he also revived the practice of informal “knowledge circles” at the Al-Azhar Mosque. At his very well-attended Q&A sessions after his Friday sermons, Gomaa makes a point of taking on anyone who tries to simplify or distort Islamic teachings without knowledge of its traditions. This has made him extremely popular with those who vehemently oppose political Islam as well as also making him a target for some extremist Islamists.

**Popularized and Simplified Fatwas:** Gomaa has immense legal influence through his advocacy of Islamic religious edicts (fatwas). When he was Grand Mufti of Egypt, he modernised the process of issuing fatwas in the country. He did this by overhauling the Dar Al-Ifa organization into a dynamic institution with worldwide reach, based on a fatwa council and a system of checks and balances.

**Spiritual Guide:** Ali Gomaa is also currently the Shaykh of the Siddiqiyya Shadhiliyya Sufi Order which he had registered as an official Sufi Order in Egypt in 2018. Although Dr Gomaa carries two other Shadhili chains: one from the late Shaykh Muhammad Zaki al-Din Ibrahim (d. 1998) and Dr. Hasan Abbas Zaki (d. 2014), he chose the order given to him by one of his main teachers: al-Sayyid Abdullah bin Siddiq al-Ghumari (d. 1993). This is a Darqawi branch of the Shadhiliyya whose chain of transmission is known as a chain of scholars and *mujtabids*. The Order is currently operating in six countries and has several thousand followers.

*The Serapium forest initiated by the Egyptian government in the 90s to combat desertification*



**Country:** Yemen

**Born:** 16 April 1971 (age 53)

**Source of Influence:** Scholarly, Lineage, Philanthropy

**Influence:** Preacher, Social Issues

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (23)

2023 (22)

2022 (22)

*"Hatred in your heart for others is always weakness"*

1991<sup>CE</sup>

began dawah in Yemen

10

age began studying under teachers



22

*Sheikh Habib*

*Ali Zain Al Abideen Al-Jifri*

# Sheikh Habib Ali Zain Al-Abideen Al-Jifri

## Director General of Tabah Foundation, UAE

Tracing his lineage to the family of Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam and cousin of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Habib Ali Zain Al-Abideen Al-Jifri is a leading Islamic scholar and prominent speaker in the Muslim world. Al-Jifri is Director General of the Tabah Foundation in the UAE, member of the board of Dar al-Mustafa in Yemen, member of the Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan, and is affiliated with various other international Islamic organizations.

**Beginnings:** Habib Ali was born in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to a family with ancestral roots in Yemen. From his early childhood he was nurtured in the Islamic sciences by distinguished teachers, starting with his mother's great aunt, Safiyya bint Hasan Al-Jifri, a scholar of Islamic sciences and a spiritual educator.

**Ba Alawi school:** Al-Jifri is part of a tradition that has been based in Yemen for over 1,000 years. His numerous teachers include the late scholars and spiritual masters Habib Abdul-Qadir bin Ahmad Al-Saqqaf and Habib Ahmad Mashhur bin Taha Al-Haddad, as well as the current leader of the Ba Alawi, Sheikh Habib Umar (see p. ). Habib Ali often teaches at Dar al-Mustafa in Tarim, Yemen, and also travels all

over the world meeting his students and giving lectures. Al-Jifri's counselling is also in demand, and his spiritual insights have left a huge impression on many. His guidance is based on incorporating as much of the sunnah into one's daily life as one can.

**Think Tank:** Al-Jifri founded the privately funded philanthropic Tabah Foundation for Islamic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi, a non-profit institution that is a source of reputable work in Islamic research and thought. It applies traditional religious principles to analyse contemporary issues. Some of these have inevitably become controversial such as when he made statements against popular revolutions during the Arab Spring due to his belief that the preservation of peace and reducing bloodshed is paramount.

**Worldwide Following:** Habib Ali's popularity has grown enormously over the past few years with over 15 million followers on different social media platforms. His inspirational speeches often leave many in tears, and his smile and gentleness touch all who meet him. He is constantly in demand and visits people from all socioeconomic levels, travelling the globe regularly. Despite not speaking English, he is in huge demand by English-speaking Muslims.

*Ghaf Tree (Prosopis cineraria), national tree of UAE*



**Country:** Türkiye

**Born:** 15 September 1971 (age 53)

**Source of Influence:** Political

**Influence:** Head of Turkish Intelligence

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

2024 (24)

2023 (450 lists)

2022 (450 lists)

*“sense-perception is not only the 'weakest' form of perception but also corresponds to the lowest level of existence”*

**10** years

adviser to President Erdoğan

**4** million

followers on social media



ۛ 23 ۛ

*Doctor*

**Ibrahim Kalin**



# Dr Ibrahim Kalin

## Director of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization

Dr Kalin is a scholar and intellectual who has been a long-term confidant of President Erdoğan, previously holding the posts of Senior Advisor to the President and Presidential Spokesperson. He was appointed head of the Turkish National Intelligence Agency (MIT) in June 2023.

**Scholar:** After completing his initial university studies in his birthplace, Istanbul, Kalin earned an MA from the International Islamic University of Malaysia and undertook his PhD from George Washington University under the supervision of Islamic philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr. His dissertation was later published by the OUP entitled: *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā adrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition*. Dr Kalin has published widely on Islamic philosophy, relations between Islam and the West, and Turkish foreign policy.

**Academic:** From 2002 to 2005 he was a faculty member at the Department of Religious Studies at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts before becoming the founder and director of the SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research based in Ankara, Türkiye (2005–2009). He also served as a Fellow at Georgetown University.

**Political Confidant:** Kalin was introduced to government in 2009 by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who is also an academic. Despite Davutoğlu

falling out with President Erdoğan, Kalin not only stayed, but ended up becoming an even more key figure. He has become a long-term confidant of Erdoğan and has served as Presidential Spokesperson and Senior Adviser to the President from 2014 till 2023. Kalin has taken the lead on several diplomatic efforts in recent years, showing his skills in negotiating complex issues during the Syrian conflict with major powers such as Russia, the US, and Iran to establish ceasefire agreements and initiate peace talks. He has also been heavily involved in Türkiye's relationship with the European Union (EU).

**Head of The National Intelligence Agency (MIT):** Kalin's appointment was met with surprise in certain quarters due to his lack of military background. However, others view his unique experiences and intellectual proficiency across various fields as a seamless fit for meeting the growing demands of modern intelligence agencies, characterised by heightened complexity and multidisciplinary challenges. Since his appointment in June 2023, he hasn't posted publicly to his substantial social media followers.

**Musician:** His passion for folk music has propelled him into becoming a proficient bağlama player, mastering the intricacies of this long-necked lute traditionally employed in Ottoman classical music. His performances on YouTube, both playing the instrument and singing, have garnered millions of views.

*A 2,020-year-old olive tree in Manisa is thought to be the world's third oldest tree*



**Country:** United States

**Born:** 1 January 1960 (age 64)

**Source of Influence:** Preacher,  
Social Issues

**Influence:** Scholarly, leading  
Islamic voice for English-speaking  
Muslims

**School of Thought:** Traditional  
Sunni

2024 (25)

2023 (23)

2022 (23)

*"The weak are dominated by their  
ego, the wise dominate their ego,  
and the intelligent are in a constant  
struggle against their ego."*

17

age when he converted to Islam

2008<sub>CE</sub>

is the year he co-founded  
Zaytuna College



24

*Sheikh*

Hamza Yusuf Hanson

# Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson

## Teacher and Co-Founder of Zaytuna College

Hamza Yusuf Hanson is one of the most influential Islamic figures in the Western world. He serves as President of Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California, the first accredited Muslim liberal arts college in the U.S., and many consider him one of the foremost authorities on Islam in the West.

**Islamic Scholar:** In 1977, at the age of eighteen, Hanson converted to Islam. Thereafter, he spent over a decade learning Arabic and studying the Islamic sciences with some of the Muslim world's most prominent and well-respected scholars. He pursued knowledge in several countries, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Morocco, and West Africa. In Mauritania, he studied and lived with the renowned polymath Murabit Al-Hajj Ould Fahfu (d. 2018). He continues to study with scholars and has earned several *ijazaat* in traditional Islamic sciences. In 1988, Hanson returned to the U.S. and began teaching Islamic Studies and leading Friday prayers at various mosques. He has also translated several Arabic works of prose and poetry. In addition to his traditional studies, he later earned a PhD from UC Berkeley/GTU in history with an emphasis on North- and West-African intellectual history; he also holds undergraduate degrees in Religious Studies, English, and Nursing.

**Speaker and Educator:** A popular public lecturer, Hanson has given many broadly viewed interviews. Through speeches and teaching short intense study programmes, including the Deen Intensive, Rihla, and Reviving the Islamic Spirit, he has helped strengthen traditional Sunni orthodoxy in the West.

A whole generation of English-speaking Muslims were inspired by his work to study Arabic and Islamic sciences. Many of his students have become teachers in their own right. His work has contributed to the development of a more confident and faithful Islamic identity in the vertiginous times of the 21st century.

**Advisor:** Hanson was a member of the WEF's C-100 under the leadership of Lord Carrey, the Archbishop of Canterbury. In addition, Hanson served as a U.S. Federal Commissioner on Human Rights. He was also a member of the UN, Vatican, and Religions for Peace initiative, Ethics in Action. Currently, under the leadership of his teacher and primary mentor, Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, Hanson serves as a member of the UAE's Supreme Fatwa Council and Vice-President for the UAE-based Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies. He also serves as a board member for the Classical Learning Test and the Acton Institute. During various crises, he has been called on to advise officials in several governments: this has opened him up to attacks from certain quarters of the Muslim community.

**Controversies:** Despite being in the public eye for over three decades, Hanson has managed to stay clear of most controversies and continues to reach a large, diverse audience. Some personal attacks have questioned his advice to a U.S. president, his ties to the UAE government, and the like, yet he remains one of the most beloved scholars in the world. Arguably, he is one of the most intellectually widely read and formidable Western Muslim scholars today.

*Large white oak (Quercus alba) in a Revolutionary War-era cemetery*



**Country:** Senegal  
**Born:** 1955 (age 69)  
**Influence:** Spiritual leader of Tijani Muslims  
**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni  
2024 (26)  
2023 (24)  
2021 (24)

*"You can only go to Paradise or to Hellfire, and you have to work for Paradise in this life. This is the way, and here is the place to work for reward in the Hereafter"*

1781<sup>CE</sup>

the year the Tijani Tariqa was founded

2001<sup>CE</sup>

the year he was appointed as Senegal's General Commissioner for the Hajj



25

Sheikh

Ahmad Tijani bin Ali Cisse

# Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Ali Cisse

## Leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi Order

Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Ali Cisse is the current spiritual leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi order, a highly influential Islamic order that holds a significant place in Western Africa. The Tijaniyya is recognized as the largest Sufi order in the region, boasting millions of followers who look to Sheikh Tijani Cisse for guidance and leadership in matters of faith and spirituality. His role as a leader extends across national borders, impacting the spiritual lives of Muslims in Senegal and far beyond.

**Leader of Tijani Muslims:** Cisse ascended to the leadership of the Tijaniyya Sufi order following the death of his elder brother, Sheikh Hassan Cisse, in 2008. Sheikh Tijani took on the mantle of leadership and assumed the role of Imam of the Grand Mosque in Medina-Baye, Senegal. The Grand Mosque holds a central place in the spiritual life of the Tijaniyya order and serves as one of Western Africa's most important centres of Islamic leadership. As the Imam of the mosque, Sheikh Tijani plays a crucial role in maintaining the religious, cultural, and spiritual traditions of the Tijani community.

**Lineage and Teachers:** Born in 1955, Sheikh Tijani Cisse is the son of Sheikh Ali Cisse, the closest disciple of Sheikh Ibrahim Niassé, and Fatima Zahra Niassé, Sheikh Ibrahim's daughter. After memorising the Qur'an in Medina-Baye, he began his career as a Qur'an teacher while pursuing his Islamic studies under the direct mentorship of his father and grandfather. He was the last student to receive personal instruction from Sheikh Ibrahim Niassé, focusing on classical Arabic literature and poetry. After his early education, he continued his formal studies in Egypt, where he excelled, earning degrees from Al-Azhar University, including a distinction in Hadith. His educational journey included extensive travels,

where he engaged in religious debates and interfaith dialogue, further solidifying his scholarly credentials.

**Tijani Tariqah:** Sheikh Tijani Cisse is a leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi order, known as the *Fayda Tijaniyya*, which was revitalised by Sheikh Ibrahim Niassé in the 20th century. This spiritual path emphasises direct personal experience of the Divine, strict adherence to the sunnah, and community service. The Grand Mosque in Medina-Baye serves as the spiritual heart of the Tijani community.

**Scholarly Activities:** Sheikh Tijani is known for his scholarly works, including editing and publishing key writings of Sheikh Ibrahim, such as *Kashif al-Ilbas* and *Sa'adat al-Anam*, which are foundational texts for the Tijani order. His scholarly efforts have been recognized by academic and governmental bodies alike, including appointments by the Senegalese government as General Commissioner for the Hajj and as Special Missions Ambassador. His leadership extends beyond religious duties; he also presides over the African American Islamic Institute, a UN-recognized humanitarian organization focused on healthcare, education, and cross-cultural communication.

**Descendent of The Tijaniyya Founder:** The Tijaniyya is a Sufi order founded by Ahmad Al-Tijani Hasani, an Algerian, in the late 18th century. As the spiritual leader of the Tijaniyya, Cisse is considered to be the bearer of a spiritual inspiration called the *Fayda Tijaniyya* ("flood" or "overflow of spiritual grace"), giving him authority to carry on the teachings of Ahmad Al-Tijani Hasani. The Tijanis are characterised by strict following of the sunnah, recitation of spiritual litanies (*aurad*), individually and in gatherings, and an emphasis on developing an inner relationship with God.

*The Baobab Tree (Adansonia digitata), national tree of Senegal*





## Sheikh Usama Al-Sayyid Al-Azhari

Egyptian Minister of Awqaf (Religious Endowments)

**Country:** Egypt

**Born:** 16 July 1976 (age 47)

**Influence:** Scholarly

**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

26

Rank (2024): 30

Rank (2023): 28

Rank (2022): 29

Sheikh Usama Al-Sayyid Al-Azhari was appointed Minister of Awqaf (Religious Endowments) in July 2024. He is an Azhari scholar, preacher, and academic. He teaches Hadith, Logic and Islamic Creed at the renowned Al-Azhar Mosque's Riwaq Al-Atrak in Cairo, Egypt. He also holds a teaching post in the Faculty of Usul Al-Din and Dawah at Al-Azhar University, Egypt.

**Minister of Awqaf:** Sheikh Usama has outlined several key initiatives the Ministry will undertake, including: addressing extremism and related behaviour; instilling national pride; promoting creativity and enhancing the role of Islamic institutions; and working with Dar al-Iftaa, the Sufi Sheikhdom, and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. The aim is to unify efforts behind the Grand Imam, as well as to collaborate with the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This is in order to increase the presence of imams in clubs, youth centres and universities through advocacy campaigns and convoys.

**Peace Activist:** He is widely regarded as one of the most influential voices advocating for, and actively working towards, new interpretations rooted in Islamic tradition, while addressing contemporary realities. In this effort, he has introduced a number of innovative ideas aimed at renewing authentic Islamic perspectives through his scholarly work and publications. Among his contributions are the development of a relational map of Shariah sciences and their connections to other fields of knowledge, the establishment of "Islamic hermeneutics", the revival of the tradition of auditing religious sciences and ensuring their transmission through a verified chain of transmission as a standard of authenticity, and exploring the Qur'anic accommodation of diverse civilizations, among others.



## Sheikh Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi

Leader of the Houthi

**Country:** Yemen

**Born:** 22 May 1979 (age 45)

**Influence:** Political

**School of Thought:** Traditional Shia

27

Rank (2024): 39

Rank (2023): 31

Rank (2022): 33

Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi is the current leader of the Houthi political, religious and militant movement, which is a major political player in Yemen and the region.

**Houthi:** The Houthi movement was established in 1992 by Hussein Badr Al-Din Al-Houthi, a Zaydi Shia scholar and anti-Wahhabi who wrote a number of books criticising Wahhabism and the leading authorities of Yemen. The Zaidis ruled most of Yemen for over 1,000 years until 1962, when they were overthrown by republican revolutionaries.

**Taking Yemen:** Abdul-Malik emerged as a leader after the February 2011 uprising, seized control over Saada and Jawf provinces in 2011 and in September 2014 they stormed the capital Sana'a, seizing a large number of ministries and military facilities. He has driven Al-Qaeda out of the regions which the Houthis have taken.

**Bombing Yemen:** From 2015-2022, Houthi-controlled territories (North Yemen) were subject to aerial bombings by a Saudi-led coalition. This bombing of one of the world's poorest countries led to over 150,000 fatalities and a humanitarian crisis claiming over 200,000 lives, as well as leaving around 70% of the population (27 million) reliant on humanitarian aid, and over a million people infected by cholera.

**Supporting Gaza:** Public support for Gaza has seen regular million-plus rallies in Yemen. Other support has seen the Houthi anti-shipping campaign selectively impose disruptions in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden on ships and cargoes with links to Israel and its supporters. To date they have targeted over 70 vessels, seizing one and sinking two. They have also hit Tel Aviv with a drone. Israeli, USA and UK air forces have bombed Yemen ports and infrastructure in retaliation.

Sheikh Mustafa Hosny

Televangelist

Country: Egypt

Born: 28 August 1978 (age 46)

Influence: Preacher

School of Thought: Traditional  
Sunnī



Rank (2024): 27

Rank (2023): 26

Rank (2022): 28

28



Mustafa Hosny is a televangelist and Islamic preacher who presented his first show in 2004 and has gone on to become a household name.

**Changing careers:** Mustafa Hosny started his career in sales and changed careers to become a full-time preacher after receiving a certification from the Institute of Training Preachers, an affiliate of the Egyptian Awqaf Ministry.

**Preacher:** Mustafa Hosny delivers sermons and lectures worldwide and currently has presented more than 53 programmes on TV and radio. He also delivers weekly sermons and lectures at Yousef El-Sahaby and El-Hosary mosques and Friday sermons at Al-Bilal Mosque compound in Cairo. In 2023 Sheikh Mustafa launched a series of episodes on the biography of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ entitled 'Noor: A Journey Through the Life of the Messenger of God'. The series translates the classical sources of the Seerah and makes them accessible to contemporary Muslims, particularly the young.

**Humanitarian:** Some of his activities include combating drug addiction amongst youth. He is a supporting member for the Children's Cancer Hospital campaign in Cairo and delivers seminars and campaigns for the Life Clear of Smoking Association in Egypt. He also supports blood donation campaigns.

**Social Media:** He has nearly 87 million followers on different social media platforms, including 6.7 million subscribers on YouTube alone where his videos have over 775 million views. He has weekly live broadcasts on social media where he tries to make classical Islamic texts accessible to his viewers. He also devotes a portion of his broadcasts to questions and answers where he answers things from the proper way to pray to questions about personal problems and challenges. His softly spoken style has greatly endeared him to the public.

Sheikh Abdul-Aziz ibn  
Abdullah Aal Al-Sheikh

Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of  
Saudi Arabia

Country: Saudi Arabia

Born: 30 November 1943 (age 81)

Influence: Grand Mufti of Saudi  
Arabia and of Salafis worldwide

School of Thought: Salafi



Rank (2024): 29

Rank (2023): 27

Rank (2022): 26

29

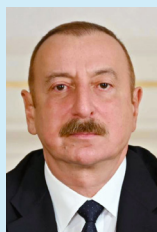


As the Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Aal Al-Sheikh has the highest position of religious authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He is an Islamic scholar based in Makkah and has influence as a leading cleric of the expansive global movement of Salafi Muslims.

**Salafi Lineage:** The Aal Al-Sheikh family in Saudi Arabia traditionally controls the religious and justice establishments. They are descended from Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703–1792), the founder of Wahhabi and Salafi thought, and for 250 years have been closely associated and intermarried with the ruling Al-Saud family.

**Central Figure of Global Salafi Movement:** As Grand Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Al-Sheikh is the leading religious figure of the Saudi-based network of Salafi Muslims. The rulings derived by Al-Sheikh are based heavily on a literal reading of the Qur'an and emphasise the need to strip away past interpretations that have become a part of Muslims' lives. He has publicly criticised Muslim televangelists who encourage Muslims to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries. He has also been robust in his condemnation of Turkish soap operas sweeping the Arab World, calling them distracting practices. He has described DA'ISH as "evil" and called them "the number one enemy of Islam". In 2017, he received praise from an Israeli minister for labelling Hamas a terrorist organization.

**Changing Times:** Religious authorities were instrumental in establishing the Saudi state in 1932, and have wielded immense power since then, although they were barred from commenting on politics without state permission. This influence is diminishing in light of the social changes being brought about through Vision 2030 and so their ability to influence society will have to evolve.



**HE President Ilham Aliyev**  
**Politician**  
**Country:** Azerbaijan  
**Born:** 24 December 1961 (age 63 years)  
**Influence:** Political  
**School of Thought:** Modern Sunni



**Al-Habib Muhammad Luthfi bin Yahya**  
**Preacher**  
**Country:** Indonesia  
**Born:** 10 November 1947 (age 77)  
**Influence:** Scholarly, Spiritual  
**Guide**  
**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

30

Rank (2024): 31  
 Rank (2023): 450 lists  
 Rank (2022): 450 lists

President Ilham Aliyev is the 4th President of Azerbaijan, serving since October 2003, and winning a fifth term in February 2024, securing 92% of the vote. He is the son of Heydar Aliyev, who was president from 1993 to 2003. He is an advocate of a moderate cultural Islam for Azerbaijan's 9.8 million Muslim citizens, about 80% of whom are Shia.

**Early life:** Aliyev completed a PhD in history at Moscow State Institute of International Relations, where he remained as a lecturer from 1985 to 1990. From 1991 to 1994 he was involved in various business enterprises, then became vice president of the Azerbaijan oil and gas company, entering into politics in the late 1990s.

**Prosperity from oil:** Azerbaijan, endowed with abundant oil reserves, has experienced a period of prosperity and stability that has positively impacted its people. The country's economic growth has driven advancements in banking, construction, telecommunications, and particularly in the oil and gas sectors, which serve as pillars of Azerbaijan's economy. These developments have contributed to improved infrastructure, job creation, and enhanced public services, benefiting the broader population.

**Foreign policy:** During President Aliyev's tenure, Azerbaijan strengthened its ties and cooperation with the European Union (EU), developed economic relations with Russia, and cooperated with NATO. He also established close relations with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and was elected the chair of the Turkic Council in 2019.

**Nagorno-Karabakh conflict:** Nagorno-Karabakh, recognized internationally as part of Azerbaijan, has a majority Armenian population and is partially controlled by the breakaway Republic of Artsakh, which is not recognised by any UN member states. A war in 2020 resulted in Azerbaijan's victory.

31

Rank (2024): 33  
 Rank (2023): 30  
 Rank (2022): 32

Habib Luthfi is currently *Ra'is 'Amm Jam'iyyah Abli Thariqah Al-Mu'tabarah Al-Nahdliyah* (Head of the Association of Recognised Sufi Orders), Head of MUI Middle Java, and the spiritual leader of the Ba Alawi *tariqah* in Indonesia. He is also a leading figure in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Muslim organization in the world with over 90 million members.

**Ba Alawi:** The Ba Alawi are descendants of the Prophet ﷺ who migrated to Hadramaut in Yemen early on in Islamic history. They played a major role in bringing Islam to the Far East, including Indonesia and Malaysia, and they hold high prominence to this day. They emphasise the importance of inward sincerity coupled with the study of religious sciences, especially as espoused by Imam Al-Ghazali.

**Seeker of Knowledge:** Habib Luthfi started his quest for knowledge early in life, and first studied under the tutelage of Ba Alawi teachers in Indonesia. He then travelled to Makkah and Madinah for further education and received authorization (*ijazaat*) in all the traditional fields of learning including, hadith, and sufism (*tasawwuf*). His authorization to be a spiritual master comes from more than one *tariqah* (spiritual brotherhood).

**Preacher and Spiritual Guide:** Habib Luthfi is a well-known preacher and has published numerous books on Islamic theology, mysticism, and law. He is also a regular speaker at Islamic conferences and events around the world. Habib Luthfi has established thousands of schools, mosques, and *zawiyahs* (spiritual centres) in Indonesia. He has garnered a following numbering in the millions, emphasising the importance of spiritual practices, particularly the recitation of litanies (*awrad*).



Maulana Tariq Jameel

Scholar and Preacher

Country: Pakistan

Born: 1953 (age 71)

Influence: Scholarly, Preacher

School of Thought: Sunni, Tablighi Jamaat



Sheikh Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi

Scholar and Spiritual Guide

Country: Syria

Born: 7 May 1963 (age 61)

Influence: Scholarly

School of Thought: Sunni



Rank (2024): 34

Rank (2023): 32

Rank (2022): 35

32



Maulana Tariq Jamil is a prominent Deobandi scholar who is also one of the most popular preachers in Pakistan. He belongs to the Tablighi Jamaat group and his lectures focus on the subject of self-purification, avoidance of violence, observance of Allah's commands and pursuing the way of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

**Background:** After completing pre-medical studies, Maulana Tariq was admitted to the King Edward Medical College in Lahore. It was there—under the influence of members of the Tablighi Jamaat—that his focus changed to Islamic education. His Islamic training is from Jamia Arabia, where he studied Qur'an, Hadith, Sufism, Logic, and Islamic Jurisprudence. Maulana Tariq's background in the sciences allows him to explain Islamic matters in a way that appeals to modern urban Muslims. Additionally, his simple lifestyle and eloquence in Urdu, as well as his fluency in Arabic, spread his fame across the Muslim world.

**Tablighi Jamaat:** Tablighi Jamaat is a political missionary movement founded by Muhammad Ilyas Al-Kandhlawi in India in 1927. It focuses on encouraging Muslims not to neglect the basic practices of their faith. It has informal affiliations with the Deobandi movement but targets a more general audience. The sub-continent diaspora have carried its message to nearly every country in the world and its adherents number in the millions. It has annual gatherings in Pakistan and Bangladesh which equally number in the millions.

**Influence:** In addition to running a madrasa in Faisalabad, Pakistan, Maulana Tariq continues to travel extensively and deliver lectures around the world. He has been very effective in influencing all kinds of people, ranging from businessmen and landowners, to ministers, actors, and sports celebrities.

Rank (2024): 35

Rank (2023): 34

Rank (2022): 37

33

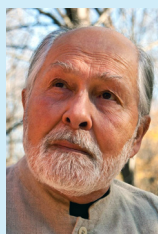


Sheikh Al-Yaqoubi is a widely respected religious scholar who also has a significant spiritual following worldwide. He was appointed as a member of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in 2016.

**Background:** Sheikh Al-Yaqoubi was born in Damascus and was trained in Islamic studies by his father, who was an imam and instructor at the Grand Umayyad Mosque. Sheikh Al-Yaqoubi followed in his father's footsteps teaching in the same mosque and becoming a world-renowned Islamic scholar of theology, jurisprudence, and hadith. He is widely recognized as one of the reliable authorities for the issuing of fatwas in Islam.

**Against Extremism:** He was one of the first scholars to speak against DA'ISH, denouncing its atrocities and showing that its actions are un-Islamic. His book *Refuting ISIS* (now in eight languages) has become essential reading, providing theological arguments against extremists and calling on mainstream, traditional followers to combat them. His criticism of the Syrian government's response to protests made his stay in Syria untenable, so he had to flee the country in 2011, eventually seeking refuge in Morocco where he is still based.

**Educator:** He has trained hundreds of imams and teachers who work in the Arab World, the West, the Far East and South Africa. As a spiritual guide, he focuses on the spiritual well-being of his students, of which he has a significant following in Europe and the USA. He is a charismatic public speaker in both Arabic and English (he also speaks Swedish) and one of the most powerful voices of Islam, making a huge positive impact via his public talks, writings and numerous media appearances worldwide. His public teaching includes readings of the entire collection of hadith in *Sahih Bukhari* and the renowned *Qasida Al-Burda* ('The Poem of the Mantle') of Imam Busiri.



**Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr**  
 Philosopher and Professor  
 Country: United States of America  
 Born: 7 April 1933 (age 91)  
 Influence: Scholarly  
 School of Thought: Traditional Shia



**HE Samia Suluhu Hassan**  
 President of Tanzania  
 Country: Tanzania  
 Born: 27 January 1960 (age 64)  
 Influence: Political,  
 Administration of Religious Affairs  
 School of Thought: Sunni

34

Rank (2024): 36  
 Rank (2023): 35  
 Rank (2022): 38

Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr is University Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University. He remains one of the most influential Muslim scholars in the world for his work on Islamic tradition and philosophy. He is the only Muslim to be included in the Library of Living Philosophers and has written over 50 books and over 500 articles.

**Background and Career:** Nasr was born in Iran and raised in a house of scholars and physicians. He was sent to school in the USA, won a scholarship to MIT for undergraduate studies in physics, and obtained a doctorate in the history of science and philosophy from Harvard. He returned to Iran in 1958 where he swiftly rose through academic ranks to become Vice-Chancellor of Tehran University and then President of Aryamehr University. The 1979 Iranian revolution forced Nasr to leave Iran and so he settled in the USA.

**Reviver of Tradition:** Nasr's work has covered the most important areas of contemporary Muslim thought from classical Islamic philosophy, Islamic science, Sufism, critique of modernity, interfaith relations, Islam-West relations, and the environmental crisis. Nasr was the first Muslim scholar ever to be invited to give the prestigious Gifford Lectures, which were later published as *Knowledge and the Sacred*. Books such as *The Encounter of Man and Nature* (1968) critique the rise of a secular, modern conception of nature as inert matter to be conquered by modern technology, and attempt to revive a sacred notion of nature.

**Legacy:** For Nasr, the quest for knowledge, specifically knowledge which "liberates and delivers him from the fetters and limitations of earthly existence", has been and continues to be the central concern and determinant of his intellectual life. His work has helped to introduce the Islamic tradition to a wider audience and to promote understanding between different cultures and religions.

35

Rank (2024): 37  
 Rank (2023): 38  
 Rank (2022): HM

Hassan is the current President of Tanzania, having assumed the post after the death of the former President in March 2021.

**Politician:** Born in 1960 in the Sultanate of Zanzibar, she ran for public office in 2000 and was elected as a special seat member to the Zanzibar House of Representatives. In 2010, she was elected to the National Assembly and was appointed as the Minister of State for Union Affairs. In 2015, she became the first female vice-president in the history of Tanzania after John Magufuli was elected president. The same pair won the 2020 elections.

**President:** After Magufuli's death in 2021, she was sworn in as his successor, becoming Tanzania's first female President. Among her first actions as President were enacting nationwide mandates to curb the spread of covid-19 in the country. She publicly took the vaccination and encouraged others to do so, in stark contrast to her predecessor. She has consolidated her position in office and been praised for her approach to encouraging investment and tourism and diffusing tensions with neighbours, especially with Kenya over Bagamoyo Port. She has continued in the same vein domestically as well, lifting the ban on political rallies and activities, releasing the opposition leader and others from prison, and reversing other measures her predecessor enacted.

**Key Challenges:** The economic reforms have bolstered the economy and her leadership style has increased confidence all round. Tanzania's GDP growth rate has averaged 6% per year since Hassan took office, inflation has fallen and foreign exchange reserves have increased. Tourism has also seen record increases. Some constitutional reforms were passed in March 2024, but more critical ones have been delayed till after the 2025 general elections.

HH Shah Karim Al-Hussayni  
The Aga Khan IV  
Country: France  
Born: 13 December 1936 (age 88)  
Influence: Leader of Nizari Ismailis  
School of Thought: Modernist  
Shia, Ismaili, Nizari



HE Sheikh Uthman Taha  
Calligrapher  
Country: Syria  
Born: 1934 (age 90)  
Influence: Calligrapher  
School of Thought: Sunni



Rank (2024): 32  
Rank (2023): 29  
Rank (2022): 30

36



Shah Karim Al-Hussayni, also known simply as the Aga Khan (Imamate: 1957-present), is the leader of the Shia sect of Muslims known as the Nizari Ismailis. For 10–15 million Nizari Ismaili Muslims the Aga Khan is the 49th hereditary Imam, with lineage ascending back to Ali, the cousin of the Prophet Muhammad. ❁

**Hereditary Leader of Ismailis:** The Aga Khan, a hereditary title bestowed upon the Imam by the Shah of Persia in the mid-19th century, derives his position of authority from his lineage. At the age of 21, the Aga Khan bypassed his father and uncle to become the 4th Aga Khan and 49th Imam, a choice that his grandfather made because he felt the community needed a leader “who has been brought up and developed during recent years and in the midst of the new age, and who brings a new outlook on life to his office”.

**Unparalleled Philanthropist:** The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a collection of over 200 development and humanitarian agencies that work to improve the lives of people in over 30 countries. The network is widely known for its architectural and cultural work, including projects that revitalise historic cities. Some projects include the renovation of the Old City of Aleppo and the Al-Azhar Park in Cairo. The Aga Khan’s foundation maintains a strong and enduring presence in developing countries: building health care capacity, promoting economic development in rural areas, and helping improve educational opportunities. The AKDN is particularly influential in Central Asia, where it works in areas that are often neglected by other organizations. The period from July 2017 to July 2018 was designated the Aga Khan’s Diamond Jubilee marking the 60th year of his reign.

Rank (2024): 38  
Rank (2023): 36  
Rank (2022): 39

37



Uthman Taha is an internationally acclaimed Arabic calligrapher who has handwritten the *Mushaf Al-Madinah*, which is the copy of the Qur’an issued by the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur’an, and thus read by hundreds of millions of Muslims.

**Background:** Sheikh Taha was born in 1934 near Aleppo, Syria. He developed a passion for calligraphy when very young, but had to wait until he moved to Damascus (where he gained a BA in Shariah at Damascus University) before he met the chief calligrapher in Syria, Muhammad Badawi Al-Diyarani, and the Iraqi calligrapher, Hashim Al-Baghdadi. He then travelled to Istanbul, where he met the most celebrated calligrapher of the time, Hamid Al-Amidi, from whom he received certification.

**Copying the Qur’an:** The written copy of the Qur’an is known as a *mushaf*, and it took Taha approximately three years to copy one out. He wrote his first copy in 1970 and in total has written out over ten copies. The most significant one was the one assigned to him in 1988 by the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur’an in Madinah. This copy is the one printed by the King Fahd Complex and distributed to millions of pilgrims every year. It is the most common copy of the Qur’an available worldwide. Taha has copied out six different textual variants including *Warsh* (used in Morocco and Algeria), *Hafs* (worldwide), *Duri* (Africa and Sudan), and *Qalun* (Libya).



**Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi**  
 President of Ennahda Party  
**Country:** Tunisia  
**Born:** 1941 (age 83)  
**Influence:** Political, Scholarly  
**School of Thought:** Sunni



**Mohamed Salah**  
 Footballer  
**Country:** Egypt  
**Born:** 15 June 1992 (age 32)  
**Influence:** Celebrities and Sports  
**School of Thought:** Sunni

38

Rank (2024): 40  
 Rank (2023): 37  
 Rank (2022): 40

Ghannouchi is one of the world's leading Islamic thinkers and one of the most influential Arab politicians in the post-Arab Spring period. Authoring over 20 books, he has led a life filled with imprisonment, exile, and governance.

**Politics:** Ghannouchi co-founded Ennahda Movement ("Renaissance") in the 1970s and was imprisoned several times before being forced into exile. Ennahda is a political party based on Islamic values and supports the concept of a multi-party democracy. In 2012 he received the Chatham House Prize for "the successful compromises each achieved during Tunisia's democratic transition" and in 2016 he received the Jamnalal Bajaj Award for "promoting Gandhian values outside India".

**Post-Arab Spring:** With the fall of President Ben Ali, Ghannouchi returned to Tunisia in January 2011 having spent 20 years in exile. He led the Ennahda Party to victory in the October 2011 national elections. In 2014, Ghannouchi quit government and handed power over to a technocratic government. When elections were held later that year, Ennahda, without Ghannouchi leading them, came second to the Nidaa Tounes party. The 2019 elections produced a deeply fragmented parliament with the government collapsing just five months into its term. Ghannouchi, who was elected speaker of parliament, narrowly won a vote of confidence in July 2020.

**Imprisonment Again:** After parliament was suspended in 2021 by democratically elected President Saied, many opposition leaders started being arrested. Ghannouchi's turn came in April 2023 and he was sentenced to a year in prison on terrorism-related charges. In February 2024, he was sentenced along with his son-in-law to three years in prison for illicit foreign financing. In July 2024, his sentence to three years in prison was confirmed by the Criminal Chamber of the Judicial and Financial Unit.

39

Rank (2024): 41  
 Rank (2023): 39  
 Rank (2022): 41

Mohamed Salah is an Egyptian football player of global fame with over 98 million social media followers. Like many sporting stars, he is an icon and inspiration for millions.

**International Player:** Salah started his career in the Egyptian Premier League in 2010 before moving to Switzerland, the UK, Italy and then the UK again. Salah enjoyed the most successful season of his career with Liverpool FC in 2017/18. He broke many records and won many accolades. He also helped Egypt qualify for the World Cup. The 2018/19 season saw more success with Liverpool FC being runners-up in the English Premier League, and crowned 2019 European Champions and World Club Champions. The 2019/20 season saw the end of a 30-year wait for Liverpool to become champions of the English league again.

**Popularity:** His affable nature and polite manners have won him many fans across the globe, and none more so than in his native country of Egypt where he has donated to various charitable causes. In the March 2018 Egyptian presidential elections, over a million people struck out the two names vying for the presidency and inserted Mohamed Salah's name, making him an unofficial runner-up in the election. His down-to-earth nature has shown itself in chance meetings with fans and acts of kindness towards those in need. He has over 98 million followers on social media and now has a wax model in Madame Tussauds.

**Singing in the Terraces:** His footballing exploits during his time at Liverpool FC have had the unprecedented effect of football fans singing positive songs about Muslims. "If he's good enough for you, he's good enough for me. If he scores another few, then I'll be Muslim too. Sitting in the mosque, that's where I wanna be! Mo Salah-la-la-la, la-la-la-la-la-la-la."

Sheikh Muqtada Sadr

Scholar and Politician

Country: Iraq

Born: 4 August 1974 (age 50)

Influence: Political, Social Issues

School of Thought: Shia



Maulana Nazur Rahman

Amir of Tablighi Jamaat

Country: Pakistan

Born: 1929 (age 95)

Influence: Preacher,

Administration of Religious Affairs

School of Thought: Sunni



Rank (2024): 42

Rank (2023): 41

Rank (2022): 42

40



The son of the late Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Sadiq Al-Sadr, and son-in-law of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr, Muqtada is a highly influential leader who inherited control over large social institutions that serve millions in the slums of Baghdad.

**Serving the Poor:** He has focussed on serving Iraq's poor Shia Muslims and has had complete freedom to work in many parts of Iraq, especially Sadr City, a district in Baghdad named after his father. He provides access to healthcare, food, and clean water. He has raised issues of corruption, high unemployment and poor government services.

**Politics:** He gained prominence after the US invasion of Iraq by creating the Mahdi Army, an armed insurgency movement that formed its own courts and system of law enforcement. This is now known as Saraya Al-Salam. Through it he has concentrated on campaigning against corruption in Iraq, criticising the government openly about this. He has worked for Shia-Sunni unity, and in 2017 called for Syrian president Bashar Al-Assad to step down, and also met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

**Power-Broker:** The Sadrist-led coalition won 73 seats in the 2021 elections, beating the Iranian-backed coalition, but he was unable to form a government, and so Sadr withdrew his coalition and quit politics a year later. There were violent clashes between the supporters of the two coalitions which led to fears of an all-out, intra-Shia civil war, but Sadr played a prominent role in preventing this. He still influences policies through his power on the streets. With parliamentary elections in 2025, there are signs that he will re-enter the political field.

Rank (2024): 43

Rank: (2023) 42

Rank (2022): 43

41



Maulana Nazur Rahman is the 4th Amir of the Pakistani Tablighi Jamaat. He succeeded Hajji Abdul-Wahhab who passed away in November 2018, age 96.

**Leader:** Maulana Nazur Rahman previously served as Deputy Amir, and was one of three individuals named by his predecessor as a potential successor. He now heads the Pakistani chapter of the Tablighi Jamaat, a global Islamic organization dedicated to reminding Muslims of their religious obligations.

**Dawah:** The Tablighi Jamaat is active in over 150 countries and is known for organizing small groups of followers who travel to Muslim communities, encouraging them to uphold their religious duties. This practice of *dawah*, or inviting others to fulfill their religious responsibilities, is regarded as a cornerstone of the faith, helping the Tablighi Jamaat build a massive membership base numbering in the hundreds of millions. The organization has deep connections to the prominent Islamic institution, Darul Uloom Deoband in India, where its founder, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhelvi, studied before establishing a following in Pakistan.

**Mass Appeal:** The Tablighi Jamaat enjoys mass appeal among Pakistanis, diaspora South Asians, and beyond, drawing in a range of followers, including notable Muslim leaders, politicians, actors, and sports stars. Its broad acceptance is partly due to its apolitical stance and its identity as a spiritual revivalist movement that condemns violence and distances itself from any militant groups. Annual gatherings in Raiwind, Pakistan, draw close to 2 million participants, while those in Biswa, Bangladesh, attract over 3 million, reflecting the organization's significant reach and enduring influence.



Dr Timothy Winter (Sheikh Abdal Hakim Murad)

Scholar

Country: UK

Born: 1960 (age 64)

Influence: Scholarly, Preacher, Administration of Religious Affairs

School of Thought: Sunni



HE Ibrahim Saleh Al-Hussaini

Scholar

Country: Nigeria

Born: 12 May 1938 (age 86)

Influence: Scholarly, Administration of Religious Affairs

School of Thought: Sunni

42

Rank (2024): 44

Rank (2023): 44

Rank (2021): 45

Professor Timothy Winter, also known as Sheikh Abdal Hakim Murad, is an academic who has been actively involved in Islamic initiatives globally over the past four decades.

**Academic:** He is the Sheikh Zayed Lecturer of Islamic Studies in the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge University and Director of Studies in Theology at Wolfson College. He has published and contributed to numerous academic works on Islam and among his best-known works are translations from Imam Al-Ghazali's *Ihya'*, a series of aphorisms (*Commentary on the Eleventh Contentions*) and his most recent book, *Travelling Home: Essays on Islam in Europe* which was published in 2020.

**Educator:** He is the founder of the Cambridge Muslim College, which has offered Diploma courses for British Dar Al-Ulum graduates and now has an accredited BA programme which is offered to graduate religious leaders who are confident, competent and conversant with the issues of the age. He is a much sought-after speaker and contributes regularly to the media and is fluent in several languages. Hundreds of YouTube videos of his lectures and talks form an important source of knowledge for English-speaking Muslims. His Paradigms of Leadership lecture series focuses on exemplary figures in Islamic history and has proved to be particularly popular.

**Cambridge Mosque:** Professor Winter has been the main force behind the decade-long project to build the Cambridge Central Mosque. The mosque represents an authentic Islamic design contextualised to its location and times. It is Europe's first eco-mosque, having been designed with a high degree of environmental sustainability. It also incorporates a café and meeting rooms for use by the whole community. The mosque opened in April 2019 and has taken its place as an iconic standard for all places of worship in the UK.

43

Rank (2024): 45

Rank (2023): 45

Rank (2022): 47

Sheikh Dr Ibrahim Saleh Al-Hussaini is currently the head of the Supreme Council for Fatwa and Islamic Affairs in Nigeria and a member of the Muslim Council of Elders which embraces prominent scholars.

**Early Studies:** Sheikh Ibrahim was born in Borno State in north-eastern Nigeria in 1938 and started his quest for knowledge at a very young age by accompanying his father, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Salih bin Yunus Al-Nawwy. He lost his father at the age of seven, and completed his initial studies at the Supreme Islamic Institute in Nigeria and then studied at the hands of renowned scholars in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, India, Pakistan, Senegal, Niger and Sudan.

**Scholar:** Sheikh Ibrahim lectures in the fields of *tafsir* (exegesis) and hadith as well as Islamic Sciences, jurisprudence and ethics. He has authored over 100 written works. He has held several significant positions, some of which are: founder and mentor of the Islamic Renaissance Organization, Adviser to the Federal Government on its Islamic Affairs since 1992, Assistant Secretary-General for African Affairs in the World Islamic People's Leadership 1989, among others.

**Current:** He opened the Sheikh Sharif Ibrahim Saleh Islamic Centre, which focuses on teaching and research. Its aim is to "promote a better understanding of contemporary challenges and how to face and handle such challenges in today's world".

HE Mullah Haibatullah  
Akhundzada

Leader of the Taliban

Country: Afghanistan

Born: 1 January 1966 (age 58)

Influence: Leader of Taliban which governs 42 million

School of Thought: Deobandi/  
Taliban



Rank (2024): 46

Rank (2023): 49

Rank (2022): 50

44



Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada was named the leader of the Taliban in 2016 after a US drone strike killed the previous leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour. Akhundzada is known primarily as a religious leader who ran schools from which many of the Taliban have graduated. He is rarely seen in public and there are no confirmed video recordings or photos of him.

**Mujahideen and Taliban 1.0:** Akhundzada is a former member of the Mujahideen, who fought against the Soviet Union's invasion during the 1980s. However, during that time, he was known more for his religious guidance rather than military leadership. He continued in the position of religious counsellor during the formation of the Taliban in the 1990s and, after the Taliban captured the western Farah province, he was put in charge of reducing crime in the area. Later on, he took on the position of head of the military court, arbitrating disputes among Taliban members. After the US invasion in 2001, he became both head of the Taliban's council of religious scholars, and a teacher in a village near the Pakistani border for 15 years..

**Taliban 2.0:** The Taliban regained power in Afghanistan in August 2021 after the collapse of the US-backed Afghan government, but the new regime remains unrecognised internationally. Western countries have also imposed sanctions and banking restrictions, including freezing \$7 billion of Afghan central bank assets. The Taliban have brought security and peace to the country, repaired infrastructure like transport routes and waterworks, and reduced corruption in customs and tax collection. Their strict anti-narcotics campaign has significantly cut opium production. They have also imposed severe restrictions on women's and girls' rights, including bans on secondary and university education. Political parties have been banned, and journalists face severe restrictions.

Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas  
Attar Qadiri

Preachers & Spiritual Guides

Country: Pakistan

Born: 12 July 1950 (age 74)

Influence: Spiritual guide and preacher

School of Thought: Traditional  
Sunni Bareilvi



Rank (2024): 47

Rank (2023): 50

Rank (2022): HM

45

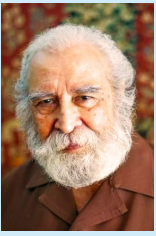


Sheikh Qadiri is an Islamic scholar belonging to the Qadri Razawi order and is the leader of Dawat-e-Islami, a global religious organization spread over 195 countries and operating in over 100,00 mosques and Islamic centres. Sheikh Ilyas Qadiri studied for 22 years under the former Grand Mufti of Pakistan, Sheikh Mufti Waqar ud-Din Qadri Razavi. He has authored over 30 books, including *Faizan-e-Sunnat*, on the merits of good deeds

**The Bareilvis:** Dawat-e-Islami was formed by followers of the Bareilvi school. Bareilvis follow the teachings of Imam Ahmed Raza Khan (1856-1921), a polymath known reverentially as Ala Hazrat, who left a huge corpus of writings. A key message of this corpus is having sufficient veneration of the Prophet ﷺ and it is the perceived lack of this which has often led to criticism of the Tablighi Jamaat and the Deobandi movements, despite all following the Sunni Hanafi school of jurisprudence. Imam Ahmad Raza was buried in his hometown, Bareilly, from which his movement takes its name.

**Dawat-e-Islami:** Ilyas Qadiri was head of the youth wing of Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) when he was chosen to head the newly formed Dawat-e-Islami in 1981 in Karachi. This movement quickly spread to all parts of Pakistan and soon all around the world.

**Global Following:** The subcontinent diaspora has carried the movement globally and it is estimated that it has over 200 million followers in over 195 countries. It is non-political, emphasising the love of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the key component of faith. It centres on the propagation of Islamic knowledge and manages two main activities: the Jamiat-ul-Madina chain of religious schools, and the non-commercial Madani TV channel.



**Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas**  
**Scholar**  
**Country:** Malaysia  
**Born:** 5 September 1931 (age 93)  
**Influence:** Scholarly  
**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni



**Dr Amr Khaled**  
**Preacher and Social Activist**  
**Country:** Egypt  
**Born:** 5 Sept 1967 (age 57)  
**Influence:** Media, televangelist with a popular website and large social media following  
**School of Thought:** Traditional Sunni

46

Rank (2024): 48  
 Rank (2023): HM  
 Rank (2022): HM

Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas was born in Bogor, West Java. He received his early education in Sukabumi and Johor Bahru. He later studied at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, England and, subsequently, at the University of Malaya, McGill University (MA) and the University of London (PhD), focusing on Islamic philosophy, theology and metaphysics.

**Scholar:** Tan Sri Syed Naquib has written over 30 books in the fields of Islamic philosophy, theology and metaphysics, history, literature, art and civilization, and religion and education. He is among the few contemporary scholars who is also thoroughly rooted in the traditional Islamic sciences. His magnum opus is *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* and his latest book (2023) is *Islām: The Covenants Fulfilled*.

**Institutions:** As a scholar of Islam, Tan Sri Syed Naquib has made significant contributions to the contemporary world of Islam in the domains of the Islamization of contemporary knowledge and of Muslim education. He was responsible for the conceptualization of the Islamic University, which he initially formulated at the First World Conference on Muslim Education, held in Makkah (1979). In 1987, Tan Sri Syed Naquib founded and directed the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), which is a major, global academic institution. He has inspired a generation of new scholars including Professor Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, who is the current holder of The Distinguished Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas Chair of Islamic Thought at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).

47

Rank (2024): 49  
 Rank (2023): 47  
 Rank (2022): 49

Amr Khaled has been a televangelist to the Islamic world since 1998. He communicates through his TV shows and web campaigns using Islamic ethics in order to inspire, foster community development, tolerance and inter-cultural relations.

**Popular Media Figure:** Part of Khaled's influence derives from the fact that he appeals to the common person. He holds a degree in accounting, and has no formal religious education, wears suits and ties, and has a clean-shaven face except for a trimmed moustache—everything you do not expect from a Muslim preacher. Khaled is credited with the launch of the first Muslim reality TV show *Mujaddidun* on Dubai Television. His website is translated from Arabic into nearly 20 languages and his videos have racked up over 383 million views on YouTube. He has over 46 million subscribers on his various social media.

**Community Development:** Khaled's goal is to encourage community development in the Muslim world by its own people with religious faith as the guiding inspiration—something he believes should be linked to interfaith dialogue, tolerance and moderation. The break-up of communities is something Khaled sees as responsible for the malaise in the Muslim World, and something he believes puts the future of young people in jeopardy. One programme he launched to realise this objective of community development was *Life Makers*, which had the stated goal of encouraging youth to work in charity. The show was a great hit and expanded into one of the most popular charity organizations in Egypt.



Professor Mustafa Abu Sway  
Scholar

Country: Palestine

Born: 1958 (age 66)

Influence: Scholarly activity, social and political

School of Thought: Traditional Sunni



Yahya Sinwar

Chairman of Hamas Political Bureau

Country: Palestine

Born: 1962 (age 62)

Influence: Social and political

School of Thought: Traditional Sunni



Rank (2024): 50

Rank (2023): 450 lists

Rank (2022): 450 lists

48



Professor Abu Sway is a scholar who lectures globally as well as in the heart of Jerusalem, Palestine, at Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, where he also reads from Imam Ghazali's *Ihya' Ulum ud-Din*, making it accessible to English-speaking Muslims. He is a member of the Hashemite Fund for the Restoration of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, and the Islamic Waqf Council in Jerusalem.

**Scholar:** Professor Abu Sway earned his PhD from Boston College (1993), with his dissertation entitled: *The Development of Al-Ghazali's Genetic Epistemology*. He is author of three books on Imam Al-Ghazali: *Islamic Epistemology: The Case of Al-Ghazali*, *Fatawa Al-Ghazali* (Arabic) and *A Treasury of Al-Ghazali*. He has dozens of published articles on other topics such as interfaith relations, Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa and Jerusalem.

**Academic Appointments:** Professor Abu Sway was appointed as the first holder of the King Abdullah II Integral Professorial Chair for the Study of Imam Ghazali's Work at Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa and at Al-Quds University in 2012. He has also been Professor of Philosophy and Islamic Studies at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, and Dean of the College of Dawah and Usul Al-Din, and College of the Qur'an and Islamic Studies from 2014-2020.

He taught at the International Islamic University in Malaysia (1993-96) and was a visiting Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence at the Wilkes Honors College at Florida Atlantic University (2003-4), as well as a Visiting Professor of Islamic Studies at Bard College, New York. (2008-10).

**Speaker:** He is frequently invited to give lectures worldwide and his ability to address controversial and sensitive topics with a calm and clear delivery makes him a rare and influential voice, capable of leaving a lasting impact on a wide range of audiences.

Rank (2024): -

Rank (2023): -

Rank (2022): -

49



Yahya Sinwar became Chairman of Hamas Political Bureau in August 2024 after the assassination of his predecessor Ibrahim Haniyeh in Tehran.

**Early life:** Sinwar was born in 1962 in Khan Younis Refugee Camp, Southern Gaza. His family is originally from Ashkelon, in present-day Israel, who fled to Gaza as refugees during the 1948 Nakba. He was educated locally in Khan Younis and gained a degree in Arabic Studies from the Islamic University of Gaza, where he first started to get involved in activism. In 1988 he was imprisoned, accused of participating in the killing of Israeli soldiers and spent 22 years in prison.

**Prison and Release:** In prison he memorised the Qur'an and studied scholarly, religious, political and military texts. He also studied Hebrew and became fluent in it. He said: "They wanted prison to be a grave for us, a mill to grind our will, determination and bodies. But, thank God, with our belief in our cause we turned the prison into sanctuaries of worship and academies for study." In 2011 Sinwar was released in a prisoner exchange. He returned to Gaza and rejoined Hamas and steadily rose through the ranks, playing a key role in its military and political strategies; by 2017 he was elected the leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

**Hamas:** Hamas is a Palestinian Islamic resistance organization founded in 1987 during the First Intifada. Since winning the 2006 elections, it has governed the Gaza Strip. In addition to its political role, Hamas is known for providing social services such as health-care, education, and welfare programs. Its armed wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, actively engages in armed resistance against Israeli forces, frequently launching rocket attacks and carrying out operations as part of its broader aim to end Israeli occupation.



**HE Muhammad Yunus**  
 Interim Leader of Bangladesh  
**Country:** Bangladesh  
**Born:** 28 June 1940 (age 84)  
**School of Thought:** Traditional  
 Islam

50

Rank (2024): 450 Lists  
 Rank (2023): 450 Lists  
 Rank (2022): 450 Lists

Muhammad Yunus is a Bangladeshi politician, Nobel Peace Prize winner, economist, entrepreneur, and civil society leader.

**Interim Political Leader:** When Bangladeshi president Shahabuddin dissolved the parliament in August 2024 after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed fled the country, he nominated Muhammad Yunus to serve as the head of the interim government of Bangladesh, acceding to student demands. In August 2024, Yunus took the oath to serve as the Chief Advisor of the Bangladesh Interim Government. Yunus has pledged to organize a constituent assembly to draft and adopt a new, democratic and inclusive constitution that ensures the inviolability of human dignity. He also vowed to continue providing humanitarian aid to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and to support the garment industry affected by the unrest prior to his appointment.

**“Banker to the Poor”:** Yunus established the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in 1983 to help people escape from poverty by providing loans on terms suitable to them and by teaching them sound financial principles. Grameen Bank spearheaded a world movement to eradicate poverty through microlending. Replicas of the Grameen Bank model operate in over 100 countries. For this, Yunus was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. He is also the recipient of the American Presidential Medal of Freedom, among many other prestigious awards and honours.

**Social Leader:** Yunus was a member of the International Advisory Group for the Fourth World Conference on Women, a post appointed by the UNSG. He has served on the UN Expert Group on Women and Finance and on the board of directors of the United Nations Foundation, a charity for UN causes. Yunus founded The Yunus Centre in Dhaka—a think tank for social business working in the field of poverty alleviation and sustainability.

# THE TOP 50 INS & OUTS

## OUTS

- 13 - HE President Joko Widodo, Indonesia (now in Hon Men)
- 15 - HE Ismail Haniyeh, Head of Hamas Political Bureau (please see Obituaries)
- 28 - Seyyed Hasan Nasrallah Secretary-General of Hezbollah (please see Obituaries)

## INS

- 18 - President Prabowo Subianto, President of Indonesia
- 49 - Yahya Sinwar, Chairman of Hamas Political Bureau, Palestine
- 50 - Muhammad Yunus, Interim Leader of Bangladesh

HONOURABLE  
MENTIONS

## HE Grand Ayatollah Abdullah Jawadi Amoli

Scholarly

Country: Iran

Born: 1933 (age 91)

Grand Ayatollah Amoli is a leading theologian and interpreter of the Qur'an. He is a prolific scholar, having published over 300 articles and books. He is most well-known for his commentary of the Qur'an, *Tafsir al-Tasnim*, which has been widely lauded by his peers. Amoli has remained a very public figure throughout his career, having led a diplomatic mission to the USSR, and continues to speak publicly on current affairs and especially against corruption in government.



## HE Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ishaq Fayadh

Scholarly

Country: Iraq

Born: 1930 (age 94)

Grand Ayatollah Al-Fayadh, originally from Afghanistan, is one of the four *maraji* of the Hawza Seminary in Najaf, Iraq—one of the two most important seats of learning in Twelver Shiism. Fayadh is known for his quietist approach to politics and is well-respected, especially amongst the Shia population of South Asia.



## Dr Aref Ali Nayed

Scholarly

Country: Libya

Born: 31 December 1962 (age 62)

Dr Aref Ali Nayed is a Libyan public figure, a renowned scholar in the field of Islamic Theology (*kalām*) and Philosophy, and a leading pioneer of inter-faith relations. He was former Ambassador of Libya to the UAE, former Special Envoy of the President of the Libya House of Representatives to USA, UK, European and African Unions, and led the Libya Stabilisation Team in 2011—and has since played a vital and positive role in the revitalization of the Libyan political track. Nayed is the Founder and Chairman of two leading think tanks: Kalam Research & Media (KRM); and the Libya Institute for Advanced Studies (LIAS). He is also currently a Visiting Senior Research Affiliate of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. He was former professor at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic



and Islamic Studies (Rome), and a former professor at the International Institute for Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC, Malaysia).

## Professor Akbar Ahmed

Scholarly

Country: Pakistan

Born: 15 January 1944 (age 80)

Professor Akbar Ahmed is the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University in Washington DC, and the former Pakistani High Commissioner to the UK and Ireland. In addition to his academic and public sector careers, Ahmed has produced a number of noteworthy films and authored more than a dozen award-winning books. He produced the Jinnah Quartet and feature film, *Jinnah* (1998). He was awarded the 2017 Sir Syed Day Lifetime Achievement Award for excellence in Poetry, Literature, Arts and the Sciences and declared the 2017 Scholar/Teacher of the Year of the American University School of International Service. Ahmed was awarded the Diplomatic Leadership Award in 2019 from PakPac USA for outstanding academic endeavour. He has produced two films: *Journey into America* and *Journey into Europe*, which are both accompanied with books with the same titles.



## Dr Ingrid Mattson

Scholarly

Country: Canada

Born: 24 August 1963 (age 61)

Dr Ingrid Mattson is the London and Windsor Community Chair in Islamic Studies at Huron University College at Western University in Canada. Previously she had worked for 14 years as Professor at the Hartford Seminary in Hartford, and served as Director of the Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations. In 2001 she was elected vice president of ISNA and in 2006 she was elected president. She is the author of the highly acclaimed *The Story of the Qur'an*. In late 2018, Dr Mattson founded a major project to uphold the sacred inviolability (*hurma*) of those who enter Muslim spaces from exploitation and abuse by those holding religious power and authority. The Hurma Project is conducting research, education, training and protocols for professional oversight for imams, chaplains, mosque boards, and others.



## HE President Mahmoud Abbas

Political

Country: Palestine

Born: 15 November 1935 (age 89)

Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, is the President of the Palestinian National Authority, and chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). He is one of the few surviving founder members of Fatah, the main political grouping within the PLO, and was one of the principal architects of the Oslo Peace Process. He accompanied Yassir Arafat to the White House to sign the Oslo Accords. He was elected President of the PNA in 2005 in what was due to be a four-year term. No elections have been held since then, and so he remains President. President Abbas opposed the “Deal of the Century”, refusing promises of billions worth of investment, but suffered the consequences with aid cuts of hundreds of millions of dollars by the US leaving the economy in ruins. The financial crisis has led to deep salary cuts which in turn have fuelled further unpopularity to his rule. He has largely been watching on the sidelines as the Gaza genocide has unfolded.



## HE Imran Khan

Political

Country: Pakistan

Born: 5 October 1952 (age 72)

Imran Khan became the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 2018 amid huge expectations that he could bring the country forward on issues of governance, accountability and reduction of corruption. He endured a tough time before being ousted in April 2022 through a no-confidence motion. He has maintained that foreign interference played a major role in his ousting and pointed fingers at various institutions in the country. In August 2023, Khan was arrested and sentenced to three years’ imprisonment. Khan still maintains massive popular support in the country as well as with the large and powerful Pakistani diaspora. His challenges are seen as part of the inevitable results of trying to change a system rife with corruption and of trying to reduce the role of the military. He has applied from his prison cell to be chancellor of Oxford University, arguably the most prestigious position in the academic world.



## HE Joko Widodo

Political

Country: Indonesia

Born: 21 June 1961 (age 63)

Joko Widodo, widely known as Jokowi, served as Indonesia’s 7th President from 2014-2024. This had been preceded by a successful stint as Governor of Jakarta from 2012 to 2014, where he earned widespread acclaim for his accessible leadership style and commitment to public service. During his presidency, Jokowi focused on ambitious infrastructure projects, economic reforms, and poverty alleviation programmes. His signature “*blusukan*” approach—impromptu visits to local communities—became a hallmark of his leadership, reinforcing his image as a leader in touch with the people. In a significant political move towards the end of his term, Jokowi threw his support behind Prabowo Subianto’s presidential bid, notably by endorsing his own son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, as Prabowo’s vice presidential running mate. This strategic alliance between Jokowi and his former rival Prabowo marked a dramatic shift in Indonesia’s political dynamics, effectively bridging previous political divides and significantly influencing the 2024 election outcome.



## Sadiq Khan

Political

Country: United Kingdom

Born: 8 October 1970 (age 54)

Sadiq Khan, the son of a London bus driver, was elected the Mayor of London in May 2016, re-elected in May 2021, and then won a historic third term in 2024. His journey to arguably one of the highest posts in the UK included being a human rights solicitor, chair of the human rights group Liberty, councillor for Wandsworth, and then MP for Tooting from 2005-2016. He is a member of the Labour Party and served as Minister in two posts in Gordon Brown’s government as well as serving in Ed Miliband’s shadow cabinet in more senior ministerial posts. Much has been made of his British Pakistani ethnicity as well as him being Muslim, but he has stressed that those parts of his identity merely strengthen his willingness to serve all parts of society. He is often attacked by far-right voices but works consistently to build cohesion among London’s diverse communities.



## HE Dr Sanusi Lamido

### Sanusi

Administration of Religious Affairs

Country: Nigeria

Born: 31 July 1961 (age 63)

In 2024, Sanusi became the 16th Fulani Emir of Kano, the second highest Muslim authority in the land (the Sultan of Sokoto being the first) and the spiritual leader of the Tijanniyah Sufi order. He had already served as the 14th Emir before being de-throned by the Governor of Kano in 2020. Sanusi is the former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) (2009-2014), and a respected Islamic scholar who has won numerous awards. He has pointed out corruption in previous governments, pushed for an end to child marriage, and been targeted by Boko Haram.



## Mufti Abul Qasim Nomani

Administration of Religious Affairs

Country: India

Born: 14 Jan 1947 (age 77)

Maulana Mufti Abul Qasim Nomani is the current *Mohtamim* (Vice-Chancellor) of Darul Uloom Deoband in India. He was elected as *Mohtamim* on 23 July 2011 succeeding Maulana Ghulam Muhammad Vastanvi. The Deoband Darul Uloom is where the Deobandi school was established and it is still the worldwide centre, having some 7,000 students. Mufti Abul Qasim Nomani graduated from Darul Uloom Deoband in 1967 and was appointed as Member of Majlis Shura (Governing Body) of Darul Uloom in 1992.



## Dr Mohammed Bechari

Administration of Religious Affairs

Country: France

Born: 16 April 1967 (age 56)

Dr Mohammed Bechari is a leading figure in the landscape of European Islam. He heads a variety of organizations that seek to better represent French and European Muslims in the wider society as well as working to empower their own communities. He is the Secretary General of the UAE-based World Muslim Communities Council, and President of the French National Federation of Muslims, one of the leading entities organising Islam in France. He is also the Secretary General of the Islamic European Conference, a Europe-wide umbrella organization that seeks to be a single entity representing European Muslims at the European level. Bechari is the founder of the Avicenna Institute in Lille and member of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) in Vienna.



## Sheikh Nuh Keller

Preachers & Spiritual Guides

Country: Jordan

Born: 1954 (age 70)

Sheikh Nuh Keller's *Reliance of the Traveller* is the first Islamic legal work translated into a European language to receive certification from Al-Azhar University. He also possesses a number of *ijazaat* in various disciplines, most notably as an authorised sheikh of the Shadhiliyyah Sufi order. He teaches students from his *zawiyah* in Jordan as well as at annual gatherings all over the world. In 2022, Keller released a translation of the Qur'an entitled *The Quran Beheld*.



عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَامَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي سَعْدٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: قَاتِلُوا

لَا ضَرَّ وَلَا ضَرَّ

'Ubadah ibn al-Samit reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.”

Narrated by Sunan Ibn Mājah

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## Dr Muhammad Al-Arifi

Preachers & Spiritual Guides

Country: Saudi Arabia

Born: 16 July 1970 (age 54)

Dr Al-Arifi is a well-known scholar and lecturer from Saudi Arabia. He is a founding and honorary member of various dawah organizations, as well as being a member of their advisory committees. He is also a Professor in King Saud University of Riyadh. He takes a special interest in Hadith literature and has received licences for the chains of transmission for various Hadith texts from a number of scholars. He has over 42 million followers on social media.



## Zakir Abdul Karim Naik

Preachers & Spiritual Guides

Country: India

Born: 18 October 1965 (age 59)

Zakir Abdul Karim Naik is a popular preacher and comparative religion specialist in the mould of the legendary Ahmed Deedat. Naik challenges leaders of other faiths to public debates that are broadcast around the world on Peace TV—a satellite channel that he helped to found. In 2015, he was awarded the King Faisal International Prize for Services to Islam. Since 2016 he has been resident in Malaysia but is being investigated by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on incitement to terror and money-laundering charges. India has requested extradition so he might stand trial on those charges. In 2021, Naik launched Al Hidayah, a new platform with educational content from renowned Islamic speakers from all over the world. His Youtube channel has close to 277 million views and he has over 23 million Facebook followers.



## Ahed Tamimi

Social Issues

Country: Palestine

Born: 31 January 2001 (age 23)

Ahed Tamimi is a Palestinian who has become a globally recognized icon for resistance to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. In 2017, she confronted Israeli soldiers who entered her yard in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh, and then proceeded to slap and kick them. Her mother was recording the incident and later the video went viral. A few days later, at night, the Israeli army's own camera



documented soldiers entering her house, handcuffing and arresting Tamimi. She was then subject to interrogation, a fate common to most Palestinian youth living under occupation, detained for three months, and sentenced to eight months in jail. Her mother was also imprisoned but never charged. Ahed was released after serving eight months as a political prisoner and received worldwide support for highlighting the oppressive life faced by Palestinians. She has recently published a book entitled *They Called Me a Lioness*. In the current war, she was arrested early November 2023 and released after several weeks as a result of a hostage deal between Hamas and Israel.

## Loujain Al-Hathloul

Social Issues

Country: Saudi Arabia

Born: 31 July 1989 (age 35)

Al-Hathloul is a Saudi women's rights activist who was released from prison in 2021 after serving two years, but is under strict conditions of no travelling or political engagement. She was a fierce critic of the law forbidding women to drive in Saudi Arabia and she used social media to challenge this and the male guardianship system. In 2014, she was detained for 73 days after she attempted to drive into Saudi Arabia from the United Arab Emirates. A year later, Al-Hathloul attempted to stand in the local elections, which marked the first time Saudi women were allowed to vote, but was ultimately barred. She was detained again in 2018, but this time she was tortured and held in prison without charges or trial for ten months, but then charged the following year with attempting to destabilise the kingdom. She is continuing with a US lawsuit against an Emirati cyber-surveillance firm (Dark Matter) and three former US intelligence operatives accused of hacking her iPhone which led to her extradition from the UAE to Saudi.



## Malala Yousufzai

Social Issues

Country: Pakistan

Born: 12 July 1997 (age 27)

Yousufzai's rise to prominence began tragically when the Taliban shot her in a school bus for encouraging girls to go to school in Swat.

After the assassination attempt, Malala was flown to England, where she recovered and continued her schooling. She received high-profile support for her campaign to ensure that all children worldwide be schooled. In 2013, Yousufzai addressed the UN, received the prestigious Sakharov Prize, and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, which she co-received in 2014 at the age of 17, thereby becoming its youngest-ever recipient. She has been granted audiences with royalty and world leaders, and this along with her high-profile international exposure has led some in her native Pakistan to question whether she has overreached. Now graduated from Oxford University, books published and with contracts from media companies, her global profile continues to rise.



## Sami Yusuf

Arts & Culture

Country: United Kingdom

Born: 19 July 1980 (age 44)

Sami Yusuf is an internationally renowned British composer, producer, vocalist and master musician who has created a revolution in the music industry. Sami Yusuf's works are often inspired by traditional musical systems and mystical poetry that enlighten and inspire the listener. For the past several years, his focus has been on revivifying and promoting musical heritage and he has demonstrated a unique ability to engage contemporary audiences with his dramatically staged performances of his compositions inspired by centuries-old traditions. Performing at sold-out venues on six continents, his music appeals to all age groups, ethnicities and beliefs across the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and North America. With downloads of over a billion, Sami Yusuf has released nine studio albums to date, has over 45 million albums sold, and has 21 million followers across his social media platforms. The artist is also known for his extensive involvement in global charitable initiatives.



## Sheikh Abdul-Rahman Al-Sudais

Qur'an Reciters

Country: Saudi Arabia

Born: 10 February 1960 (age 64)

Al-Sudais is chief of the Imams at the Grand Mosque of Makkah. He memorised the Qur'an at the age of 12, and studied shariah at Riyadh University, Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, and Umm al Qura University. Al-Sudais is also popular for his sermons and stance on peaceful conflict-resolution. In 2005, he was named by the Dubai International Holy Qur'an Award (DIHQQA) Organising Committee as its 9th annual "Islamic Personality Of the Year" in recognition of his devotion to the Qur'an and Islam. In 2017, Al-Sudais supervised the film *One Day In The Haram*, a film about the Haram in Makkah, told through the eyes of the workers.



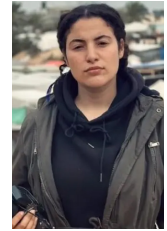
## Bisan Owda

Media

Country: Palestine

Born: 11 Feb 1997 (age 27)

Bisan Owda, raised in Gaza, is a renowned journalist, activist, and filmmaker whose work spans gender equality with the United Nations (UN) and climate change initiatives with the European Union (EU). She has produced content for Roya TV, created educational videos for YouTube, and works with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). From the onset of the onslaught of Gaza, Bisan began documenting life in Gaza, capturing the struggles of its people—struggles that mirror her own experiences. Her house was bombed, she became displaced, and she witnessed the devastating Al-Shifa Hospital airstrike. Bisan's impactful work has earned widespread recognition. In May, she received a Peabody Award in the News category for her Al Jazeera Media Network show, 'It's Bisan from Gaza' and 'I'm Still Alive'. In July, her documentary of the same name was nominated for the 45th News and Documentary Emmy Awards for Outstanding Hard News Feature Story: Short Form. Despite criticism from pro-Israel groups, the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) defended its decision to nominate her, acknowledging the significance of her work.





## Sadio Mane

Celebrities & Sports

Country: Senegal

Born: 10 April 1992 (age 32)



Sadio Mane is a Senegalese footballer globally renowned as one of the best footballers in the world. He had been instrumental in Liverpool's success (2016-2022), winning the Champions League in 2019 and then ending a 30-year wait to win the Premier League in 2020. He also played for the Senegal team which reached the 2020 African nations cup final. He recently moved to the Saudi Pro League club Al Nassr from Bayern Munich. He is seen making supplication before the start of each match and performs a prostration every time he scores a goal. He is well known for his modest and humble personality, and has donated significant amounts of his personal wealth to develop the infrastructure in his hometown of Sedhiou. He transformed his childhood village of Bambalia—a village in the south of Senegal—with a number of charitable works, including building a new hospital, school, mosque, sports stadium and other infrastructures.

## Khabib Nurmagomedov

Celebrities & Sports

Country: Russia

Born: 20 September 1988 (age 36)



Khabib Nurmagomedov is a former mixed martial artist. As well as being the youngest Russian wrestler in history to compete in the UFC, he was also the first Russian and Muslim to win a UFC title. He was the Lightweight UFC champion holding the longest undefeated streak in MMA history with 29 wins before retiring in March 2021. He is ethnically from the Russian republic of Dagestan and has chosen the nickname "the eagle" to pay homage to this region. This has won him great support amongst many Muslim youth, not only in Dagestan but also in Chechnya and other ex-soviet, Muslim-majority countries. His appeal is not limited to these as he has managed to transcend ethnic complexities and become one of Russia's most popular sportsmen. He has 47 million followers on social media.



On the authority of Abu Hurairah, who said : The messenger of Allah said ﷺ:

"Part of someone's being a good Muslim is his leaving alone that which does not concern him."


Narrated by Termithi and others

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# THE AMMAN MESSAGE

[www.AmmanMessage.com](http://www.AmmanMessage.com)

*[T]he best resource for those who wish to travel along the straight path in their words and their actions, and in their spiritual and religious life.*

— The Grand Sheikh of the Azhar, Sheikh Mohammed Sayyid Tantawi , 2006.


The Amman Message started as a detailed statement released the eve of the 27th of Ramadan 1425 AH / 9th November 2004 CE by H. M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein in Amman, Jordan. It sought to declare what Islam is and what it is not, and what actions represent it and what actions do not. Its goal was to clarify to the modern world the true nature of Islam and the nature of true Islam.

In order to give this statement more religious authority, H. M. King Abdullah II then sent the following three questions to 24 of the most senior religious scholars from all around the world representing all the branches and schools of Islam: (1) Who is a Muslim? (2) Is it permissible to declare someone an apostate (*takfir*)? (3) Who has the right to undertake issuing *fatwas* (legal rulings)?

Based on the fatwas provided by these great scholars (who included the Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Ayatollah Sistani, and Sheikh Qaradawi), in July 2005 CE, H. M. King Abdullah II convened an international Islamic conference of 200 of the world's leading Islamic scholars (*ulema*) from 50 countries. In Amman, the scholars unanimously issued a ruling on three fundamental issues (which became known as the 'Three Points of the Amman Message'):

- They specifically recognised the validity of all 8 *mathhabs* (legal schools) of Sunni, Shia, and Ibadhi Islam; of traditional Islamic Theology (Ash'arism); of Islamic Mysticism (Sufism), and of true Salafi thought, and came to a precise definition of who is a Muslim.
- Based upon this definition they forbade *takfir* (declarations of apostasy) between Muslims.
- Based upon the Mathahib they set forth the subjective and objective preconditions for the issuing of *fatwas*, thereby exposing ignorant and illegitimate edicts in the name of Islam.

These Three Points were then unanimously adopted by the Islamic World's political and temporal leaderships at the Organization of the Islamic Conference summit at Makkah in December 2005. And over a period of one year from July 2005 to July 2006, the Three Points were also unanimously adopted by six other international Islamic scholarly assemblies, culminating with the International Islamic Fiqh Academy of Jeddah, in July 2006. In total, over 500 leading Muslim scholars worldwide—as can be seen on this website—unanimously endorsed the Amman Message and its Three Points.

This amounts to a historical, universal and unanimous religious and political consensus (*ijma'*) of the Ummah (nation) of Islam in our day, and a consolidation of traditional, orthodox Islam. The significance of this is: (1) that it is the first time in over a thousand years that the Ummah has formally and specifically come to such a pluralistic mutual inter-recognition; and (2) that such a recognition is religiously legally binding on Muslims since the Prophet  said: My Ummah will not agree upon an error (Ibn Majah, *Sunan*, Kitab al-Fitan, Hadith no. 4085).

This is good news not only for Muslims, for whom it provides a basis for unity and a solution to infighting, but also for non-Muslims. For the safeguarding of the legal methodologies of Islam (the *mathahib*) necessarily means inherently preserving traditional Islam's internal 'checks and balances'. It thus assures balanced Islamic solutions for essential issues like human rights; women's rights; freedom of religion; legitimate jihad; good citizenship of Muslims in non-Muslim countries, and just and democratic government. It also exposes the illegitimate opinions of radical fundamentalists and terrorists from the point of view of true Islam. As George Yeo, the Foreign Minister of Singapore, declared in the 60th Session of the U. N. General Assembly (about the Amman Message): "Without this clarification, the war against terrorism would be much harder to fight."

# THE 450 LISTS

# 🌀 The Lists 🌀

## Scholarly

page 151

These scholars, thinkers, and educators are well-respected leaders who have made significant contributions to the study and cultivation of Islamic knowledge and Muslim culture.

## Political

page 161

These leaders possess high positions of power over substantial groups of people and exert influence from their status, reputation, or political clout.

## Administration of Religious Affairs

page 171

These agents of change are responsible for founding and/or directing institutions that influence the religious affairs of Muslims.

## Preachers & Spiritual Guides

page 178

Preachers rely on charisma to inspire millions through multimedia while spiritual guides traditionally teach through live study circles and individualised directives to their disciples.

## Philanthropy, Charity & Development

page 185

These activists work in the field, affecting the world through poverty alleviation programmes, emergency aid, charitable giving, sponsorships of various initiatives for people and communities to become self-reliant.

## Social Issues

page 188

These individuals address various social issues such as health, education, women's rights, the environment, human rights and conflict resolution.

## Business

page 200

These entrepreneurs head and direct key organisations in the business world pushing innovation and financial development forward.

## Science & Technology

page 205

These are the main figures from the world of science and technology.

## Arts & Culture

page 210

These are artists and cultural ambassadors whose work has become part of people's daily lives.

## Qur'an Reciters

page 220

The recitation of the Qur'an is a special art that is valued by Muslim communities across the world. The word al-Qur'an literally means 'the recitation' referring to its origins as an oral text.

## Media

page 222

In an age of impulsive news and innovative media, these personalities have garnered influence from their activity in the media world.

## Celebrities & Sports Stars

page 226

These instantly recognisable figures have a huge public following due to their prominence in popular culture and sport.

## Top Extremists

page 229

These individuals are responsible for heinous acts and controversial statements that are rejected by Muslim orthodoxy, separating them clearly from others engaged in armed conflict.

## *Middle East and North Africa*

### ALGERIA

#### **Cherif, Mustapha**

Professor Mustapha Cherif is a philosopher and researcher specializing in international relations and dialogue between cultures. Cherif has written numerous works on religion, civilization and dialogue between cultures. He has held many senior academic and diplomatic positions including Algerian Minister of Higher Education and Ambassador to Egypt. He was awarded the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture and the Ducci Foundation Peace Prize in 2013. He is also a member of the World Catholic-Muslim Forum and a permanent delegate at the Arab League.

### BAHRAIN

#### **Yaquby, Nizam**

Sheikh Nizam Yaquby was trained in the Islamic sciences in Bahrain and Makkah, studying under some eminent sheikhs, before going on to study at McGill University. He sits on a plethora of shariah advisory boards and has been a visiting lecturer at Harvard University. He is a highly sought-after expert with an immense breadth of experience with the Muslim community, and has led a team which issued a fatwa supporting a cryptocurrency.

### IRAN

#### **Amoli, Grand Ayatollah Abdullah Jawadi**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 142

#### **Dabashi, Professor Hamid**

Professor Hamid Dabashi is the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York. Dabashi has authored over 20 books, delving into subjects such as religion, literature, cinema, and philosophy, establishing himself as a leading voice in contemporary Middle Eastern studies. His scholarly work is complemented by his role as a public intellectual and anti-war activist, frequently contributing essays on

current affairs to platforms like Al-Jazeera. Dabashi has also made significant contributions to cultural preservation, most notably through founding Dreams of a Nation, a Palestinian Film Project dedicated to safeguarding Palestinian cinema. His latest work, *Mashya and Mashyana Unearthed: Myth, Metonymy and the Unknowing Subject*, continues his exploration of myth and narrative, offering profound insights into the human condition. Dabashi's influence extends across disciplines, making him a pivotal figure in the global discourse on culture, politics, and philosophy

#### **Damad, Ayatollah Dr Seyyed Mostafa Mohaghegh**

Damad is one of very few high-level clerics in Iran to have been educated in international law in the West. Damad is a forceful advocate for a more progressive interpretation of shariah. He is a very well-respected scholar, and is currently a professor in the Faculty of Law at Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran. In October 2010, at the Pope's behest, he addressed the Synod in the Vatican, stressing the Muslim view towards Christians as one of friendship, trust, and mutual understanding. He was honoured as a prominent figure of humanities in Iran at the 8th Farabi International Award ceremony in 2017.

#### **Shirazi, Grand Ayatollah Nasir Makarim**

Grand Ayatollah Shirazi is a leading theologian teaching at the Qom Seminary, one of the two most important centres of learning for Twelver Shia. He is most influential for his *Tafsir Al-Amthal*, which is a very popular, simplified commentary of the Qur'an. He has also spearheaded the creation of schools and magazines devoted to young people. He has been outspoken in his support for Palestinians and for Iran to respond to any aggression against it.

#### **Sobhani, Grand Ayatollah Jafar**

Grand Ayatollah Sobhani is a leading member of the Council of Mujtahids at the Qom Seminary, one of the two most important centres of learning in Twelver Shiism. He is the founder and Director of the Imam Sadiq Institute in Iran and was previously a member of the Society of Seminary Teachers at Qom. His work in all areas of the Islamic sciences is widely known and receives critical attention. Sobhani is

a prolific writer, having published over 300 scholarly works.

## IRAQ

### **Fayadh, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ishaq**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 142

### **Al-Najafi, Grand Ayatollah Bashir**

Grand Ayatollah Bashir Al-Najafi is one of the four *maraji'* of the Hawza Seminary in Najaf, Iraq, and one of Iraq's most powerful Shia clerics. As a *marja'* of the Hawza in Najaf, Iraq's premier Shia institution, Najafi holds a position of immense authority. Najafi, originally from Pakistan, holds less sway amongst Iraq's population than the other *maraji'* but has significant clout in South Asia.

### **Al-Qaradaghi, Professor Ali Muhiddin**

Professor Al-Qaradaghi is the Secretary General of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) and Professor of Jurisprudence at Qatar University. He holds key positions in various Islamic Fiqh organizations as well as being on shariah supervisory boards for several banks. He is also President of the Board of Trustees of the University of Human Development in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, where he was born. He has written more than 30 works.

### **Al-Sadr, Ayatollah Al-Faqih**

#### **Seyyed Hussein Ismail**

HE Ayatollah Al-Faqih Seyyed Hussein Ismail Al-Sadr is the most senior Shia cleric in Baghdad, Iraq. He heads the Ayatollah Seyyed Hussein Ismail Al-Sadr Foundation Trust, which runs humanitarian, development, and peace and reconciliation projects in Iraq. His role as a social leader and humanitarian has increased significantly during the recent hostilities in Iraq. The issue of reconciliation and dialogue between Iraq's different religious and ethnic communities has featured heavily in the Ayatollah's recent efforts.

## JORDAN

### **Khasawneh, Sheikh Abdul Karim**

Sheikh Khasawneh has served Jordan in his capacity as a religious scholar and mufti in various roles. He is a former Mufti of the Jordanian Armed Forces, served as the Grand Mufti of Jordan between 2010-2017, and subsequently from 2019-2023. Khasawneh is

also a member of the Jordanian Ifta Council and a member of the board of the World Islamic Sciences and Education University (WISE).

## LEBANON

### **Derian, Grand Mufti Abdul Latif (new)**

Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian became Grand Mufti of Lebanon in 2014 after having held several high-level posts, including director of the previous Grand Mufti Muhammad Rashid Qabbani's office. He taught Shariah at the Beirut Arab University and at the Institute of Islamic Studies. He serves as a member of the Shariah Board of Lebanese Islamic Bank and the Chairman of Shariah Committee of Al-Baraka Bank, Lebanon. He has done much to combat terrorism and extremism in the region, and in confronting aberrant and radical fatwas. He has also authored several books on Islam.

## LIBYA

### **Nayed, Dr Aref Ali**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 142

## MOROCCO

### **Abdurrahman, Professor Taha**

Dr Taha Abdurrahman is a Moroccan philosopher famous for his work on the creation of an ethical humanistic modernism on the basis of the ethics and values of Islam. Abdurrahman has won the Moroccan Book Prize twice, and was awarded the ISESCO Prize for Islamic Philosophy in 2006. He is the President of the Wisdom Circle of Thinkers, Morocco, and a member of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS). He launched his latest book *The Philosophy of Siyar: Moral Justification* in Ankara, Türkiye in June 2024.

## OMAN

### **Al-Khalili, Sheikh Ahmad**

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Khalili is the Grand Mufti of Oman. He was born, and lived, in Zanzibar until the end of the Al-Said rule (1964) and then moved to Oman along with many others of Omani heritage. He is a strong advocate for religious tolerance and works hard to ensure harmony between the different religious schools of thought in Oman.

## PALESTINE

### **Nusseibeh, Professor Sari**

Dr Sari Nusseibeh comes from one of Jerusalem's oldest and most prominent families, having a 1300-year presence in the city. He has studied at various universities including Oxford and Harvard and is a professor of philosophy, as well as being a leading public intellectual. He served as president of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem for more than 20 years.

## SAUDI ARABIA

### **Al-Awni, Dr Hatim**

Dr Hatim Al-Awni is the General Supervisor of the International Committee for the Support of the Final Prophet ﷺ (ICSFP). He has also served in a number of academic and political capacities, including the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia for two separate terms. While his academic research includes dozens of publications, perhaps his greatest contribution is the awakening of Salafi introspection in Saudi Arabia. His widely read articles have pointed out clear connections between militant extremism and core Salafi texts. He also writes extensively on rapprochement between Islamic schools of thought, particularly between Salafi and Traditionalist (Ash'ari and Maturidi) approaches.

### **Al-Fawzan, Sheikh Salih Bin Fawzan**

Sheikh Al-Fawzan is considered to be the most senior scholar of the Salafi movement in Saudi Arabia. He is a member of the Council of Senior Scholars and the Committee for Fatwa and Research. He has authored over 35 books and is one of the major muftis in the country. He participates in the highly influential Saudi radio programme '*Noor ala ad-Darb*' ('Light upon the Path') along with other scholars.

### **Al-Madkhali, Sheikh Rabee ibn Haadi 'Umayr**

Sheikh Rabee ibn Haadi 'Umayr Al-Madkhali is one of the most radical thinkers in the Salafi movement. He is an influential writer and speaker whose influence has led to an independent faction within Salafism. Al-Madkhali's adherents are known as Madkhali Salafis and make up one of the most significant and influential branches inside the Salafi movement. A former head of the Sunnah Studies Department at the Islamic University of Madinah, Al-Madkhali is a scholar who has authored over 30 works in the fields of Hadith and Islamic disciplines.

## Al-Saffar, Sheikh Hassan Musa

Sheikh Hassan Musa Al-Saffar is a Saudi Shia reformist leader who has made significant progress in communicating with Salafi leaders and other senior officials in Saudi Arabia. This is important as sectarian tensions throughout the Muslim world have risen with increased Sunni-Shia hostilities in Iraq.

## SYRIA

### **Al-Nabulsi, Dr Mohammed Rateb**

The son of a well-known Syrian religious scholar, Dr Rateb Al-Nabulsi was professor at Damascus University until the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. He has represented Syria all over the world in many Islamic conferences. Muslims know him through his lessons, orations, symposiums, and interviews broadcast on radio and television. He has written a number of Islamic books, many of which have been translated into English. In addition to studying in his native Syria, he has also studied in Ireland and France.

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## *Sub-Saharan Africa*

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## ERITREA

### **Said, Sheikh Faid Mohammed**

Sheikh Faid Mohammed Said was raised in Eritrea, where he was educated by Sheikh Hamid, the Senior Judge of the Shariah Court in Asmara. He later moved to Madinah Al-Munawwarah, where he continued his studies under Sheikh Atiyah Mohammed Salim, the Resident Scholar of Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi and Senior Judge of Madinah. He has also completed a PhD from the University of Minnesota, USA. Sheikh Faid is an author (contributing to the International Islamic Fiqh Academy's 25th Annual Journal, and to the OIC's *Encyclopedia of Moderation*), university professor and member of the executive committee and chair of the religious board at AM-MALE (Alliance of Mosques, Associations and Muslim Leaders in Europe). He is currently General Secretary of the Fatwa and Islamic Affairs commission and Imam and *Khateeb* of the Central Mosque in London.

## ETHIOPIA

### **Idris, Hajji Omar**

Hajji Omar Idris is a mufti and leader of Ethiopian

Muslims, who represent 40% of Ethiopia's population. Widely respected, he is a proponent of Muslim unity and was elected as President of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council in May 2019, marking the first peaceful transition of leadership since the council was formed. Hajji Idris is also President of the Fatwa and Dawa Councils.

## GAMBIA, THE

### **Jah, Ambassador Professor Omar**

Professor Omar Jah, is a religious scholar with extensive international experience. He has taught in various educational institutions around the world including in Canada, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. He has also served as ambassador for the Gambia, and held senior positions in the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in Jeddah, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Currently, he is serving as President of the Shaykh Abdallah Jah Charitable Foundation (SAJCF). He has been awarded the Order of the Republic of Sudan; Order of King Abdulaziz, 1st Class (Saudi Arabia); Order of the Republic of the Gambia; and Commander of the Republic of the Gambia. He has published a number of important works on Islam in Africa.

## MAURITANIA

### **Al-Shanqiti, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hasan bin Al-Diddu**

Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hasan bin Al-Diddu Al-Shanqiti is a Mauritanian scholar, author, writer, and poet. He is the President of O'lama Information Centre, and the President of Abdallah ibn Yasin University. He is also head of the country's Centre for the Development of Scholars. In 2014 he was the Vice President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS). He has licenses (*ijazaat*) from various Islamic scholars authorizing him to teach all the major hadith collections.

## NIGERIA

### **Zakzaky, Sheikh Ibraheem**

Sheikh Ibraheem is the leading force behind the most influential Shia movement in Nigeria and heads its Islamic Movement. The movement has witnessed rapid growth and is based on the model of Hezbollah, focusing on social services, education, charity, etc, but also including military training. In December 2015, the Nigerian Army raided his residence

in Zaria, massacred hundreds of his followers, killed three of his sons and held him under state detention before being released. Recently, he spent five months receiving medical treatment in Iran, before returning home in February 2024 and being welcomed by thousands of supporters.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### **Esack, Farid**

Farid Esack is a traditionally trained scholar who is also a successful academic in modern universities. He has authored many famous works on Islam and is arguably the world's leading Islamic Liberation theologian. He was appointed as gender-equality commissioner by Nelson Mandela. Through the organization, The Call of Islam, Esack played a leading role in the struggle against apartheid. He is an advocate of interreligious solidarity, against all forms of injustice and has worked extensively to support Muslims infected with HIV. He is currently Head of the Department of Religion Studies at the University of Johannesburg and has been a professor at Harvard University. In 2018 he was awarded the Order of Luthuli (Silver), South Africa's highest civilian order for his contribution to scholarship and work for justice.

### **Moosa, Professor Ebrahim**

Dr Ebrahim Moosa is the Mirza Family Professor of Islamic Thought and Muslim Societies in the Keough School of Global Affairs, the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, and in the Department of History at the University of Notre Dame. His interpretive and historical research on questions of tradition, ethics, and law includes two monographs as well as several edited and co-edited books. His prize-winning book, *Ghazali and the Poetics of Imagination*, was awarded the Best First Book Prize in the History of Religions by the American Academy of Religion. He is the author of *What is a Madrasa?* (2015). Moosa is also regarded as a prominent public intellectual. In 2007 he was invited to deliver the King Hasan Lecture (*Durus Hasaniyyah*) to HM King Mohammed VI of Morocco in Arabic. He currently directs the Madrasa Discourses project, advancing scientific and theological literacy amongst young theologians (madrasah graduates) in South Asia.

## UGANDA

### **Mamdani, Professor Mahmood**

Dr Mamdani is the Herbert Lehman Professor of



Government in the Departments of Anthropology and Political Science at Columbia University in the United States, and was Director of the Makerere Institute of Social Research in Kampala, Uganda. He is a leading public intellectual. He is the former President of the Council for Development of Social Research in Africa in Dakar, Senegal. Mamdani is well-known for his book *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, The Cold War and The Roots of Terror*, which became significant in liberal policy circles in the US. He called out Colombia University's heavy-handed approach towards students protesting against the genocide of Gaza.

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## Asia

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### AZERBAIJAN

#### **Pashazade, Sheikh ul-Islam Haji Allahshukur Hummat**

Sheikh Pashazade is the Grand Mufti of Azerbaijan, the elected Mufti of the Caucasus region, and Chairman of the Religious Council of the Caucasus. Pashazade is also the world's only Sunni-Shia Grand Mufti, giving each group religious edicts (*fatwas*) according to their own legal methodology (*madh-hab*), reflecting Azerbaijan's Sunni-Shia mix. He co-chaired the World Summit of Religious Leaders, held in Azerbaijan in April 2010. He has been spearheading Azerbaijan's initiatives of promoting dialogue between faiths within the region and internationally. He played a pivotal role in gaining formal recognition for the Church of Latter Day Saints in Azerbaijan in 2024.

### INDIA

#### **Nadwi, Dr Bahauddeen Muhammed Jamaluddeen**

Dr Bahauddeen Muhammed Jamaluddeen Nadwi is the founding Vice Chancellor of Darul Huda Islamic University, Kerala, India. He has authored a number of books, treatises, edited volumes, and translations in Arabic, English and Malayalam, spanning Qur'anic sciences, Islamic jurisprudence, Hadith, education, Sufism, Comparative Religion, Arabic Language and Literature, and Islamic History. He is the Editor-in-Chief of an international Journal of Islamic Studies, and a member of regional (Kerala), national, and international organizations. Dr Nadwi's students play leading roles in educational, developmental, and

transformative initiatives globally.

### INDONESIA

#### **Bisri, Kyai Haji Achmad Mustofa**

Kyai Haji Achmad Mustofa Bisri (also known as 'Gus Mus') is widely revered as a religious scholar, poet, novelist, painter, and Muslim intellectual. A graduate of Al-Azhar, he is a former Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council and has strongly influenced the NU's (Nahdlatul Ulama) social and political development over the past 30 years. He heads the prestigious Raudlatuth Tholibin Islamic Boarding School in Rembang, Central Java. Mustofa Bisri's role in combining spirituality with artistic expression is widely admired in Indonesia, where he is regarded as a cultural icon. Often called the 'President of Poets', he is celebrated for his courage in defending artistic and religious freedom in the face of radical onslaughts.

### MALAYSIA

#### **Al-Akiti, Dato Dr Muhammad Afifi**

Dato Dr Afifi Al-Akiti is a Shafi'i scholar, trained theologian, and philologist. He is a Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, and teaches Islam at the Faculty of Theology, Oxford University's oldest faculty. He is the first-ever Malaysian to be appointed to such a position in this famous university. His areas of expertise are Islamic theology, law, finance, and science. Al-Akiti is internationally acclaimed for his 2005 fatwa, *Defending the Transgressed by Censuring the Reckless against the Killing of Civilians*, written in response to the 7 July London bombings. From 2018 to 2020, he was appointed by the Conference of Rulers in Malaysia as Deputy Chairman to the High-Level Panel on the Federal Administration of Islam, a royal commission looking into institutional reforms at the federal level in Malaysia. He was awarded a Datukship by HRH The Sultan of Perak in 2012.

#### **Bakar, Professor Osman**

Professor Osman Bakar is currently Al-Ghazali Chair of Epistemology and Civilizational Studies and Renewal at ISTAC (International Islamic University Malaysia) and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Science at the University of Malaya. He previously held posts at Universiti Brunei Darussalam and Georgetown University, Washington DC. Dr Bakar is author and editor of 43 books and numerous

articles on various aspects of Islamic thought and civilization, especially Islamic science and interreligious and inter-civilizational dialogue. Several of his writings, especially his best-selling work, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, have been translated into a dozen languages. He has served as advisor and consultant to a variety of international academic and professional organizations, including UNESCO, the Qatar Foundation, and The European Science Foundation. He was awarded a Datukship by the Malaysian King in 2000. He is a recipient of the 13th Farabi International Award (2022), presented by the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology.

### **Kamali, Professor Mohammad Hashim**

Dr Kamali was Dean and Professor at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) and the International Islamic University in Malaysia. He then served as Founding CEO of the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies in Malaysia (2008-2022) and is currently Very Distinguished Fellow of that Institute. He is the world's leading expert on comparative studies between Islamic and modern law. Kamali has received many international awards in recognition of his intellectual and academic contributions towards serving Islam and Muslims. He was conferred with the Darjah Dato' Paduka Mahkota Perak (DPMP) Award (Title "Dato") from His Royal Highness Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah in 2020. Kamali worked on the new constitutions of Afghanistan in 2003, of the Maldives in 2004, and of Somalia in 2010.

## **PAKISTAN**

### **Ahmed, Professor Akbar**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 142

### **Hashmi, Dr Farhat**

Dr Farhat Hashmi is an influential Islamic teacher, public speaker, and scholar. She is a prominent name in the burgeoning field of the role of women in Islam. In addition to the academic aspects of Islamic teachings, Hashmi also focuses on its relatable and practical aspects, thereby ensuring that her message resonates with a multitude of women across the globe. She holds a PhD in Hadith Sciences from the University of Glasgow, Scotland. She is the Founder of Al-Huda International, a non-profit institute founded in 1994. Al-Huda promotes Islamic learning and serves in the field of social welfare, and has

branches across Pakistan as well as internationally.

### **Al-Qadri, Sheikh Dr Tahir**

Sheikh Tahir Al-Qadri is a Professor of law and the founder of Minhaj ul Quran International Worldwide and the Minhaj Welfare Foundation. Al-Qadri has authored some 550 published works and given more than 6,000 lectures on various subjects which are aired on international satellite channels. He has over seven million social media followers. In March 2010, Qadri issued a 600-page fatwa declaring that terrorists and suicide bombers are unbelievers. He has continued to be outspoken against terrorists. He is based in Canada.

## **SINGAPORE**

### **Aljunied, Professor Khairudin**

Professor Khairudin Aljunied is a globally recognized specialist in the field of intellectual history. He has held professorships and chair positions at Georgetown University, Columbia University, University of Malaya, University of Brunei Darussalam, and the National University of Singapore. His research examines the dynamic interactions between Southeast Asia and global Islam. A prolific scholar-activist who features regularly in the media and documentaries, he has published fourteen books with a large range of international presses. His published books include: *Shapers of Islam in Southeast Asia* (OUP).

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## *Europe*

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## **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

### **Cerić, Sheikh Dr Mustafa**

Dr Mustafa Cerić was schooled at the Gazi Husrev Beg Madrasa in Sarajevo, Al-Azhar University and the University of Chicago (PhD in Islamic Studies). He became an imam in Zagreb in 1987 and was the Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1999-2012. Dr Cerić is an advocate of cross-cultural engagement as well as a peace activist. In 2006, he issued the 'Declaration of European Muslims' stating that European Muslims are dedicated to the common values of law, tolerance, democracy and human rights, the value of life, faith, freedom, property, and dignity. In 2008, Dr Cerić led the Muslim delegation of the 'A Common Word' initiative to the Vatican, which included a meeting with the Pope. Dr Cerić is

currently the President of the World Bosniak Congress as well as an active member of many local and international scholarly organizations and societies.

#### **Mahmutćehajić, Professor Dr Rusmir**

Dr Rusmir Mahmutćehajić is a Bosnian academic, author, and former statesman. Considered one of Bosnia's leading intellectuals and public figures, he is the foremost advocate of the idea of a diverse Bosnia. A scholar of the Muslim intellectual tradition and a contributor to contemporary Muslim thought and the liberal interpretation of Islam, Professor Mahmutćehajić has served his country as Deputy Prime Minister and as Energy Minister through the process of independence and much of the war (1991-95). For the past 15 years, he has been President of International Forum Bosnia, which is dedicated to the development of critical intelligence and a plural society in Bosnia. He is the author of more than 20 books in Bosnian, some 12 of which have been published in multiple languages, and author of several hundred academic articles and essays.

### **RUSSIA**

#### **Gaynutdin, Mufti Sheikh Ravil**

Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin is a Moscow-based scholar. Among various academic roles, he is Grand Mufti of Russia and Chairman of the Union of Muftis of Russia. He is probably the single most important figure in the schema of Russian Islam. As a member of the Russian President's Council for Coordination with Religious Organizations, he is a key figure in relations between the Kremlin and Russia's Muslim population.

### **SWITZERLAND**

#### **Ramadan, Dr Tariq**

Dr Ramadan is a European intellectual and author about Islam in public life. He was a professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University, and holds academic positions at other institutions worldwide. In February 2018, Ramadan was accused of raping two women (a third charge was dropped when the testimony of one of his accusers was discredited) and was arrested in that same month pending his trial. In 2020 he was charged with raping two more women. The French justice system has come under scrutiny for the way it treated Ramadan, denying him bail and putting him in solitary confinement where his physical health deteriorated (he

suffers from multiple sclerosis). In June 2023, he was cleared of rape charges and sexual coercion by a Swiss court, ending a six-year-long legal struggle. The past year has seen him appearing again on Muslim media channels.

### **TÜRKIYE**

#### **Karaman, Professor Dr Hayrettin**

Dr Karaman is one of the most prominent scholars of Islam in Türkiye, and the pre-eminent scholar of Islamic law (shariah) there. He publishes popular academic texts extensively and writes a weekly column in the newspaper *Yeni Safak* ('New Dawn'). His long career in academia has garnered him much respect. At the pinnacle of his career, Karaman was a dean at Türkiye's premier university, Marmara University. He left this position at the height of the headscarf controversy in 2001.

#### **Şentürk, Dr Recep (new)**

Dr Recep is an academic and sociologist of religion, and is presently the Dean of the College of Islamic Studies at Hamad bin Khalifa University in Doha, Qatar. He is also President of Usul Academy, a higher education institution that aims to deliver a classical madrasah education as well as contemporary subjects within an Islamic framework. He is the founder of Ibn Haldun University and was its president from 1917 to 2021. He obtained degrees from Marmara University and Istanbul University before obtaining a doctorate from Columbia University, New York. He is a strong advocate of non-western sociological theories, following the genre of Ibn Khaldun. His work focuses on social networks, human rights, and modernization in the Muslim world. He has authored several books, including: *Open Civilization, Modernization and Sociology, and Sociologies of New Religions*.

### **UNITED KINGDOM**

#### **Abdel Haleem, Professor Muhammad**

Professor Muhammad Abdel Haleem is a much-loved Director of the Centre of Islamic Studies at SOAS, University of London, and Editor of the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*. He was awarded an OBE in 2008 in recognition of his services to Arabic literature and interfaith understanding. He is a Member of the Conference of Academy of the Arabic Language, Cairo, and was awarded an honorary doctorate in Islamic Studies from the University of Jordan in

2006. Born in Egypt, Abdel Haleem memorized the Qur'an (this was a prerequisite for entry to Al-Azhar University) before starting his further education. He has many publications including a widely acclaimed translation of the Qur'an.

### **Hellyer, Dr Hisham**

Dr Hisham A (HA) Hellyer is currently a scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and senior associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies. Elected as a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the Royal Society of Arts for his scholarly and public impact over two decades in geopolitics, security studies, media, and belief, he has held positions at Harvard University, Warwick University, Brookings, and the American University in Cairo. Trained in the Islamic canon, he was previously appointed as fellow at the Centre of Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge, the first "senior scholar" of Azzawia Institute, Council Member of the British Board of Scholars and Imams, and professional fellow at Cambridge Muslim College. His seven books include: *Muslims of Europe: the 'Other' Europeans*; *A Revolution Undone: Egypt's Road Beyond Revolt*; *A Sublime Path: the Sufi Way of the Makkan Sages*; and *The Islamic Tradition and the Human Rights Discourse*.

### **Mangera, Dr Mufti Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf**

Dr Mufti Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf Mangera is a British Muslim scholar educated in both the Islamic and Western traditions. He has memorized the Qur'an and studied with accomplished scholars in the UK, South Africa, India, and Syria. He holds a PhD from SOAS and has served as an imam in the UK and USA. He is the founder of Whitethread Institute, a post-graduate institute for Islamic scholars. He works on scholarly publications through White Thread Press ([www.whitethreadpress.com](http://www.whitethreadpress.com)) with many of his lectures being available on [www.zamzamacademy.com](http://www.zamzamacademy.com).

### **Sardar, Ziauddin**

Ziauddin Sardar is considered as one of the top intellectuals in Britain and has been described as "Britain's own Muslim Polymath" by *The Independent* newspaper. He has authored and edited over 60 books covering a range of fields from Muslim thought, science policy, futures studies to history, philosophy and cultural relations. Sardar is credited with forming the postnormal times theory and serves as the Director of the Centre for Postnormal Policy and Futures

Studies. He has worked for *Nature*, the *New Scientist*, Channel 4 television and was a columnist on the *New Statesman* for twelve years. He has worked on numerous ground-breaking initiatives representing British Asian and Muslim communities, producing programmes for national TV, and serving on official Commissions and Forums. He has taught at UK universities and worked overseas. He currently edits the quarterly *Critical Muslim*, and works as an advisor to Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

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## *Oceania*

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### **NEW ZEALAND**

#### **Hayward, Professor Joel**

Dr Hayward has taught Islamic Studies in many elite institutions, including the Royal Air Force College (UK), of which he served as Dean for five years, Khalifah University (UAE), where he headed Humanities and Social Sciences, the National Defence College of the UAE and the Cambridge Muslim College, which he has led since 2023. He weaves together classical Islamic knowledge and methodologies and the source-critical Western historical method to make innovative yet carefully reasoned sense of complex historical issues that are still important in today's world. His books on Islam include: *Warfare in the Qur'an* (2012), *War is Deceit: An Analysis of a Contentious Hadith* (2017), *Civilian Immunity in Foundational Islamic Strategic Thought* (2019), and *The Leadership of Muhammad ﷺ: A Historical Reconstruction* (2021). The latter won the illustrious prize of Best International Non-Fiction Book at the 2021 Sharjah International Book Awards. His latest book (2022) is *The Warrior Prophet: Muhammad ﷺ & War*.

North America

### **CANADA**

#### **Mattson, Dr Ingrid**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 142

# A Common Word

[www.acommonword.com](http://www.acommonword.com)

The 'A Common Word Between Us and You' initiative (ACW) was launched on October 13th, 2007 initially as an Open Letter signed by 138 leading Muslim scholars and intellectuals (including such figures as the Grand Muftis of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Oman, Bosnia, Russia, and Istanbul) to the leaders of the Christian churches and denominations of the entire world, including His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. In essence it proposed, based on verses from the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Bible, that Islam and Christianity share, at their cores, the twin 'golden' commandments of the paramount importance of loving God and loving one's neighbour. Based on this joint common ground, it called for peace and harmony between Christians and Muslims worldwide, who together comprise over 55% of the world's population. ACW was and is an extended global handshake of interreligious goodwill, friendship and fellowship and consequently of world peace.

ACW is a document which uses religion as the solution to the problems of interreligious tensions. By basing itself on solid theological grounds in both religions—the twin Commandments to love God and love the neighbour—ACW has demonstrated to Christians and Muslims that they have a certain common ground (despite irreducible theological differences) and that both religions require them to have relations based on love not on hatred.

During the ten years since its launch ACW has become arguably the most influential interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians in history. It has provided a common ground on which thousands of Muslim and Christian religious leaders have been brought together through:

- Initiating a multitude of conferences, seminars, workshops, training programs, and university courses in Jordan, the Vatican, the USA (Yale University, Georgetown University and the College of William and Mary, Fuller Theological Seminary, ISNA, Oregon, Virginia, South Carolina, New Orleans), the UK (Cambridge University, Oxford University, Heythrop College and Lambeth Palace), Oman, Malaysia, Egypt, Sudan, Pakistan, the UAE, the Brookings Institute in Qatar, the Mediterranean Dialogue of Cultures, Germany (the Munich School of Philosophy), the World Council of Churches in Switzerland, the Philippines, and Australia.
- Being the subject of books, articles, PhDs and over 74 dissertations and reports.
- Founding the regular [every 3 years] Catholic-Muslim

Forum, which was first held at the Vatican in 2008, at the Baptism Site, Jordan, in 2011, and at the Vatican in November, 2014.

- Giving rise to a variety of other events, activities, initiatives and even legislative bills.

Thus HH Pope Benedict XVI, said of it (during the First Seminar of the Catholic-Muslim Forum held at the Vatican, 4-6 November 2008:

"The Open Letter 'A Common Word between Us and you' has received numerous responses and has given rise to dialogue, specific initiatives and meetings, aimed at helping us to know one another more deeply and to grow in esteem for our shared values."

Equally, HG Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, said of it (in 2010):

"The appearance of the A Common Word [Open Letter] of 2007 was a landmark in Muslim-Christian relations and it has a unique role in stimulating a discussion at the deepest level across the world."

Insofar as Muslim-Christian relations are concerned, Professor Miroslav Volf of Yale University said of it (in 2011):

"The A Common Word Initiative is the most significant initiative in Muslim-Christian relations since *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council."

And in so far as Muslim initiatives towards Christians are concerned, Professor David F. Ford (Regius Professor of Divinity, University of Cambridge, U. K. and Director of the Cambridge Interfaith Program) said of it (in 2011):

"The Open Letter A Common Word Between Us and You (2007) was probably the single most important initiative ever taken by Muslim scholars and authorities towards Christians."

The A Common Word initiative was awarded the UK's Association of Muslim Social Scientists Building Bridges Award of 2008; Prince Ghazi, Habib Ali Al-Jifri and Grand Mufti Mustafa Ceric were awarded Germany's Eugen Biser Award for it in 2008, and Prince Ghazi was awarded the St Augustine Award for Interreligious Dialogue in the Mediterranean (Milan, Italy, 2012) and the Interfaith Harmony and Tolerance Prize by the International Islamic University of Malaysia, *Jamia Ma'din* and the National Unity and Integration Department, Malaysia.

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### Ahmad, Dr Saiyad Nizamuddin (new)

Dr Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad is The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ University Professor of Shia Islam Studies at Florida International University (FIU). He holds additional roles at the University of Exeter and at Mufid Academic Seminary, Virginia, as well as having taught in Egypt, Malaysia and the UAE. Dr Ahmad earned his MA and PhD in Islamic Studies from Princeton University. He also studied with traditional masters completing both the Shia and Sunni canon, receiving *ijazaat* in numerous sciences and disciplines. His online classes attract ever more attention as he delves into the intellectual heritage of humanity.

### Bewley, Aisha

Aisha Bewley is a scholar, author, writer and one of the most prolific and accomplished translators of classical Islamic works from Arabic to English. Since converting to Islam in 1968, she has spent the decades faithfully learning the Islamic tradition and making available its key texts to the global English-speaking Muslim community, often in collaboration with her husband. She was born 1948 in the United States, obtained an MA in Near Eastern Languages from the University of California and then spent a year at the American University in Cairo. She started her traditional Islamic learning in a Dar al-Ulum and continued her journey following the teachings of Sheikh Muhammad ibn al-Habib of Meknes (passed away 1972) under the late Sheikh Abdalqadir al-Murabit (passed away 2021).

### Jackson, Dr Sherman

Dr Jackson is the King Faisal Chair in Islamic Thought and Culture and Distinguished Professor of Religion and American Studies and Ethnicity, and the Director of the Center for Islamic Thought, Culture and Practice (CITCAP) at the University of Southern California. He is a well-respected scholar and author of works dealing with Islam, shariah, Islamic jurisprudence and theology, and Islam in the African-American Muslim community. Jackson is the co-founder of the American Learning Institute for Muslims (ALIM) and has been featured on the *Washington Post-Newsweek* blog 'On Faith' and the *Huffington Post*. He is a former member of the Fiqh Council of North America and a former professor of Law, Near Eastern Studies, and Afro-American Studies at the University of Michigan.

### Qadhi, Dr Yasir

Dr Yasir Qadhi is one of very few professors of Islamic studies who is also a classically trained scholar (Yale University and the Islamic University of Madinah respectively). Currently he is the Dean of The Islamic Seminary of America, the Resident Scholar of the East Plano Center, Texas and a former professor at Rhodes College, Memphis, TN. He has established a reputation as a cleric who appreciates the cultural impact that Muslims have to face in the US and is prepared to address sensitive topics head on, but bringing nuance. He is also renowned for reaching out to media outlets and mainstream Americans of different religions to promote a better understanding of Islam, and to challenge stereotypes about Muslims in the US.

# The Muslim Council of Elders

[www.muslim-elders.com](http://www.muslim-elders.com)

The Muslim Council of Elders is an independent international body that was established on 21 Ramadan 1435 Hijri (18 July 2014) in order to promote peace in Muslim communities. The goal of the Muslim Council of Elders is to create secure societies that respect knowledge and scholars; to encourage dialogue, tolerance, respect for others, and peace; to restore the role of scholars by using their expertise to improve muslim societies; and to help eliminate causes of fragmentation and promote conciliation.

The council consists of Muslim scholars, experts and dignitaries known for their wisdom, sense of justice, independence and moderateness. They work together to promote peace, to discourage infighting, and to address the sources of conflict, divisiveness, and fragmentation in Muslim communities.

Based in the United Arab Emirates' capital, Abu Dhabi, the council is the first institutional body that aims to bring the Islamic nation together by extinguishing the fire that threatens Islam's humanitarian values and tolerant principles, and putting an end to the sectarianism and violence that have plagued the Muslim world for decades.

The Muslim Council of Elders was formed as a result of the recommendations of The Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, and it is a joint initiative by Grand Imam Sheikh Dr Ahmad al-Tayyib, the Sheikh of al-Azhar, and the forum's chairman scholar Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah.

*Middle East and North Africa*

## IRAN

**Ebtekar, Dr Masoumeh**

Dr Ebtekar was the first female Vice President of Iran. A scientist, journalist and politician, she frequently writes on environmental, political, social, and women's issues in Persian and English. She is one of the founding members of the reformist Islamic Iran Participation Front and served as Head of the Environmental Protection Organization under Rouhani and Khatami. Her accolades include the Energy Globe Foundation Honorary Lifetime Achievement Award, being named one of the seven 2006 Champions of the Earth by the United Nations Environment Program, and one of 50 environmental leaders by *The Guardian* newspaper. In 2016, Dr Ebtekar was awarded an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Political Science by the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, Korea. In August 2017, Ebtekar was appointed as Vice President of Women and Family Affairs, a post she held until 2021. She holds a PhD in immunology, a subject she still teaches at Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran.

**Pezeshkian, HE President Masoud (new)**

President Masoud Pezeshkian is the 9th President of Iran, having taken office in July 2024 following the death of the previous president in a helicopter accident. He was a Member of the Consultative Assembly from 2008 to 2024, and Minister of Health and Health Education from 2001 to 2005. The President is a qualified heart surgeon, having studied at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences and Iran University of Medical Sciences. His medical specialization led him to become the President of Tabriz University from 1994 to 1999. He served in the Iran-Iraq War, as both fighter and doctor, between 1980 and 1988. Unlike his predecessors, he is seen as a moderate and reformer, seeking a more conciliatory approach.

## IRAQ

**Barzani, Masoud**

Barzani entered the political arena at the young age of 16 under the wing of his late father and became the

leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in 1979. He played a major role in shaping the new Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. He has been the main force fighting DA'ISH and is adamant about establishing an independent Kurdish state. He was President of the Iraqi Kurdish Region from 2005-2017, but had to resign because of fierce regional opposition to the referendum he held in September 2017 for Kurdish independence (there was overwhelming support for an independent Kurdistan). There are approximately 8 million Kurds living within the Kurdish region in Iraq, 15 million in Türkiye, 10 million in Iran, and over 3 million in Syria.

**Al-Sudani, Mohammed Shayya**

Mohammed Shayya Sabbar Al-Sudani is the current Prime Minister of Iraq. Previously, he served as the Governor of Maysan Province (2009-2010) as well as the Human Rights Minister (2010-2014). He was nominated for post of prime minister during a year-long political crisis and succeeded in forming a government in October 2022 despite Muqtada Al-Sadr's opposition. The latter has rallied against excessive Iranian and USA involvement in the governance of Iraq. In July 2023, after Sweden approved a planned Qur'an-burning, Al-Sudani expelled the Swedish ambassador to Iraq and revoked work permits for Swedish companies.

## ISRAEL

**Salah, Sheikh Raed**

Sheikh Raed Salah is head of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel. He is widely respected in the Islamic world as a religious leader. From 1989 to 2001, Salah also served as the Mayor of Umm Al-Fahm, an Israeli-Arab city. He is frequently arrested and imprisoned by the Israeli government and, in February 2020, a court in Israel sentenced Salah to 28 months in prison for "inciting to terror", much of which was spent in solitary confinement. In December 2021, he was released from prison after having served 16 months of his sentence.

## JORDAN

**Abu Rashta, Ata**

Ata Abu Rashta is the global leader of the Islamic

# The Marrakesh Declaration

[www.marrakeshdeclaration.org](http://www.marrakeshdeclaration.org)

## In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate

Executive Summary of the Marrakesh Declaration  
on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly  
Muslim Majority Communities

25th-27th January 2016

WHEREAS, conditions in various parts of the Muslim World have deteriorated dangerously due to the use of violence and armed struggle as a tool for settling conflicts and imposing one's point of view;

WHEREAS, this situation has also weakened the authority of legitimate governments and enabled criminal groups to issue edicts attributed to Islam, but which, in fact, alarmingly distort its fundamental principles and goals in ways that have seriously harmed the population as a whole;

WHEREAS, this year marks the 1,400th anniversary of the Charter of Medina, a constitutional contract between the Prophet Muhammad, God's peace and blessings be upon him, and the people of Medina, which guaranteed the religious liberty of all, regardless of faith;

WHEREAS, hundreds of Muslim scholars and intellectuals from over 120 countries, along with representatives of Islamic and international organisations, as well as leaders from diverse religious groups and nationalities, gathered in Marrakesh on this date to reaffirm the principles of the Charter of Medina at a major conference;

WHEREAS, this conference was held under the auspices of His Majesty, King Mohammed VI of Morocco, and organised jointly by the Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs in the Kingdom of Morocco and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies based in the United Arab Emirates;

AND NOTING the gravity of this situation afflicting Muslims as well as peoples of other faiths throughout the world, and after thorough deliberation and discussion, the convened Muslim scholars and intellectuals:

DECLARE HEREBY our firm commitment to the principles articulated in the Charter of Medina, whose provisions contained a number of the principles of constitutional contractual citizenship, such as freedom of movement, property ownership, mutual solidarity and defence, as well as principles of justice and equality before the law; and that,

The objectives of the Charter of Medina provide a suitable framework for national constitutions in countries with Muslim majorities, and the United Nations Charter and related documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are in harmony with the Charter of Medina, including consideration for public order.

NOTING FURTHER that deep reflection upon the various crises afflicting humanity underscores the inevitable and urgent need for cooperation among all religious groups, we

AFFIRM HEREBY that such cooperation must be based on a "Common Word," requiring that such cooperation must go beyond mutual tolerance and respect, to providing full protection for the rights and liberties to all religious groups in a civilised manner that eschews coercion, bias, and arrogance.

BASED ON ALL OF THE ABOVE, we hereby:

Call upon Muslim scholars and intellectuals around the world to develop a jurisprudence of the concept of "citizenship" which is inclusive of diverse groups. Such jurisprudence shall be rooted in Islamic tradition and principles and mindful of global changes.

Urge Muslim educational institutions and authorities to conduct a courageous review of educational curricula that addresses honestly and effectively any material that instigates aggression and extremism, leads to war and chaos, and results in the destruction of our shared societies;

Call upon politicians and decision makers to take the political and legal steps necessary to establish a constitutional contractual relationship among its citizens, and to support all formulations and initiatives that aim to fortify relations and understanding among the various religious groups in the Muslim World;

Call upon the educated, artistic, and creative members of our societies, as well as organisations of civil society, to establish a broad movement for the just treatment of religious minorities in Muslim countries and to raise awareness as to their rights, and to work together to ensure the success of these efforts.

Call upon the various religious groups bound by the same national fabric to address their mutual state of selective amnesia that blocks memories of centuries of joint and shared living on the same land; we call upon them to rebuild the past by reviving this tradition of conviviality, and restoring our shared trust that has been eroded by extremists using acts of terror and aggression;

Call upon representatives of the various religions, sects and denominations to confront all forms of religious bigotry, vilification, and denigration of what people hold sacred, as well as all speech that promote hatred and bigotry; AND FINALLY,

AFFIRM that it is unconscionable to employ religion for the purpose of aggressing upon the rights of religious minorities in Muslim countries.

Marrakesh

January 2016 , 27th



political party Hizb ut-Tahrir. Having worked closely with the organization's founder, Taqiuddin Al-Nabhani, Abu Rashta gained prominence in Jordan during the First Gulf War when he contested the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In 2003, he became the leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Hizb-ut Tahrir is popular in the Levant, the former Soviet Union, South and Southeast Asia, and Western Europe.

#### **HRH Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah**

Named Crown Prince in 2009, HRH Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah is the eldest son of His Majesty King Abdullah II, making him heir to the throne. HRH holds the rank of First Lieutenant in the Jordanian Armed Forces, and has accompanied his father on several military and political occasions. His efforts to develop the Jordanian youth community started with the Hageq (achieve) initiative, an activity targeting school-aged children. In 2015, Crown Prince Hussein became the youngest person to chair a UN Security Council meeting and in 2017 he delivered Jordan's address at the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly. He married in 2023 and became a father in 2024.

### **KUWAIT**

#### **HE Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (new)**

HE Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah became the Emir of Kuwait in 2023. Born in 1940, he spent most of his career in Kuwait's security and intelligence apparatus, culminating in his role as deputy chief of the Kuwait National Guard. His appointment as Crown Prince in 2020 at the age of 80 marked him as the world's oldest crown prince. As Emir, he has taken bold steps, including dissolving the National Assembly and suspending constitutional articles to address political deadlock.

### **LIBYA**

#### **Haftar, Khalifa**

Khalifa Haftar rose to prominence after the uprising against the late General Gaddafi, and was the person who announced that the Libyan government had been suspended. A leading figure in Libya's military establishment, Haftar became a major general in the Libyan Army in 2011. Haftar's Libyan National Army is at odds with the UN-recognized government and seized control of Libyan oil ports in 2018. The UAE, Egypt, and Russia continue to support

Haftar whereas the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) is headed by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh and is supported by Türkiye and Qatar.

### **OMAN**

#### **HRH Sultan Haitham bin Tariq**

Sultan Haitham bin Tariq ascended the throne on 11 January 2020 after the passing of his cousin, Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Previously, Sultan Haitham served as Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and as Minister of Heritage and Culture from 2002, a position he held until his inauguration as Sultan of Oman. In his first speech to his nation, Sultan Haitham promised to "follow the path of Sultan Qaboos and build upon it". Sultan Haitham is a passionate sportsman and was the first to head the Oman Football Association in the early 1980s. He is also chairman of the "2040 Oman Vision" and was described by *The Economist* as "outward-looking and Western-oriented".

### **PALESTINE**

#### **Abbas, HE President Mahmoud**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 143

#### **Barghouti, Mustafa (new)**

A physician by profession, Mustafa Barghouti is a co-founder of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society and has served as a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Known for his efforts to promote Palestinian statehood, he is also critical of both Israeli policies and internal Palestinian governance issues. Barghouti's roles include serving as the General Secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative (PNI), also known as al-Mubadara, and he has been a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council since 2006. Additionally, he is a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Central Council. He also served as Minister of Information in the Palestinian unity government in 2007.

#### **Al-Kahlout, Hodayfa (Abu Obaida) (new)**

Hodayfa Al-Kahlout, known as Abu Obaida, is the spokesperson for Hamas' military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, with 85% of recruits being orphans whose parents were killed by Israeli forces. He was born in 1985, hails from Naalia and currently resides in Jabalia. Prior to 2014, he completed a

master's dissertation at the Islamic University of Gaza on 'The Holy Land between Judaism, Christianity and Islam'. Since the beginning of the Gaza genocide, his social media briefings have gained increased prominence with his statements and appearances closely followed by both supporters and opponents.

### **Mashal, Khaled**

Khaled Mashal was Hamas' politburo chief from 2004-2017. His term began after the Israeli assassinations of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and Abdel Aziz Al-Rantisi in 2004 and ended in a peaceful transition to the late Ismail Haniyeh. Mashal saw the organization through multiple attempts at a roadmap to peace and a major Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip. Mashal has shown a willingness to negotiate with Israel to return to the 1967 borders and grant Palestinians a right of return, while importantly implying the necessary existence of the State of Israel, despite Hamas's historic denial of that possibility. Mashal has been one of the most direct and candid leaders in dialogue and confrontation with Israel and this has garnered international recognition. In 2021, Hamas elected Mashal for a four-year term as head of its office in the diaspora.

## **SUDAN**

### **Abdalla, Asma Mohamed**

Asma Mohamed Abdalla became Sudan's first female Minister of Foreign Affairs in early September 2019 in Sudan's Transitional Cabinet. Previously she had served as ambassador and worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before being dismissed after the 1989 coup d'état which brought Omar Al-Bashir to power. She left Sudan and lived in exile, doing work for IS-ESCO and UNICEF amongst other organizations. During the 2018-19 Sudanese protests, Abdalla joined the Forces of Freedom and Change.

## **SYRIA**

### **Al-Assad, HE President Bashar**

Al-Assad is President of the Syrian Arab Republic. Since 2011, the civil war between the regime and an assortment of groups (loosely gathered under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army) has resulted in approximately 580,000 people being killed, seven million displaced internally, and about seven million having fled the country in a humanitarian crisis which continues to have a destabilizing influence on neighbouring countries. In May 2021, Al-Assad won

a fourth term in office with 95.1% of the votes. He attended the Arab League summit in Jeddah in May 2023 after a 12-year ban, showing that he has re-established relations with most Arab countries. In June 2024, the Paris appeals court determined that the international arrest warrant issued by France against Al-Assad for alleged complicity in war crimes during the Syrian War remains valid.

## **TUNISIA**

### **Saied, HE President Kais**

President Kais Saied ran as an independent candidate with broad political support and popular appeal to win the presidential election in 2019. With economic conditions not improving, protests were dealt with in a heavy-handed manner, and then in July 2021 Saied suspended parliament and dismissed the Prime Minister. A year later a new constitution was adopted through a referendum (30% turnout) and December 2022 elections recorded the lowest turnout in history (9%). With opposition figures being imprisoned and media pressured, most fear that Tunisia is returning to a pre-Arab Spring type rule.

## **UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

### **HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum**

HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum is the constitutional monarch of Dubai, as well as the Prime Minister and Vice President of the United Arab Emirates. In 1995, as Crown Prince of Dubai, his chief objective was to make Dubai a resort and business destination. To that end, he helped develop the Palm Islands, the Burj Al-Arab hotel, the Burj Khalifa skyscraper, the Dubai World Cup and the Godolphin Stables. He has also launched multiple charity initiatives from Dubai, such as "Dubai Cares", which has reached over 18 million beneficiaries in 53 countries since its inception in 2007. As well as his outstanding political and business achievements, he is also an author, a poet and a world-class horseman.

### **Al-Qassimi, Sheikha Lubna**

Sheikha Lubna bint Khalid bin Sultan Al-Qassimi was the first woman to hold a ministerial post in the UAE (Minister of Economy from 2004-2008), going on to hold a further three ministerial posts (Minister of Foreign Trade (2008-2013), Minister of International Cooperation and Development (2013-2016), and being the UAE's first Minister of State for Tolerance (2016-17)). In 2000, she founded Tejari, the

Middle East's first business-to-business online marketplace which now has franchises in Kuwait, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. She was also President of Zayed University between 2014-18.

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## *Sub-Saharan Africa*

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### NIGERIA

#### **Tinubu, HE President Chief Bola Ahmed**

Chief Bola Ahmed Tinubu became the 16th President of Nigeria after winning presidential elections in February 2023. A member of the Social Democratic Party since 1991, he was forced into exile from 1994-1998 when Nigeria fell to a dictatorship. Upon his return he was elected the governor of Lagos State from 1999 to 2007, initiating new road constructions amongst other achievements. After leaving office in 2007, he played a key role in the formation of the All Progressives Congress and supported former President Buhari in his successful 2014 and 2109 campaigns. Since becoming President himself, he has taken significant actions, such as removing fuel subsidies, suspending the governor of the central bank and retiring 150 major generals in an effort to reduce the power of the military over state security.

### SENEGAL

#### **Faye, HE President Bassirou Diomaye (new)**

Faye became the 5th President of Senegal in April 2024, as the General Secretary of the PASTEF political party. Hailing from Western Senegal, Faye's traditional village upbringing deeply influenced his values and leadership style. After studying law in Dakar, he embarked on a career as a tax inspector in the Tax and Estates department. As President, Faye has committed to battling corruption and overhauling Senegal's economy. A staunch advocate of left-wing Pan-Africanism, he is focused on reclaiming Senegal's sovereignty and has vowed to end the "French economic stranglehold" on the country.

### SOMALIA

#### **Adam, Fawzia Yusuf Haji**

Fawzia's influence stems from the fact that she was the first woman to be named Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Somalia (2012-2014). She had a significant role in revitalizing the Somali economy

by recovering national assets that were frozen, as well as signing an agreement with Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan for bilateral cooperation. A similar agreement was also signed with China. Fawzia launched a TV channel named RAAD TV aimed at providing a better image of the unstable and war-torn Somalia. She ran in the 2022 Somali presidential election, but lost to Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. In January 2024, she was nominated by Somalia for the position of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

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## *Asia*

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### AFGHANISTAN

#### **Baradar, Abdul Ghani**

Baradar is the political head of the Taliban and Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs of Afghanistan. Baradar fought against the Soviet invasion until their withdrawal in 1989, then set up a madrasah in Kandahar with his former commander, Mullah Mohammad Omar, which produced the Taliban. During the Taliban's first time in power (1996-2001), Baradar held a number of key posts, including that of Deputy Minister of Defence. In 2010, Baradar was imprisoned in Pakistan and only released after the Trump Administration started talks with the Taliban in 2018. He then became the Taliban's chief ambassador and spoke directly to President Trump.

### CHINA

#### **Kadeer, Rebiya**

Kadeer is the de facto leader of the movement for social justice for the 15-million-strong Uyghur ethnic-population of China. She was formerly a successful businesswoman and philanthropist in China but was imprisoned in 1999 for leaking state secrets and now lives in exile in the United States. Before her arrest, Kadeer was running the 1,000 Families Mother's Project which helped Uyghur women start businesses. She now works closely with both the World Uyghur Congress and the Uyghur American Association. She is well-known for her work in Europe and North America publicizing the plight of the Uyghur ethnic group, and is partially responsible for raising the issue both in China and abroad. The Chinese government sees Kadeer as an agitator.

## INDIA

### **Farooq, Dr Mohammad Umar**

Dr Farooq inherited the 14th Mirwaiz (traditional preacher of Muslims in Kashmir) in 1990 at the age of 17 after the assassination of his father. At the young age of 20 he became Chairman and Founder of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, a grassroots coalition of pro-freedom parties in Jammu & Kashmir. He has raised the Kashmiri problem at the UN, the EU parliament, and the IOC, advocating dialogue with both India and Pakistan so that the aspirations of the Kashmiri people may be realized. After being placed under house arrest in August 2019, he was eventually granted permission to leave in September 2023 and his attendance at prayers elicited an emotional response.

## INDONESIA

### **Parawansa, Khofifah Indar**

Parawansa served as the 14th Governor of East Java 2019-2024. She had previously served as the Deputy Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives and the Minister of Social Affairs. She has been a strong supporter of inter-faith unity and also led a campaign to reduce red-light districts by offering alternative jobs. She was also chairwoman of the Muslimat, a women's group affiliated to Nahdlatul Ulama. She has 2 million followers on social media.

### **Sukarnoputri, Megawati**

Megawati Sukarnoputri is the daughter of Indonesia's first President, Sukarno. She served as Vice President from 1999-2001 and then became Indonesia's first female president (from 2001 to 2004) and the fourth woman to be the leader of a Muslim-majority nation. She was mentor to former president Joko Jokowi Widodo (2014 and 2019 winner). She is the current head of the PDI-P party.

### **Widodo, HE Joko**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page 143

## KAZAKHSTAN

### **Tokayev, HE President Kassym-Jomart**

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev became the second President of Kazakhstan in 2019, ending the 28-year rule of Nursultan Nazarbayev. President Tokayev has gradually introduced reform and is leading

the country into a more democratic and transparent nation. January 2022 saw some violent outbreaks, but a June referendum has given the President the mandate to push ahead with reforms. Significant reforms include limiting the presidential rule to one seven-year term (the previous president was re-elected five times) and reverting to the original name of the capital city, Astana. It had been renamed Nur-Sultan in 2019 in honour of the first President. In November, 2022, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev won the early presidential election with 81.31% of the vote and was re-elected.

## MALAYSIA

### **Mohamad, HE Mahathir**

Mahathir is a dominant political figure. In his first tenure as Prime Minister (1981-2003) he won five consecutive general elections. He is noted for his support for liberal Muslim values and has established Islamic institutions such as the International Islamic University of Malaysia. Mahathir has, however, been criticized for his record on civil liberties and for the trials and tribulations that his former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, endured after being sacked by Mahathir in 1998. After retiring for many years, Mahathir registered a new political party in 2017 and joined the coalition Pakatan Harapan ('Pact of Hope') which went on to win the 2018 elections with Mahathir becoming, at 94 years old, the world's oldest sitting head of government—a position he held until February 2020.

### **Wan Ismail, Datuk Seri Wan Azizah**

Datuk Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail was the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia (the first woman to serve in that position) from 2018-2020. She served as a government doctor for 14 years before deciding to support her husband, Anwar Ibrahim, when he was appointed the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia in 1993. Since then, her political journey has been largely defined by his struggles. Following the dismissal and arrest of her husband in 1998, Wan Azizah moved full-time into politics, forming political parties, alliances and winning seats at general elections. She has been a Member of Parliament (MP) for Bandar Tun Razak since November 2022.

## PAKISTAN

### **Khan, Imran**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 143

### **Munir, General Syed Asim**

Syed Asim Munir Ahmed Shah is an army general and the current Chief of Army Staff. A descendant of a religious and scholarly family, Asim is also known as the first army chief in the history of Pakistan to be a *Hafiz* Qur'an (memorized the entire Qur'an). He served as chief of both premier military intelligence agencies of Pakistan although his tenure at ISI was short-lived after a falling out with then-Prime Minister Imran Khan, whom he has subsequently had imprisoned. He must navigate unprecedented national criticism of the army's influence on Pakistan's democracy as the country goes through turbulent times politically and economically.

### **Sharif, Mian Muhammad Shehbaz**

Shehbaz Sharif became the 24th Prime Minister of Pakistan in March 2024, having served as the 23rd Prime Minister (2022-23) after a no-confidence motion against former Prime Minister Imran Khan. Sharif is the brother of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and has himself had a long political career, being the President of the Pakistan Muslim League and serving as the Chief Minister of Punjab three times (1997, 2007 and 2013). He was arrested in 2020 on charges of corruption and money laundering and spent a few months in jail before being granted bail in April 2021.

### **Sharif, Nawaz**

Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif served as Prime Minister of Pakistan on three occasions: from 1990-1993, from 1997-1999, and from 2013-2017. On the last occasion he was forced to resign over corruption charges and in 2018 was convicted of corruption. He received a ten-year sentence and spent two months in prison before the Pakistan High Court suspended the sentence (the same happened to his daughter, Maryam). Sharif was then found guilty of fresh corruption charges and an accountability court sentenced him to seven years in prison and fined him \$25 million. He was allowed to leave for London to receive medical treatment in November 2019. In 2023, after four years of exile, he returned to Pakistan. He is still seen as one of the most significant players in Pakistani politics.

## **PHILIPPINES**

### **Gutoc-Tomawis, Samira**

Samira Gutoc-Tomawis is a strong advocate for minorities and peace in the Philippines. She has pushed policies for Muslims that turned into law such as Eid holidays. She has particularly strong support in Marawi City, where she runs relief missions to civilians still suffering the results of the five-month battle in Marawi between government forces and DA'ISH supporters in 2017. She chairs an *Ngo Ako Bakwit* dedicated to displaced persons. She has been critical of the delayed rehabilitation of the city ravaged by the war and the continued imposition of martial law in Mindanao. She served as a member of the Regional Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao and a member of the *Bangsamoro Transition Commission*. In 2019, she ran for the Senate and placed 25th. In 2021, she joined *Aksyon Demokratiko's* national executive board, but was unsuccessful in her bid for the senate in 2022.

### **Misuari, Nur**

Nur Misuari began his campaign through the *Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM)* in the 1970s, which later became the *Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)*. Under Misuari's leadership the MNLF challenged the government until the *Tripoli Agreement* was negotiated in 1976. Misuari was charged in connection to the deadly 20-day attack in Zamboanga city in September 2013, which left nearly 200 people dead; but in 2016, Misuari was granted a temporary suspension of his arrest and asked for his help in the peace negotiations in Mindanao. In late 2019, President Duterte appointed Nur Misuari as *Special Economic Envoy on Islamic Affairs* to the *Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)*. Despite recent pressure to arrest Misuari, he continues to work toward peace with the Philippines' government and has offered to deploy MNLF fighters to help defeat the DA'ISH-backed *Maute Group*.

## **SINGAPORE**

### **Rasheed, Zainul Abidin**

Rasheed is Singapore's *Ambassador to Kuwait* and the *Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs* to the Middle East. In 2017, he was appointed to the *Board of Trustees* at the *Nanyang Technological University of Singapore*. He previously served as *Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs* for Singapore and *mayor of the city-state's North Eastern district*.

Rasheed's activities focus on Singapore's diplomatic relations with the Muslim world and sharing Singapore's expertise in inter-cultural and inter-religious relations with nations that have substantial Muslim populations. Rasheed is widely known domestically, having held numerous positions of leadership throughout his career in journalism, organized labour, and representation of Singapore's large Muslim community.

## UZBEKISTAN

### **Mirziyoyev, HE President Shavkat**

In 2023 President Shavkat Mirziyoyev won his third (although officially it is his first under the new constitution which limits presidents to two terms in office) election, a seven-year term, winning 87% of the vote. Since succeeding the authoritarian Islam Karimov (who ruled for 25 years before he died in office), President Shavkat has introduced gradual reform including restricting the power of the security services, encouraging foreign trade and investment and allowing more political freedom. He has looked to better relations with neighbouring countries as well as the USA, China and Russia. Shavkat served as Prime Minister from 2013-2016 before being elected President.

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## *Europe*

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## KOSOVO

### **Osmani-Sadriu, President Vjosa**

Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu was elected the 5th President of Kosovo in 2021, running on an anti-corruption platform. A law graduate, she has been involved in politics from an early age including being elected to the Assembly of Kosovo, holding the position of Speaker and also serving as acting president. She experienced the effects of war in her hometown and went on to help prepare the legal work for Kosovo's independence. As President she is willing to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

## NETHERLANDS

### **Aboutaleb, Ahmed**

Ahmed Aboutaleb has served as Mayor of Rotterdam since 2009, and is set to retire in October 2024. Born in Morocco and arriving in the Netherlands

at the age of 15, Aboutaleb has also served as State Secretary for Social Affairs and Employment. He has balanced the racial and interfaith tensions that exist in Rotterdam. In December 2020, he was confirmed as Mayor for a third term and in 2021 won the World Mayor Award.

## RUSSIA

### **Kadyrov, HE President Ramzan**

Ramzan Kadyrov is the President of Chechnya and the son of the former president, rebel leader and mufti, Akhmad Kadyrov. In 2016, Kadyrov was re-elected with nearly 98% of the vote. He has overseen a massive reconstruction of Chechnya, and has held several important international Islamic conferences, including one that attempted to define Sunni Islam in 2016. A Putin loyalist, who was recently promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General in the National Guard, he has offered key support in the war on Ukraine.

## TÜRKIYE

### **Davutoğlu, Ahmet**

Ahmet Davutoğlu was Prime Minister of Türkiye from 2014, before differences with President Erdoğan saw him resign in 2016. He is a political science academic who was appointed Ambassador, Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and then Prime Minister in rapid succession. In 2019, Davutoğlu resigned from the AKP accusing it of falling into a culture of corruption. He then launched a new political party, the Future Party, becoming its first leader, and now hopes to build it into a political force.

## UNITED KINGDOM

### **Khan, Sadiq**

Please read bio in Honorable Mentions section on page. 143

### **Shah, Naseem**

Naseem Shah, more commonly known as Naz Shah, has been Labour MP for Bradford West since 2015. She served as the Shadow Minister for Crime Reduction, before resigning over the Labour Party's stance on a Gaza ceasefire proposal. She has previously held shadow ministerial posts of state for Women and Equalities (2018-20) and Community Cohesion (2020-21). She is a strong voice for victimized

groups and community groups. She has championed the voice of the British Muslim community on the issues of Kashmir and Palestine and has spoken powerfully in the House of Commons in defence of the Prophet ﷺ.

### **Warsi, Baroness Sayeeda**

Baroness Warsi was Britain's first Muslim Cabinet Minister. From May 2010 to September 2012 she was the Chairman of the Conservative Party, and a Minister without Portfolio in David Cameron's Cabinet. From 2012 she served as Minister of State for Faith and Communities and Senior Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. She resigned from her post in August 2014, citing her disagreement with the UK Government's policy over the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict. Baroness Warsi is involved in a number of charities and educational institutions, and remains an authoritative and powerful voice on the issue of Islamophobia. In 2017, Baroness Warsi published her first book, *The Enemy Within: A Tale of Muslim Britain*. In 2024, her second book, *Muslim's Don't Matter* was released. She is also co-host of the political reality show 'Make Me Prime Minister', and a regular presenter on daytime TV. In 2024 she launched her Podcast, *A Muslim & A Jew Go There*.

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## *Oceania*

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### **AUSTRALIA**

#### **Husic, Ed**

In 2010, Ed Husic became the first Muslim to be elected to the Australian Federal Parliament. When Kevin Rudd announced the Second Rudd Ministry in 2013, Husic was named as Parliament Secretary to the Prime Minister. Taking his oath on the Qur'an, Husic became the first Muslim sworn in to the Australian federal government frontbench. With his rise in political prominence came growing Islamophobic abuse directed toward him. After Labor's victory in the 2022 Australian federal election, Husic became the Minister for Industry and Science.

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## *North America*

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### **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

#### **Carson, André**

André Carson was the second Muslim to be elected to the US Congress. He was first elected to Congress in 2008, and is now serving his eighth two-year term as representative of Indiana's seventh congressional district. Alongside national issues, he has spoken against Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory, voted against a House resolution condemning the BDI movement and, at the end of July 2022, he announced a bill to investigate the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

#### **Ellison, Keith**

Keith Ellison was the first Muslim to serve in the US Congress. He represented the Fifth Congressional District of Minnesota from 2007-2019 before deciding to run for attorney general rather than congress. He was duly elected as the 30th Attorney General of Minnesota becoming the first Muslim in the US to win statewide office, and he was re-elected in 2022. Ellison has been an outspoken advocate for American Muslims, and his trips to the Muslim world have garnered international support for his outreach.

#### **Omar, Ilhan**

Ilham Omar has been the US Representative for Minnesota's 5th congressional district since 2019, (having received the largest percentage of the vote of any female candidate for US House in state history). She is vocal in her support for the working class, students, the environment, Palestinians and other causes. Former President Trump tweeted against her on numerous occasions resulting in death-threats from white supremacists. Born in Mogadishu, Somalia, to a Somali father and Yemeni mother, Omar came to the USA in 1995 at the age of 13. She excelled in studies and started work as a community nutrition educator whilst also working as a campaign manager. She is the Director of an association that advocates for women from East Africa to take on civic and political leadership roles.

#### **Tlaib, Rashida**

Born in the USA, Rashida Tlaib won the Democratic nomination for the US House of Representatives seat from Michigan's 13th congressional district in 2018 and was unopposed in the general election,

thus becoming the first Palestinian-American woman, and joint first Muslim woman, in Congress. She has previously served in the Michigan State House (2009 to 2014), and was the first Muslim woman

ever elected to the state's legislature. She has been vocal in her opposition to the Israeli onslaught in Gaza and held up a 'war criminal' sign when Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu addressed Congress.

عَزَّ وَجَلَّ  
عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَيْضًا أَنَّ لَيْلَةَ إِصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ لِلنَّبِيِّ ﷺ  
يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ هَبْ لَنَا لَيْلَةً نَجُودُ فِيهَا بِأَجْرِ صَالِحِينَ نَصِيحِي وَصِيونِي نَصِيحِي وَتَصَدَّقُونَ فَنُصَلِّ بِأَجْرِ صَالِحِينَ  
قَالَ أَوَلَيْسَ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ مَا تَصَدَّقُونَ كَمَا تَسْبِيحُ صِدْقَةٍ وَكَمَا تَكْبِيرُ صِدْقَةٍ وَكَمَا تَحْمَدُ صِدْقَةً  
وَكَأَنَّ لَيْلَةَ صِدْقَةٍ وَأَمَّا نَالِجٌ وَوَصَدَقَةٌ وَنَوْعٌ مِنْ صِدْقَةٍ وَفِي بَعْضِ أَحَادِيثِ صِدْقَةُ الْقَوْلِ :  
يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ إِجْرٍ أَشْهُوَرِي كَوْنِي فِيهَا إِجْرًا أَلَيْتِي لَوْ وَضَعْتُمَا فِي حَرَامٍ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ وَزْنٌ  
فَكَذَلِكَ إِذَا وَضَعْتُمَا فِي الْحَلَالِ كَانَ لَكُمْ إِجْرٌ

Some people from amongst the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to the Prophet ﷺ, "O Messenger of Allah, the affluent have made off with the rewards; they pray as we pray, they fast as we fast, and they give [much] in charity by virtue of their wealth." He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Has not Allah made things for you to give in charity? Truly every tasbeehah [saying: 'subhan-Allah'] is a charity, and every takbeerah [saying: 'Allahu akbar'] is a charity, and every tahmeedah [saying: 'al-hamdu lillah'] is a charity, and every thaleelah [saying: 'laa ilaha illAllah'] is a charity. And commanding the good is a charity, and forbidding an evil is a charity, and in the bud'i [sexual act] of each one of you there is a charity." They said, "O Messenger of Allah, when one of us fulfils his carnal desire will he have some reward for that?" He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Do you not see that if he were to act upon it [his desire] in an unlawful manner then he would be deserving of punishment? Likewise, if he were to act upon it in a lawful manner then he will be deserving of a reward."

Related by Muslim

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# ADMINISTRATION OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

## *Middle East and North Africa*

### EGYPT

#### **Ayyad, Grand Mufti Nazir Mohamed (new)**

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi appointed Nazir Mohamed Ayyad as Egypt's new Grand Mufti for a four-year term, following a recommendation from the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayeb. Ayyad succeeds Shawki Allam, who served as Grand Mufti since 2013. A respected scholar in Islamic jurisprudence, creed, and philosophy, Ayyad previously held the position of secretary-general of Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy. Known for his moderate stance, he actively promotes interfaith dialogue and combats extremism and Islamophobia. As Grand Mufti, Ayyad will lead Egypt's Dar Al-Ifta, the institution responsible for issuing fatwas and providing Islamic legal guidance on various matters impacting both personal and public life.

#### **Badie, Dr Mohammed**

Dr Mohammed Badie succeeded Mohammad Mahdi Akef as the 8th Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in January 2010. Following the military coup against Morsi's leadership, he was one of many Muslim Brotherhood leaders arrested. Badie—whose son was shot dead during one of the counter-protests against the coup—was sentenced to death in April 2015 along with 13 other senior Muslim Brotherhood members. He is currently serving multiple life sentences in prison.

### IRAN

#### **Rashad, Professor Ali Akbar**

Professor Ali Akbar Rashad founded the Research Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, and has been its President since its establishment in 1994. He is a philosopher and a scholar in the fields of philosophy of religion and Islamic studies. In addition to translations and ongoing research, he has written over 35 books and 69 articles. He is also active in international scholarly activities and conferences, particularly in the field of interfaith dialogue.

### MOROCCO

#### **Al-Tawfiq, Ahmad**

Al-Tawfiq is the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs in Morocco and a strong supporter of Sufi groups. He is a writer for the Association of Moroccan Authors for Publication, as well as the Vice President of the Moroccan Association for Historical Research. Al-Tawfiq is an advocate of interfaith dialogue, and is currently on the board of World Religious Leaders for The Elijah Interfaith Institute.

### PALESTINE

#### **Hussein, Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad**

Sheikh Hussein was appointed the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in 2006. Previously, he had been the manager and imam of the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. He is an outspoken critic of the Israeli occupation, and has personally defended the Al-Aqsa Mosque from settlers and the Israeli army. In July 2018, Hussein issued a fatwa forbidding Muslims from selling or transferring any land in Palestine to Jews.

#### **Sabri, Sheikh Dr Ekrima Sa'id**

Sheikh Sabri is the head of the Supreme Islamic Council and former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine. He remains an imam of the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, where he preaches regularly. Sabri is well-respected in Palestine for his forthright views on Israel. He has been at various times banned from entering Al-Aqsa Mosque and arrested, the latest being in August 2024 for mourning assassinated Hamas Political Bureau chief, Ismail Haniyeh.

### SAUDI ARABIA

#### **Altwaijri, Dr Abdulaziz Othman**

Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri is an accomplished academic, senior lecturer, eminent writer and poet. He was the Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), and ex-officio Secretary General of the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World (FUIW) 1991-2019. He established the Supreme Council of Education, Science and Culture, an

alliance designated for work outside the Islamic world, and is a member of numerous international organizations and forums such as the Royal Aal Al Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, and the Nizami Ganjavi International Center. Dr Altwajiri is also a staunch advocate of cultural dialogue and the alliance of civilizations and has received high-level distinctions from over 26 countries.

#### **Al-Issa, Dr Mohammad ben Abdel Karim**

Dr Al-Issa was appointed Secretary-General of the Muslim World League in 2016. Prior to that he had served as Minister of Justice and Head of the Supreme Council for Justice. The Muslim World League is an NGO which was founded in 1962 and is based in Makkah. It propagates Saudi teachings worldwide as well as carrying out social work. Al-Issa visited the Vatican in 2017 where he met the Pope and in 2020 led a delegation of Islamic scholars to visit Srebrenica in Bosnia, and Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. He is also President of the International Islamic Halal Organization. He has continued high-profile international trips to promote messages of harmony and interfaith cooperation.

#### **Al-Malik, Dr Salim M**

Dr Salim M Al-Malik was appointed as the Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) in May 2019 (replacing Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajiri). Dr Salim has a PhD in Allergy and Clinical Immunology, and a PhD in Pediatrics. He has previously held various senior positions in Saudi Arabia. ISESCO is based in Rabat, Morocco and strives to strengthen cooperation among member states in educational, scientific, and cultural research, making Islamic culture the focal point of educational curricula at all levels.

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## *Sub-Saharan Africa*

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### **CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

#### **Diakité, Sheikh Aïma Ousmane (new)**

Sheikh Ousmane Diakité has been President of the Superior Council of Imams of Côte d'Ivoire (COSIM) since 2021. A lawyer and professor, he oversees over 26,000 imams in a country where Muslims constitute 42.5% of the population of 30 million. Known as the "Imam of the Middle Way" for his skill in mediation and compromise, Diakité is a staunch

advocate of interfaith dialogue, continuing the legacy of his predecessors. He emphasizes collaboration between Christian and Muslim leaders to combat societal challenges such as moral decline, drug abuse, and organized crime.

### **KENYA**

#### **Khalifa, Sheikh Mohammed**

Sheikh Khalifa is the Organizing Secretary of the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya. He addresses various social issues, as well as encouraging Kenyans to campaign peacefully in general elections and to engage in politics on the basis of issues rather than along tribal affiliations.

### **NIGERIA**

#### **Ahmad, Abdrahman Olanrewaju**

Sheikh Abdrahman Olanrewaju Ahmad is the National Missioner of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, a 96-year-old Islamic organization established for the purpose of educational, moral, and social development for Muslims. The organization boasts millions of members, with its achievements spanning Nigeria's faiths and ethnicities.

#### **Bayero, Aminu Ado**

Aminu Ado Bayero held the position of 15th Emir of Kano from March 2020 to May 2024 before being dethroned by the Kano state government. His father had been the 13th Emir (1963-2014) but was succeeded by a nephew, who was subsequently dethroned in 2020, allowing Bayero to claim the title. The Emir of Kano is historically the second most important Muslim position in Nigeria after the Sultan of Sokoto. The Emir of Kano serves as the leader of the Tijani sufi order in Nigeria. The Kano State Government filed a suit asking the state High Court to stop the 15th Emir, Bayero, and four other Emirs of Karaye, Bichi, Rano and Gaya from parading themselves as Emirs.

#### **Oloyede, Professor Ishaq Olarewaju**

Professor Ishaq Olarewaju Oloyede is the Secretary General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council. He also serves as the President of the Association of African Universities (AAU), and is the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Ilorin.

### **Sanusi, HE Dr Sanusi Lamido**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page 144

## **SENEGAL**

### **Mbacké, Serigne Mountakha**

Serigne Mountakha Mbacké was appointed leader of Senegal's Mouride Brotherhood in January 2018 after the death of his predecessor, Serigne Cheikh Sidi Moukhtar Mbacké who died at the age of 94. He has become the eighth caliph of the brotherhood which was established by his grandfather, the sufi Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba, who died in 1927 and is buried in Touba. It is estimated that over a sixth of all Senegalese are members of the *tariqah*, and it is particularly influential in the economic and political spheres. The Grand Magal of Touba is a pilgrimage of millions who converge on Touba to celebrate the life and teachings of Amadou Bamba (held on 18th Safar).

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## *Asia*

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## **CHINA**

### **Faming, Hassan Yang**

Hassan Yang Faming is the President of the China Islamic Association. This is a government-linked body which liaises with China's Muslims. A conservative estimate numbers 30 million Muslims from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The Hui are the most populous but the Uyghur have the greatest concentration in the Xinjiang region, where internment camps hold over a million Muslims in a bid to 're-educate' them. The 'Sinicization' of Islam has stepped up in relentless fashion in the last few years.

## **INDIA**

### **Ahmad, Sheikh Abubakr**

Sheikh Abubakr Ahmad is President of the Islamic Community of India, Founder and Chancellor of Jamia Markaz Saqafathu Sunniyya, one of the leading educational and humanitarian institutions in India, and General Secretary of the All India Sunni Jamiyyathul Ulama. He is often referred to by his epithet Abul Aytam ('Father of Orphans') for his service to orphans and the destitute. He advocates peaceful co-existence, social harmony and its international propagation and has set up thousands of cultural

centres and educational institutes in India. Sheikh Abubakr has authored and published more than 60 books on a variety of topics in Arabic, Urdu and Malayalam. In July 2023 he was awarded the Hijra Award in Malaysia.

### **Al-Bukhari, Sayyid Ibraheemul Khaleel**

Sayyid Ibraheemul Khaleel Al-Bukhari is the Founder and Chairman of Jamia Ma'din (Ma'din Academy), Kerala, India. It is an umbrella body of various educational and charity ventures where 25,000 students are enrolled for different courses from primary to research level. He is an advisor to the International Interfaith Harmony Initiative, Malaysia; the Vice President of the Muslim Educational Board of India, New Delhi; General Secretary of Kerala Muslim Jama'at, the apex body of Muslim community in Kerala; and the President of Sunni Management Association. He is also the Managing Editor of *Armonia Journal* ([armoniajournal.com](http://armoniajournal.com)) and has penned 22 books in various languages.

### **Kandhalvi, Maulana Saad**

Maulana Saad Kandhalvi is the great-grandson of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, the founder of the Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) missionary movement and the grandson of its second ameer. He is currently the head of the TJ centre in Nizamuddin, New Delhi, India. A recent falling out with other leaders has led to some clashes between rival followers and a fatwa issued by Deoband criticizing Maulana Saad's leadership has led to further ramifications worldwide including at Biswa Ijtema, Bangladesh, the second largest religious gathering in the world.

### **Nomani, Mufti Abul Qasim**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 144

### **Noorie, Maulana Shakir Ali**

Maulana Noorie is the President of Sunni Dawate Islami, a non-political religious organization in Mumbai, India. Its Annual Congregation is one of the largest Sunni Muslim assemblies held in India, attracting around 300,000 people annually into the heart of Mumbai, India's financial capital. There are approximately 50 institutions under his leadership providing knowledge to more than 7000 students. Maulana Muhammed Shakir Noorie has authored over 40 books which are published in many languages. He has initiated several human welfare campaigns including: women empowerment through education,

feeding and clothing the poor and downtrodden, counselling assistance to the youth, and a programme against drug abuse and intoxicants.

### **Owaisi, MP Janab Asaduddin**

Barrister Asaduddin Owaisi is an eminent Indian parliamentarian and has served as President of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) since being elected in 2008. Under Owaisi's stewardship, the party won seven assembly seats in 2009 then in 2014. In 2019, he started his fourth term being elected to the 17th Lok Sabha (House of the People). An outspoken parliamentarian, Owaisi has been instrumental in persuading the Indian government to establish the Ministry of Minority Affairs to look after the welfare of religious minorities in India, including Muslims. He has almost fifteen million social media followers.

### **Ul-Hassan, Maulana Zuhair**

Maulana Zuhair Ul-Hassan is a leader of the Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) group. He was born and raised in Nizamuddin, New Delhi and completed his Islamic studies in Saharanpur. His late father Zubair Ul-Hasan was one of three leaders appointed as members of the leadership council. The TJ has faced unprecedented divisions of late with Maulana Zuhair's followers clashing with followers of Maulana Saad Kandhalvi over who leads the TJ.

## **INDONESIA**

### **Achyar, Miftachul**

Miftachul Achyar became the *Rais 'Aam* (Supreme Leader) of the country's largest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), after the resignation of Ma'ruf Amin (who became Vice-President of Indonesia 2019-24). The NU was established in 1926 and claims a 90-million membership. It is a charitable body funding schools and hospitals as well as organizing communities to help alleviate poverty. The majority of its leaders promote Islam Nusantara, a moderate and compassionate approach.

### **Amin, Maruf**

Maruf Amin was the running mate of Joko Widodo in the 2019 general elections and served as the Vice-President of Indonesia. He is an Indonesian Islamic scholar who was chair of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia and general guide of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the world's largest Islamic organization (he resigned in late 2018). Amin's early education was at

a boarding school established by NU founder Hasyim Asyari, before receiving his bachelor's degree in Islamic philosophy. He then started his lifelong activities of working in dawah (religious propagation) and politics, finding success in both.

### **Nashir, Dr KH Haedar**

Dr KH Haedar Nashir was elected as Chairman of the Muhammadiyah Movement in 2015. He previously served in a variety of other roles in the organization, which has approximately 30 million members. The Muhammadiyah Movement focuses on promoting moral and spiritual ideals through various social activities. It strongly opposes syncretism, but promotes interfaith relations.

## **MALDIVES**

### **Saeed, Dr Mohamed Shaheem Ali**

Dr Mohamed Shaheem Ali Saeed has been serving as Minister of Islamic Affairs since November 2023, a post that he previously held from 2012-18. He is *hafiz* of the Qur'an, a licensed lawyer, and former Chancellor of the Islamic University of Maldives (IUM). Dr Saeed was central to the establishment of the Maldives Hajj Corporation, the Maldives Islamic Bank Pvt Ltd, and a *waqffund*. He is a member of the Sharia Advisory Council of the Central Bank of the Maldives. Dr Saeed has authored many articles and books on religious issues and has spoken at forums in nine countries.

## **PAKISTAN**

### **Naeem ur Rehman, Hafiz (new)**

Hafiz Naeem was elected the sixth President of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan in April 2024, having served as the President of Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi from 2013-2024. Naeem holds a degree in Civil Engineering from NED and a Master's in Islamic History from Karachi University. His political journey began with the Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba in the 1990s, eventually joining Jamaat-e-Islami in 2000. Naeem has been a vocal advocate for Karachi's rights, leading protests against K-Electric and campaigning for improved city infrastructure. Naeem has maintained a strong political presence over the years, culminating in his election as Jamaat-e-Islami's national leader.

### **Naqvi, Ayatollah Syed Sajid Ali**

Ayatollah Syed Sajid Ali Naqvi leads the Shia Ulama Council (previously called Tehrik-e-Jafaria

(TJP) of Pakistan). He was chosen by the Supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, to lead Shia Muslims in Pakistan and is now his religious representative.

## SRI LANKA

**Rizwe, Mufti Mohammed Ibrahim Mohammed**  
Mufti Mohammed Rizwe is the President of the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU), the supreme body of Islamic theologians in Sri Lanka. Inaugurated in 1924, ACJU boasts a 7,500-strong membership of scholars while an executive committee of 33 senior scholars run the organization's 155 branches throughout the island's 24 districts. Mufti Rizwe is a specialist in the field of Islamic Jurisprudence, and was instrumental in bringing Islamic insurance, interest-free banking and halal certification to Sri Lanka. His other contributions that have benefited the Sri Lankan community at large include the Maktab Preliminary Islamic Education System, Careline Islamic Counseling, and Mahmood Institute for Skill Development of Ulama.

## TAJIKISTAN

**Abdulkodirzoda, Mufti Saidmukarram**  
Mufti Saidmukarram Abdulkodirzoda is the state-selected Grand Mufti and thus head of Tajikistan's Muslims, most of whom are Sunnis, and whose tradition includes following the Hanafi school in matters of jurisprudence and the Naqshbandi spiritual path. They belong to the Persian-speaking Tajik ethnic group who share a language, culture, and history with Afghanistan and Iran.

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## Europe

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## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

### Kavazović, Husein

Sheikh Husein Kavazović has been the 14th *Raisu-l-ulama* (Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina) since 2012. Kavazović had pushed for cooperation with other religious communities and a wider "incorporation of women into the work of the Islamic religious community". His sphere of influence is primarily with the community of 2.5 million Bosniak Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Bosniak diaspora, who number approximately

1.5 million. He speaks Bosnian, Arabic, and English.

## BULGARIA

### Hadzhi, Mufti Mustafa Alish

Sheikh Hadzhi is Bulgaria's Chief Mufti. Bulgaria has been referred to as "Istanbulgaria" because of the importance of Turkish-Bulgarian relations. Hadzhi is the leader of the Muslim community in a predominantly Christian state with a large influx of Muslims. He defended his community from extreme nationalists who went so far as to attack mosques and worshippers.

## FRANCE

### Bechari, Dr Mohamed

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 144

## GERMANY

### Köhler, Ayyub Axel

Köhler is former chairman of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany. He has written numerous articles, primarily for Islamic magazines such as *Al Islam* of the Islamic Centre of Munich, and *Al Fajr* of the Islamic Centre of Hamburg. He also published newsletters for the Muslim League around the issue of the integration of Islamic ways of life into German society.

## ITALY

### Pallavicini, Imam Yahya Sergio Yahe

Sheikh Pallavicini is a prominent figure in European relations with the Muslim world. He is Vice President of Comunit Religiosa Islamica (The Islamic Religious Community), Italy, Chairman of EULEMA, the European Muslim Scholars Council, and a former advisor for Islamic affairs to the Italian Minister of Interior. Pallavicini is also the Imam of the Al-Wahid Mosque of Milan in Via Meda, where he organizes the training of imams in Italian. His father was the late Abd Al-Wahid Pallavicini, the noted preacher and Head of the Ahamadiyyah Idrissiyah Shadhiliyyah brotherhood in Italy.

## KOSOVO

### Ternava, Sheikh Naim

Sheikh Naim Ternava is the Grand Mufti of Kosovo.

He is the leading religious figure in Kosovo, which emerged after an ethno-religious war resulted in widespread loss of life and destruction. Ternava is a key figure in the attempts of the country's Muslim population to overcome the horrors of war. He was instrumental in the creation of the Inter-Religious Council Organization for Interfaith Relations.

## RUSSIA

### **Nasibullahoglu, Sheikh Cafer**

Sheikh Cafer Nasibullahoglu is the Imam of St Petersburg Mosque. He is also the Mufti of St Petersburg, home to almost one million Muslims. His diverse congregation consists of Muslims of Tatar, Kazakh, Uzbek, Tajik, and Arab origins, among others. The sermon at St Petersburg mosque is often conducted in Arabic, Tatar, and Russian.

## SERBIA

### **Dudić, Grand Mufti Mevlud**

Grand Mufti Mevlud Dudić has been serving the 300,000-strong Serbian Muslim population (approximately 4% of the country's population) in his current role since 2014. Previously, he held positions as Director of the Gazi Isa-beg madrasah and Rector of the International University, both in Novi Pazar. He has also served on Government Commissions and has authored hundreds of papers. Fluent in Arabic, English and Albanian, Dudić enjoys good relations with Muslim religious scholars the world over and is a member of the main global Islamic organizations.

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## Oceania

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## AUSTRALIA

### **Alsuleiman, Imam Shady**

Imam Shady Alsuleiman is an Australian-born imam who has strongly connected with the Muslim youth and helped integrate the Muslim community with wider Australian society. Alsuleiman is the President of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), which represents over 250 imams from each of the Australian States and Territories. It is also the body that elects the Mufti of Australia. He's an international speaker with many followers on social media and has also established one of Australia's largest youth and community centres known as the UMA.

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## North America

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## CANADA

### **Abdur-Razak, Shaykh Faisal Hamid**

Shaykh Faisal Hamid Abdur-Razak founded and has served as head of the Islamic Forum of Canada for the past 50 years. He has also served as the Muslim representative on the Government of Canada Interfaith Committee. He continues to engage in Interfaith Dialogue to promote peace, harmony and understanding, as well as heading interfaith delegations to the Vatican. He initiated a 24/7 Livestream Broadcast many years ago that remains active to this day, uniting countless members of the global Muslim community, especially in western countries. He enjoys a following of several million followers on social media. Shaykh Faisal has authored many books covering a wide range of subjects.

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### **Mohammed II, Warithudeen**

Warithudeen Mohammed II is the eldest son of Imam W Deen Mohammed, the leader of the Nation of Islam who in 1976 transformed it into an orthodox and mainstream Sunni Islamic movement. He is President of The Mosque Cares, a charitable organization established by Imam W Deen Mohammed. The organization sponsors classes in Qur'anic Arabic and financial literacy, as well as informational sessions in health and nutrition, and business and entrepreneurial initiatives.

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## South America

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## ARGENTINA

### **Hallar, Muhammad Yusuf**

Hallar is an active figure in Argentina, and is involved in community development for Muslims. He has conducted comprehensive research on Muslims in Latin America and holds a number of positions including Secretary-General of the Islamic Organization of Latin America and the Director of the Office of Islamic Culture. He is also a member of the Expert Committee on Minority Rights for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

**Bukai, Sheikh Mohamad**

Sheikh Mohamad Bukai was born in Syria and studied at Al-Azhar University. He has been living in Sao Paulo since 2007 and is known for his soft speech, kind nature and splendid character. He has previously served as sheikh of the Liga Islamica do Pari and is the Imam of the Mesquita Brasil in Sao Paulo and Director of Religious Affairs of the Uniao Nacional das Entidades Islamicas. His page on Facebook often airs live transmissions of his Friday khutbahs as well as short videos on Islam.

**Suquillo, Professor Juan**

Professor Juan Suquillo is the President and Co-founder of the Islamic Centre in Quito. He received the "National Hero" award in recognition for his services to Ecuador. He is also the General Secretary for the Interfaith Council CONALIR fighting for religious rights and anti-discrimination. His books in Spanish have been popular and Suquillo is regarded as a bridge and reference for Latino Muslim leaders and scholars.

عَزَائِرِي الْعِفَاي رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَمَا رُوِيَ عَنِّي بِعَرَجٍ لَنْ يَقَالَ  
 يَا عِبَادِي لِي حِمْمَةٌ ظَلَمْتُ عَلَى نَفْسِي وَجَعَلْتُمْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ حُجْرًا وَأَنَا ظَالِمٌ لَكُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَتَمُّهُدِيْتُمْ وَأَسْتَهْدِي فِي هَذَا كَرِي  
 يَا عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ  
 يَا عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ  
 وَأَنْتُمْ تَجْعَلُونَ فِي نَفْسِي وَيُكْفَرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَجْعَلُونَ فِي نَفْسِي وَيُكْفَرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَجْعَلُونَ فِي نَفْسِي وَيُكْفَرُونَ بِاللَّهِ  
 يَا عِبَادِي لِي حِمْمَةٌ ظَلَمْتُ عَلَى نَفْسِي وَجَعَلْتُمْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ حُجْرًا وَأَنَا ظَالِمٌ لَكُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَتَمُّهُدِيْتُمْ وَأَسْتَهْدِي فِي هَذَا كَرِي  
 يَا عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ  
 يَا عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ  
 يَا عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ أَلْبَسْتُمْ عِبَادِي كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ  
 وَمَنْ يَجِدْ خَيْرًا لِنَفْسِهِ فَلْيَأْكُلْهُ وَمَنْ يَجِدْ خَيْرًا لِنَفْسِهِ فَلْيَأْكُلْهُ وَمَنْ يَجِدْ خَيْرًا لِنَفْسِهِ فَلْيَأْكُلْهُ

On the authority of Abu Dharr al-Ghifaree (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet ﷺ from his Lord, that He said:

O My servants! I have forbidden dhulm (oppression) for Myself, and I have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another. O My servants, all of you are astray except those whom I have guided, so seek guidance from Me and I shall guide you. O My servants, all of you are naked except those whom I have clothed, so seek clothing from Me and I shall clothe you. O My servants, you commit sins by day and by night, and I forgive all sins, so seek forgiveness from Me and I shall forgive you. O My servants, you will not attain benefiting Me so as to harm Me, and you will not attain benefiting Me so as to benefit Me. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all as pious as the most pious heart of any individual amongst you, then this would not increase My Kingdom an iota. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all as wicked as the most wicked heart of any individual amongst you, then this would not decrease My Kingdom an iota. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all to stand together in one place and ask of Me, and I were to give everyone what he requested, then that would not decrease what I Possess, except what is decreased of the ocean when a needle is dipped into it. O My servants, it is but your deeds that I account for you, and then recompense you for. So he who finds good, let him praise Allah, and he who finds other than that, let him blame no one but himself. [Muslim]

Related by Muslim

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## Middle East and North Africa

### ALGERIA

#### Belkaid, Sheikh Abdellatif

Sheikh Abdellatif is well-known in Algeria, Egypt, and Europe as a spiritual teacher and leader of the Hibriyya *tariqah*. He inherited his father's spiritual gifts. The sheikh's students include many highly placed officials in the Algerian government, as well as the famous Egyptian scholar, Sheikh Sha'rawi, before the latter's death.

#### Al-Khairi, Sheikh Abdul-Nacer

Sheikh Abdul-Nacer is a master of the Shadhili *tariqah*, and has a wide following in his native Algeria, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Malaysia, and various European countries where his students come from all walks of life. He emphasizes the recitation of the Qur'an, as well as abundant *salawaat* (praying for the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ). He is a descendant of the famous Sufi of Prophetic lineage, Abdul Salam ibn Mashish of Morocco.

### EGYPT

#### Abdelkafy, Sheikh Dr Omar

Sheikh Abdelkafy is an Egyptian preacher and dawah practitioner. A well-respected *hafiz* of the Qur'an, he is also the Director of the Qur'anic Studies Centre at the Dubai International Holy Qur'an Award. In addition to working in his native Egypt, he travels abroad to help Muslim communities, working specifically with the Muslim community in Canada.

#### Masoud, Moez

Moez Masoud is an Egyptian preacher, television and radio presenter, and activist who focuses on the fields of contemporary spirituality, interfaith dialogue, and Islam in the modern world. Masoud has a following of over 11 million on various social media sites, including YouTube videos, Facebook and X. Masoud participated in the post-Tahrir "Egyptian National Dialogue" and has continued that dialogue on socio-political issues in Egypt from within the perspective of traditional Islam.

### IRAQ

#### Kubaisi, Sheikh Dr Ahmed

Sheikh Kubaisi is a very popular Sunni cleric and preacher in Iraq. He advocates the end of foreign occupation in Iraq and the institution of an Islamic state. To this end, he is a spokesperson of the Sunni Ulema Council, an important association of Sunni Muslim scholars in Iraq. Kubaisi has been residing in the UAE for several years and despite health issues continues to be active, and leads prayers that are televised worldwide from the state mosque of Abu Dhabi.

### JORDAN

#### Keller, Sheikh Nuh

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 144

### SAUDI ARABIA

#### Al-Arifi, Dr Muhammad

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 145

#### Al-Qarni, Dr Aaidh

Dr Aaidh Al-Qarni is a prominent Saudi scholar, author, and activist preacher, best known for his popular self-help book *Don't Be Sad*. Dr Al-Qarni has garnered a substantial following through a preaching career which spans various modes of broadcast media. In 2019 he apologized on Saudi TV for his past preaching, calling his prior understanding of Islam "hardline" and apologizing for his past ties with Qatar. He said that he now agrees with the Islamic understanding of Crown Prince MBS. He has over 40 million followers on social media.

#### Al-Shugairi, Ahmad

Al-Shugairi is a televangelist with a huge following around the world. He is at the forefront of a religious revivalist movement that is influencing young people across the Middle East. Best known for his TV programme 'Khawatir' (2005-2015), Al-Shugairi took a break for a number of years before launching 'Seen' in 2021, which is proving to be every bit as successful. With no formal Islamic training and an MBA,



his popularity comes from repackaging a balanced understanding of Islam for his throngs of fans of all ages. He has over 56 million fans across social media platforms.

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## Sub-Saharan Africa

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### GHANA

#### **Sharubutu, Sheikh Dr Osmanu Nuhu**

Sheikh Dr Osmanu Nuhu Sharubutu is an Islamic scholar, National Chief Imam and Grand Mufti of the Republic of Ghana, Eminent Member of the National Peace Council of Ghana and Founder of The SONSETFUND, IPASEC, Sabiilu-Salaam Qurani Memorization Institute and the SONS-NPC (Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu National Peace Conference). Ages 105 years old in 2024, he is still actively working hard and tirelessly on religious, social and educational issues, helping to promote disadvantaged and vulnerable communities in Ghana. This has enabled him to transcend religious boundaries and be respected by all sectors of the country.

### MALI

#### **Hamahoullah, Mohamed Ould Cheikh (new)**

Mohamed Ould Cheikh Hamahoullah, popularly known as Bouyé Haïdara, is a revered Sufi leader whose influence extends across West Africa. At 84, he continues to guide millions from his *zawiyah* in Nioro du Sahel, Mali. As the heir to the spiritual legacy of his father, Sheikh Hamahoullah, Bouyé Haïdara leads the Hamallism branch of the Tidjane brotherhood, a movement that gained prominence through its resistance to French colonialism. His following, estimated at 5-10 million talibés, testifies to the enduring appeal of Sufi traditions in the region. Bouyé Haïdara's teachings bridge historical anti-colonial sentiment with contemporary spiritual guidance. His influence transcends religious spheres, making him a key figure in Mali's social and political landscape.

### MAURITANIA

#### **Al Khairy, Cheikh Ould (new)**

Cheikh Ould Al Khairy is a spiritual guide and representative of the Tariqah Tijaniyah with thousands of students across Africa and the world. He is also an educator who has inspired many across the world

with his teachings and personal practice. In addition to his teaching, he has focused on building mosques, schools and orphanages.

### NIGERIA

#### **Bauchi, Sheikh Dahiru Usman**

Sheikh Dahiru Usman Bauchi of the Tijaniyya Sufi order is celebrated for his Qur'anic schools which specialize in producing *buffaz* (memorizers) of the Qur'an. His public exegesis of the Qur'an, delivered in Hausa every year during the month of Ramadan, attracts thousands. Additionally, millions of West Africans listen to it on the radio or buy recordings. He has critically engaged with puritanical Islamic schools of thought since the early 1980s. In July 2014, he escaped a suicide bombing attack which killed 23 people.

#### **Katsina, Sheikh Yakubu Musa**

Sheikh Yakubu Musa Katsina is a popular preacher in Nigeria. He is also the leader of the Izala revivalist sect in Katsina. The Izala, or Jama'at Izalatil Bid'iya Iqamatus Sunnah (Movement Against Negative Innovations and for Orthodoxy) is an activist salafi movement that calls for a return to the practices of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and a true practice of Islam. His family comes from Katsina, the predominantly Muslim city in northern Nigeria, and he is outspoken against corruption in the country.

#### **Maqari, Sheikh Professor Ibrahim Ahmad**

Sheikh Maqari completed his studies at Al-Azhar in 1999 and then his doctorate at Bayero University Kano in 2009. He has lectured across Nigeria as a Professor of Arabic and linguistics. Sheikh Maqari has multiple published books and articles in international journals, and is a member of the Assembly of Muslims in Nigeria, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, and Founder of Tazkiyyah Educational Resource Center.

### ZIMBABWE

#### **Menk, Mufti Ismail Musa**

Dr Ismail Menk is the Mufti of Zimbabwe under the Majlisul Ulama Zimbabwe, an Islamic educational and welfare organization that caters to the needs of the country's Muslims. Mufti Menk is well-known internationally and is often invited to give lectures. His ability to relate religious principles to contemporary settings has made him particularly influential

amongst the Muslim youth. He is humble and affable, endearing himself to those who cross his path. His eloquence, wit and humour are traits loved by many non-Muslims as well. He has more than 35 million followers across social media and his Youtube videos have garnered some half a billion views.

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## Asia

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### INDIA

#### **Azmi, Hazrat Allama Maulana Qamaruzzaman**

Maulana Azmi is the Khalifa of Imam Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilvi's son. He is a prolific speaker and, according to the *Times of India*, has millions of followers worldwide. At the age of 18 he established Al-Jameatul-Islamia, which is now recognized as one of India's top Islamic universities. For over 50 years, he has been building organizations, institutions, mosques, colleges, and universities around the world.

#### **Madani, Maulana Syed Arshad**

Maulana Madani is the President of the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, a group which strongly opposed the creation of a separate Muslim state of Pakistan. In 2006, Maulana Syed Arshad Madani succeeded his brother, Maulana Syed Asad Madani, but since 2008, the group has been split into two factions. Maulana Arshad is also a noted scholar. He is the Principal of Darul Uloom Deoband and Vice President of All India Muslim Personal Law Board. He also supervises much social work and heads a number of Islamic seminaries and bodies and is an advisor to eight international Islamic schools.

#### **Naik, Zakir Abdul Karim**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 145

#### **Saifuddin, Syedna Mufaddal**

Saifuddin is the 53rd *Dai Al-Mutlaq* ('Unrestricted Missionary') of the Dawoodi Bohras, a subgroup within the Mustaali, Ismaili Shia branch of Islam. He succeeded—but not without dispute—to the office after his father, Syed Mohammed Burhanuddin, passed away in 2014. In 2017, he inaugurated the 14-acre Nairobi campus of Aljamea-tus-Saifiyah, a Dawoodi Bohra institute of higher learning. Kenyan President Kenyatta awarded him the Elder of the Order of the Golden Heart as a result. He also met

Egyptian President El-Sisi in 2016 and donated 10 million EGP to the Long Live Egypt fund. He is the spiritual leader of 2-5 million people living in 100 countries. He is also the Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Miliya Islamia University.

### INDONESIA

#### **Gymnastiar, Abdullah Aa Gym**

Abdullah Gymnastiar, more commonly known as 'Aa Gym' ('Elder Brother Gym'), was for a long time Indonesia's most popular preacher. With his style of modern, youthful, enjoyable preaching, he built a substantial following and a large media empire. His regular audience boasted over 80 million Indonesians and had an approval rating that peaked at 91%, leading to Gymnastiar being courted by several political parties as a potential vice presidential nominee. Over the past several years, Gymnastiar has been slowly regaining his popularity using his unique preacher/performer style. He is an attractive, funny, and charismatic man who tells engaging stories and sings *nasbeeds* (religious songs). He has over 18 million fans on social media.

#### **Shihab, Quraish**

Quraish Shihab is an Indonesian expert on Qur'anic exegesis who regularly preaches on national television. He is noted as a progressive scholar who teaches Qur'anic exegesis using context and simple language. He is an author of many Islamic books, including *Tafsir Al-Misbah*. He served as Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs in 1998 and also as Chairman of the Indonesian Ulama Council since 1984. Shihab was also a director of State Islamic University, Syarif Hidayatullah, 1992-1998. He is a co-founder and active member of the Muslim Council of Elders, working towards world peace. He was awarded a medal for his achievements by Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly in 2020.

### MALAYSIA

#### **Awang, Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi bin**

Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi bin Awang is the current President of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party or PAS. He was recently appointed as the Prime Minister's Special Ambassador to the Middle East with ministerial status. He is also the Vice President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars. He was former Chief Minister of the state of Terengganu in Malaysia from 1999-2004, Member of Parliament

for Marang Terengganu, and a state lawmaker for Rhu Rendang. He has written several books related to democracy and politics in Islam. Awang's Friday morning lectures at Rusila Mosque draw thousands of people.

#### **MrGlani, Sheikh Dr Mahmoud**

Born in Madinah to a family of Prophetic lineage, Sheikh MrGlani himself belongs to the Shadhili Sufi *tariqah* but strongly emphasizes the need to recognize all authentic Islamic Sunni Sufi *tariqahs* and sheikhs. His teachings emphasize the need to establish love for the Prophet ﷺ. To this end, he has founded a number of *zawiyahs* around the world to re-establish the practice of regular and abundant *dhikr* and *salawaat*. For the past several years, he has been delivering a series of widely attended public lectures titled 'Divine Gifts on the Path to Allah' in major Malaysian cities and universities. He encourages people around the world to rediscover and practise their core human values, to oppose colonial and oppressive thinking, and to espouse mutual respect and tolerance among followers of all the heavenly religions.

### **MYANMAR**

#### **Aung, Khalifa U Thein Win**

Gulam Siddique Saraka Ré Wahedi, better known as Khalifa U Thein Win Aung, succeeded his father as the religious leader of KAFTG Garana Organization and Islamic Sufi Tariqah League Myanmar. He studied under teachers in India and Iraq as well as his father. Every year, he actively leads hundreds of religious gatherings across the country serving over 200,000 Myanmar Muslims as a spiritual master. During anti-Muslim riots he helped many of those affected with food and shelter as well as organizing meetings with other faith leaders.

### **PAKISTAN**

#### **Bukhari, Khanum Tayyaba**

Bukhari is one of very few female religious scholars in Pakistan and has significant influence. She is a sought-after speaker who excels in six languages: Urdu, Arabic, Persian, English, Punjabi, and Sirai-ki. She also has a large following in Europe, North America, and Australia. Ms Bukhari is the founder of Bukhari Relief Foundation, a well-known, non-governmental charitable organization that helps people all over Pakistan who have been displaced by major

natural disasters.

#### **Ghamidi, Javed Ahmad**

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi is a Pakistani public intellectual and Qur'an scholar. He is the founder of Al-Mawrid Institute of Islamic Sciences and its sister organization, Danish Sara. He was a member of the Council of Islamic Ideology and, in 2009, Ghamidi was awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz, the third highest civilian honour of Pakistan. He appears regularly on TV shows and has a large middle-class professional following.

### **SINGAPORE**

#### **Alattas, Syed Hassan bin Muhammad bin Salim**

Syed Hassan, more affectionately known as Habib Hassan, has been a pillar of strength and unity in building religious harmony in Singapore and throughout Southeast Asia. He has condemned acts of terrorism and has been the force behind bringing Islam together with other religions in Singapore. In 2015, during Singapore's 50th National Day, he was conferred one of the highest awards by the Singapore Government in recognition of his outstanding work and contributions toward building a harmonious nation.

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### *Europe*

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### **ALBANIA**

#### **Naçi, Elvis**

Naçi is an Albanian Imam and Director at the Islamic Community of Albania. He is extremely popular in Albania and regularly appears as a guest on talk shows. He also has an active Facebook and Youtube profile. In 2019, he was named Man of the Year by several magazines in Albania.

### **GREECE**

#### **Metso, Mufti Djemali**

Mufti Djemali Metso was one of the muftis in Greece's Western Thrace cities of Komotini and Xanthi who were retired compulsorily by the Greek government recently. The Western Thrace region of Greece is home to a Muslim Turkish minority of around 150,000 people, and Mufti Metso had served the community for over 30 years in his capacity as

Mufti of Komotine. He still enjoys a close relationship with the community, who look upon him as not only a mufti but as a spiritual leader.

## TÜRKIYE

### Gülen, Muhammed Fethullah

Fethullah Gülen is a preacher, intellectual and educator, who assumed the leadership of the Nurcu religious movement started by Said Nursi (1878-1960 CE). He enjoyed huge support among all of Türkiye's religious population until he was accused of orchestrating the attempted coup of 15 July 2016, and his organizations and supporters subsequently bore the brunt of Erdoğan's crackdown. Many of his followers and supporters in state institutions, such as the police, judiciary and education, have been targeted and removed from their posts (over 500,000 people have been detained since the coup). Türkiye has formally asked the United States to extradite Gülen.

### Haqqani, Sheikh Mehmet Adil

Sheikh Mehmet Adil Haqqani is the Sheikh of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order, named after the celebrated Sheikh Nazim Al-Haqqani (passed away in 2014). He is the eldest son of Sheikh Nazim, and was born and raised in Damascus, Syria, while his father was studying there under his own sheikh, Sheikh Abdullah Fa'izi Dagestani. With an uncanny resemblance to his father, and a soft, humble approach, Sheikh Mehmet is currently teaching thousands of students worldwide.

### Topbaş, Osman Nuri

Osman Nuri Topbaş is an author, philanthropist, and spiritual leader of a Naqshbandi Sufi order based in Istanbul. His group is known as Eronkoy (named after the town where he was born) and, like other sufi groups in Türkiye, focuses heavily on charitable work. He has written works in history, literature, religious sciences, and poetry. Translations of his works span 43 languages, including English.

## UNITED KINGDOM

### Babikir, Sheikh Ahmed

With his gentle and warm disposition, Sheikh Babikir is a popular figure in the UK. He studied Islamic Sciences in Sudan and is fully authorized in a host of Islamic disciplines, including fiqh, hadith, creed, and Sufism. He holds an undergraduate degree in mathematics and a Masters in Management from

the University of London. He has contributed widely to UK society through social, charitable, and educational initiatives. He was the Headmaster of Islamia Primary School for many years, and is currently the Director and Founder of Rumi's Cave, a community hub in West London.

### Nakshawani, Ammar

Dr Sayed Ammar Nakshawani is an Islamic lecturer, scholar, historian and author. He is known for his knowledge of Islamic history and Qur'anic exegesis, as well as his ability to convey complex ideas in a clear and engaging manner. His lectures are viewed worldwide and have been translated into multiple languages, making him a popular and influential figure among the global Muslim community. He has previously held positions at Harvard University, the Hartford Seminary, Columbia University and the University of Cambridge.

### Pirzada, Shaykh Muhammad Imdad Hussain

Sheikh Muhammad Imdad Hussain Pirzada has served the global Muslim community for over half a century. He is a leading voice in literature, education, the training of scholars, and community and charity work. Following his acclaimed 5-volume commentary, *Qur'an: The Sublime Word in Arabic, Urdu and English*, and his 10-volume commentary, *Bukhari: The Sublime Tradition*, for which he was honoured in 2019 at the Imam Bukhari Complex in Samarkand, his latest research is pioneering in the field of leadership and *seerah* literature. Through Jamia Al-Karam, the institution and school he founded in 1985, hundreds of male and female British Muslim scholars have studied under his tutelage, who today serve as imams in more than 150 mosques in major cities as well as chaplains, teachers and community leaders in the UK and across Europe. He is founder of Muslim Charity, a relief and development NGO working in over 17 countries, and he is President of the World Association for Al-Azhar Graduates (UK).

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## North America

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## CANADA

### Philips, Dr Abu Ameenah Bilal

A notable Jamaican-Canadian Muslim convert and Islamic scholar, Dr Bilal Philips is founder of the first accredited Islamic university in India in 2009:

Preston International College, Chennai. However, he is most notably the Founder and Chancellor of the Islamic Online University AKA International Open University (iou. edu. gm), which currently has over 450,000 registered students studying accredited English-medium degree courses in Islamic Studies (shariah), Education, Psychology, Banking and Finance, IT and Business Administration, and a BA in Arabic language and literature. The IOU has the distinction of having the most diverse student body of any university in the world. Dr Bilal also reaches mass Muslim audiences through his television appearances on global satellite channels like Peace TV, Huda TV, and Islam Channel as well as through his official Facebook page. He has over ten million social media followers.

#### **Rabbani, Sheikh Faraz**

Sheikh Rabbani is the Founder, Education Director, and an instructor at SeekersGuidance Canada, an educational institute featuring a very popular Q&A service, online courses, and occasional retreats. In August 2011, he helped launch SeekersHub in Toronto with affiliated branches being developed in Australia and elsewhere. He was formerly a central figure with SunniPath, and has continuously been at the vanguard of effectively utilizing the latest web technologies and services to teach Islam in the West for over a decade. He serves as a partner and legal advisor with StraightWay Ethical Advisory.

### **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

#### **Kabbani, Sheikh Muhammad Hisham**

Sheikh Kabbani established the American branch of the Haqqani Educational Foundation, dedicated to the promotion of the fundamental Islamic teachings of tolerance, respect, and peace. Since Sheikh Muhammad Nazim Adil's death in 2014, Kabbani has become the leader of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi Order. In 1991, Kabbani moved to the United States and has since founded 23 study and meeting centres in the United States and Canada, as well as an Islamic retreat centre in Michigan focusing on spreading Sufi teachings.

#### **Al-Ninowy, Sheikh Dr Muhammad bin Yahya**

Sheikh Dr Muhammad Al-Ninowy is a Syrian-American scholar, author, and medical doctor based in Atlanta, Georgia, whose lineage is traced back to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In addition to a PhD in Islamic studies from the University of Georgia, he

holds a Doctor of Medicine degree. He is the founding director of Madina Institute and Seminaries, The Center for Non-Violence and Peace Studies, and the charitable organization Planet Mercy, with campuses in the USA, Canada, the UK, South Africa, Malaysia, and Norway. Al-Ninowy also leads a school that follows the Sufism of Ahl-Al-Hadith. He was appointed by the Sultan of Malaysia in 2020 to serve as a member of the board of directors of the Islamic University. An upcoming book is: *Nonviolence; a fundamental Islamic principle*.

#### **Shakir, Imam Zaid**

Imam Zaid Shakir is a senior faculty member and co-founder of Zaytuna College, Berkeley, California, the first accredited Muslim undergraduate college in the USA. Shakir accepted Islam in 1977 while serving in the United States Air Force. He obtained a BA in International Relations and later earned his MA in Political Science. In 2001, he graduated from Syria's Abu Noor University with a BA in Islamic Studies. He is one of America's top Islamic scholars, a voice of conscience, and a compelling force for the improvement of race relations for non-Muslims in America. He co-founded the New Brunswick Islamic Center, formerly Masjid al-Huda in NJ, Masjid Al-Islam in New Haven, CT, and more recent the Lighthouse Mosque, in Oakland, CA. He led the funeral prayer for the late boxing champion and human rights icon, Muhammad Ali. Inspired to work with religious groups on sustainable living and climate change, he is a Green Faith partner in action for the earth.

#### **Suleiman, Imam Omar**

Imam Omar Suleiman is the President of Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research and a professor of Islamic Studies at Southern Methodist University. He started his journey of Islamic learning in the year 2000 and studied in various countries in the Middle East as well as Malaysia. He has become a hugely popular speaker, delivering regular online lectures which have reached millions, as well as writing frequently for various media outlets. In the 2000s, he was noted on a national level as being a strong advocate of community service, interfaith dialogue, and social justice, and was awarded for his outstanding civic achievement by the Mayor and City Council of New Orleans.

#### **Wahhaj, Imam Siraj**

Siraj Wahhaj is Imam of the Al-Taqwa Mosque in Brooklyn, a prolific lecturer, community activist, the leader of the Muslim Alliance in North America, and

former Vice President of ISNA. He first became famous for his successful efforts in fighting drugs and crime in his neighbourhood. In 1991, he became the first Muslim to recite the Opening Prayer of the Qur'an (*Al-Fatihah*) at the US House of Representatives. Brooklyn Borough President, Marty Markowitz, proclaimed 15 August, Siraj Wahhaj Day in honour of his "lifetime of outstanding and meaningful achievement".

**Younis, Dr Haifaa (new)**

Dr Haifaa Younis seamlessly blends her expertise in both the worldly and spiritual realms. As an American Board Certified Obstetrician and Gynecologist, she is committed to her medical profession while also passionately sharing the message of Allah (SWT) and nurturing a deep love for Islam and the Qur'an through her teachings. She is the Founder and Chairman of the Jannah Institute and serves as a resident scholar at both the Jannah Institute and the Islamic Center of Irvine (ICOI). Dr Haifaa leads seminars that delve into the thematic commentary of various chapters of the Holy Qur'an, highlighting their practical applications in daily life. She graduated from the Mecca Institute of Islamic Studies in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and completed her memorization of the Qur'an at Al-Huda Qur'an Memorization School, also in Jeddah.

*Caribbean*

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**Hosein, Sheikh Imran**

Sheikh Imran N Hosein is an Islamic scholar

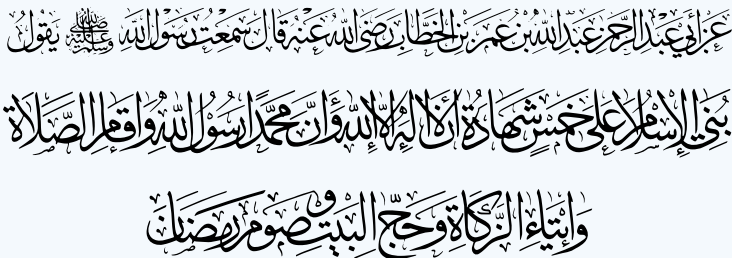
specializing in contemporary interpretations of Islamic eschatology. Having given up his career as a diplomat in 1985 to dedicate his life to the mission of Islam, Sheikh Imran is a tireless missionary who often travels for two to three years at a time in the cause of Islam and calls for Muslims to retreat to faith-based eco-villages until such time as Imam Mahdi appears. He is also a commentator on international monetary economics, and advocates the establishment of free-markets and currency with intrinsic value as a means of savings and aversion of a pending collapse of the "world of paper money". He has very popular videos on YouTube with millions of views, especially related to eschatology, politics, and the economy.

*South America*

**BRAZIL**

**Hammadeh, Sheikh Jihad**

Sheikh Jihad Hammadeh has a long history of contributions to dawah in Brazil. He is the religious adviser to ANAJI—the National Association of Islamic Jurists. His educational background includes a theological course at the Islamic University of Madinah, a bachelors in history and a masters in social communication. Besides being Vice President of the Uniao Nacional das Entidades Islamicas, he presides over two other Islamic institutions. He regularly appears on national TV in Brazil and other media outlets speaking about Islam and has also worked as a consultant for two Brazilian soap operas on the theme of Muslims and Muslim-majority countries.



On the authority of Abdullah, the son of Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ, who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, "Islam has been built on five [pillars]: testifying that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the salah (prayer), paying the zakat (obligatory charity), making the hajj (pilgrimage) to the House, and fasting in Ramadhan."

Related by Bukhari & Muslim

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# PHILANTHROPY, CHARITY & DEVELOPMENT

## *Middle East and North Africa*

### IRAQ

#### **Al-Khoei, Sayyed Jawad**

Dr Sayyed Jawad Mohammod Taqi Al-Khoei is the Secretary-General of the Al-Khoei Institute in Najaf, Iraq, a pioneering centre that combines a traditional Islamic seminary with a contemporary interfaith academy. Sayyed Jawad is a regular contributor at local and international conferences on interfaith and intrafaith dialogue. He is also UNESCO Chair for the Development of Interreligious Dialogue Studies at the University of Kufa.

### JORDAN

#### **HM Queen Rania Al-Abdullah**

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah is the wife of HM King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein, but is also in her own right an educational activist with global appeal. Through sheer hard work, she has developed one of the largest virtual followings of any Muslim in the world (over 38 million followers), and she defends and humanizes Islam and Arab causes in and to the West as effectively as any Muslim scholar in the world. She is the initiator and key leader behind the launch of several educational initiatives such as the Jordanian Madrasati, "My School", a project for the development of Jordan's public school system. In 2017, Queen Rania received the Global Trailblazer Award and the Fellowship Award from Fashion for Relief in recognition of her humanitarian efforts towards children caught in conflict. She has played a crucial role in challenging the misrepresentation of Palestinians in Western media and public discourse since the latest war on Gaza started.

### LEBANON

#### **Al-Sadr, Rabab**

Rabab Al-Sadr is a social and human rights activist and philanthropist. She is a dynamic thinker and is the President of the Imam Al-Sadr Foundation, one of the most successful humanitarian organizations

working in Lebanon. The foundation's projects focus on training, development and poverty alleviation across Lebanon. She is the sister of Imam Musa Al-Sadr.

### QATAR

#### **HH Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al-Missned**

Her Highness Sheikha Moza is the mother of the current Emir of Qatar, and Chairperson of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. The Foundation has brought some of the leading US university programmes to Qatar. It also promotes international research, and provides scholarships around the world. Sheikha Moza also serves as the President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and is Vice Chairperson of both the Supreme Education Council and the Supreme Health Council. She plays a very active role in promoting a wide range of issues at home, in the Gulf region, and internationally.

### SAUDI ARABIA

#### **AbuSulayman, Muna**

Muna AbuSulayman was the first Saudi woman to become an iconic TV personality and is internationally recognized as a leader in the fields of philanthropy, media and social impact. She is one of the founding co-hosts of the social issues show 'Kalam Nawaem', which was ranked number one across the Arab World for eleven years in a row. She was also chosen as the first Saudi UN Goodwill Ambassador for the UNDP as well as a Young Global Leader at the World Economic Forum in the same year while managing one of the largest Muslim foundations. AbuSulayman has successfully launched, managed, and scaled multiple businesses and is running a Social Impact investment fund and consultancy that focuses on finding "Big Ideas that Work" to solve problems in education, gender inequalities, sustainability and social cohesion.

#### **Al-Jasser, Dr Muhammad Sulaiman (new)**

Dr Al-Jasser assumed office as Chairman of the Islamic Development Bank Group on 9 August 2021.

He has held a multitude of senior positions in Saudi Arabia and since January 2022 has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Regional Center of Quality and Excellence in Education–UNESCO. Dr Al-Jasser holds a PhD in economics and a Master's degree in economics from the University of California and a Bachelor's degree in economics with honors from San Diego State University. Dr Al-Jasser has received several medals and awards, most notably the King Abdul Aziz Medal of the First Order in 2001 and Senegal's most prestigious National Order of the Lion in January 2023.

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

### **HH Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qassimi**

Sheikh Sultan is the Ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah. He had the educational vision to start University City in 1997, which includes the American University of Sharjah, the University of Sharjah, and other colleges. Since, his vision has inspired neighbouring emirates and countries to emulate his endeavour to bring world-class university education to the region. He is known for his philanthropic activities and has endowed chairs for Arabic and Islamic studies in Western universities (e.g. Exeter University). He is a great promoter of the arts and culture, with Sharjah boasting 16 galleries and museums, and he is also an accomplished poet, writer and academic.

## *Sub-Saharan Africa*

## CHAD

### **Taha, Hissein Brahim (new)**

Hissein Brahim Taha is the 12th Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the world's second-largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations. Taha's diverse experience includes a stint as Chad's Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2017, providing him with valuable insights into international relations. As the ex-officio Chancellor of the Islamic University of Technology, he also plays a crucial role in advancing Islamic education and technological development. Taha's leadership of the OIC places him at the forefront of addressing key issues facing the Muslim world, from political conflicts to economic development.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### **Sooliman, Dr Imtiaz Ismail**

Sooliman is the founder of Gift of the Givers Foundation. It is the largest disaster relief organization of African origin on the African continent. His organization has delivered over \$248 million in aid to 45 countries around the world. The organization has also designed and developed the world's first and largest containerized mobile hospital, which has been deployed in Bosnia. It also runs 24 development projects in South Africa and Malawi. He was awarded South Africa's Order of the Baobab for distinguished service in April 2010. In 2016, he received the Global Citizen Award from Henley and Partners in London and has received ten honorary doctorates.

## *Asia*

## INDIA

### **Premji, Azim**

Premji is an Indian business tycoon and philanthropist who was the Chairman of Wipro Limited, a leader in the software industry, and remains non-executive director of the board. In 2011, he was awarded Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award by the Government of India. In 2013, he signed the Giving Pledge, agreeing to give away at least half of his wealth and has given away billions in charity since then. The Azim Premji Foundation supports programmes that reach more than 2.5 million children.

### **Qasmi, Maulana Badruddin Ajmal**

Maulana Badruddin Ajmal is a prominent Indian businessman who runs the Ajmal Group of Companies, which sells attar perfume, oils, and textiles. He is a proponent and member of various social service organizations and is also a scholar of Islam, having studied at the Darul Uloom Deoband. Qasmi is also a politician who founded the Assam United Democratic Front political party. He is noted for his contributions to charitable hospitals, orphanages, and educational institutions, including a women's science college.



## MALAYSIA

### Al-Bukhary, Syed Mokhtar

Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary is one of the richest Malaysians. He owns a variety of companies including the Malaysian Mining Corporation, a behemoth that has been awarded multiple, multi-billion dollar projects. In 2020 he was awarded a 5G contract from the government, showing his political connections. He has established many humanitarian projects including rebuilding the lives of Afghan refugees, helping Pakistan's tsunami victims, and establishing an AIDS hospital in Uganda. He also supports many educational foundations and is the Founder of Albukhary Group of Companies.

## PAKISTAN

### Rizvi, Professor Dr Adibul Hasan

Dr Rizvi is one of Pakistan's leading humanitarians, having established the largest free health organization in Pakistan. He works as a doctor and an administrator at SIUT in Karachi, which was founded in 1971 as an eight-bed unit but is now the largest health organization in Pakistan. SIUT provides free and comprehensive services in urology, nephrology, transplantation, and liver-related diseases. He is the recipient of many awards for his life's work.

## SINGAPORE

### Faizal, Mohamed

Mr Mohamed Faizal is a second chief prosecutor at the AGC. He is the only Muslim Senior Counsel in Singapore and the only Muslim on Singapore's Supreme Court bench. He is a passionate champion of educational initiatives and established scholarship

programmes specifically targeted at lower-income students. He has received the President's Volunteerism and Philanthropy Award, being the second Muslim in its history to receive it.

## Europe

## UNITED KINGDOM

### El-Banna, Dr Hany

Dr El-Banna is the founder of Islamic Relief, the largest Western-based international Muslim relief and development NGO. Established in 1984, the organization provides assistance in over 45 countries worldwide. HM the late Queen Elizabeth honoured El-Banna's work, giving him an OBE for his services to the community. In 2015, Islamic Relief signed a memorandum of understanding with the African Union, formalizing a partnership to tackle poverty in the continent.

### Ismail, Sufyan

Sufyan Gulam Ismail is an award-winning Entrepreneur and Philanthropist who retired from full time business at the age of 38 to tackle Islamophobia. He is the founder of MEND and various other grass roots Islamophobia organisations which play a crucial role in protecting and preserving Islam and Muslims, both in the UK and internationally. Sufyan also part-authored a text book on Islamic Finance which is taught in UK universities. Aside from his philanthropy, Sufyan oversees a Global Venture Capital business which specialises in Artificial Intelligence, Media, Sustainability, Carbon Credits and more.

عَنْ النَّوَّاسِ بْنِ سَمْعَانَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَرْثَدَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ:  
الْبِرُّ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَالْإِثْمُ حَاطٌ فِي نَفْسِكَ وَكَرِهْتَ أَنْ يَخْرُجَ عَلَيْكَ النَّاسُ

On the authority of an-Nawas bin Sam'an رضي الله عنه, that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

Righteousness is in good character, and wrongdoing is that which wavers in your soul, and which you dislike people finding out about.

Related by Muslim

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## Middle East and North Africa

### EGYPT

#### Karam, Dr Azza

Dr Azza Karam is President and CEO of Lead Integrity, the first multi-faith-inspired and women-led international management consultancy, with a Database of expertise on human rights, sustainable development, humanitarian relief, business and media. She served as the Secretary General of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (2019 to 2023). Prior international service includes nearly two decades at the United Nations (UNDP and UNFPA) where she founded and coordinated a UN Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Diplomacy after serving as Coordinator of the Arab Human Development Reports. She is affiliated with the Ansari Institute of Religion and Global Affairs at Notre Dame University (USA), after serving as Professor of Religion and Sustainable Development at Amsterdam's Vrije Universiteit (The Netherlands). She was awarded an Honorary Degree by John Cabot University in 2022.

### IRAN

#### Ebadi, Shirin

Shirin Ebadi is a lawyer who, in 2003, became the first Iranian to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She is the founder of Children's Rights Support Association and has defended and supported the rights of children and women. Ebadi lectures about the human rights situation in Iran and espouses a liberal view of Islam appreciated by many Muslim feminists. Since the presidential elections of 2009, she has been forced to live in exile (in London) while her husband is barred from travelling out of Iran.

### MOROCCO

#### Soufi, Nawal

Nawal Soufi won the UAE 'Arab Hope Maker' Prize in 2017 and was awarded 1 million AED for her dedication to the cause of helping refugees. She arranged rescue missions for Syrian refugees fleeing across the Mediterranean Sea.

### PALESTINE

#### Abuelaish, Dr Izzeldin

Izzeldin Abuelaish is a Palestinian physician and internationally recognized peace and human rights activist devoted to advancing health and educational opportunities for women and girls in the Middle East. He is also known for using health as a vehicle for peace. Dr Abuelaish's book, *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey*—the story of his loss of his three daughters, Bessan, Mayar, and Aya, and their cousin Noor to Israeli shelling in 2009 and his subsequent transformation—has achieved critical acclaim. Published in 2010 and translated into 17 languages, the book has become an international best seller. It is a testament to his commitment to forgiveness as the solution to conflict, and the catalyst towards peace. He has received a number of national and international awards for his work, including The Public Peace Prize in 2014.

#### Abu Sarah, Aziz

Aziz Abu Sarah is a Palestinian activist who is globally recognized for his work on peace and conflict resolution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He is a former Executive Director of the Centre for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University. He was named as National Geographic Explorer in 2011, and a TED fellow in 2014. He was the First Intercultural Innovation Award winner, an award issued in partnership by the UNAOC and BMW. Aziz has published articles at *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Alarabiya*, *National Geographic* and others. His book, *Crossing Boundaries, a Traveler's Guide to World Peace*, was published in 2020.

#### Al-Faqih, Judge Kholoud

Faqih made history when she became the first female shariah judge in the Middle East (in Ramallah, Palestine). She has travelled internationally to speak about her struggles in succeeding in a male-dominated field, and has become an inspiration to many women outside the Middle East as well. She ranked number ten in the 100 Most Powerful Arab Women in 2012 by *CEO Middle East* and *Arabian Business* magazines. An award-winning documentary, *The Judge*, was made about her life in 2018.

### **Al-Hroub, Hanan**

A school teacher from occupied Palestine who won The Global Teacher Prize in 2016, Hanan Al-Hroub started teaching traumatized Palestinian children who had faced violence, or whose parents had been shot in front of them. Hanan Al-Hroub instilled confidence, self-esteem, and the ability to live a normal childhood in her students. She published a book entitled *Play and Learn* that includes educational games that help children overcome the challenges they face.

### **Al-Jafarawi, Saleh (new)**

Saleh, a young Gazan multimedia artist, has emerged as a powerful voice documenting the daily struggles and resilience of Palestinians in Gaza. His work as a photographer, YouTuber, and singer has garnered him millions of followers on social media platforms. Saleh's unique ability to capture moments of strength and even joy amidst overwhelming adversity has made him a beacon of hope for many. Despite being targeted and injured by an Israeli drone attack in February 2024 while covering a hospital evacuation, Saleh's resolve remains unshaken. His continued dedication to sharing Gaza's stories, even in the face of personal danger, has only increased his influence and impact, making him a vital chronicler of Palestinian life and resistance.

### **Tamimi, Ahed**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 145

## **QATAR**

### **Al-Muftah, Ghanim**

Ghanim Al-Muftah is the embodiment of "Impossible is Nothing". He was born with a caudal regression syndrome, a condition affecting the development of his lower spine. He has not let this affect his attitude to life and displays tremendous character in engaging in his interests and activities. He is a successful entrepreneur and motivational speaker, enjoying the following of over ten million people on social media and more than one billion views on his YouTube channel. At the 2022 football World Cup, Ghanim was appointed Qatar's brand ambassador, and goodwill ambassador. He kicked-off the event by reciting from the Holy Qur'an and then went on to call for the world to embrace unity and diversity. In an iconic moment, he shared the stage with Morgan Freeman.

**HH Sheikha Aisha bint Faleh bin Nasser Al-Thani**  
Sheikha Aisha Al-Thani is the Founder of the Doha Academy and Board Member of Reach Out to Asia, Qatar. She is also a member of the Qatar Supreme Education Council, the highest education authority in Qatar. She is a modernist development thinker who promotes a more pronounced and well-judged engagement with people of faith. Sheikha Aisha's perspective resonates with the more concerted efforts by humanitarian organizations to look at the networks of people of faith as a solution to practical development problems.

### **Al-Thani, Dr Abdulla bin Ali**

Dr Abdulla bin Ali Al-Thani is the President of the Hamad Bin Khalifa University in the State of Qatar, and is Chairman of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE). Dr Abdullah, a member of Qatar's ruling family and a former university professor, is the man at the centre of many of Qatar's educational initiatives, and is leading the way to transform Qatar's education system.

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

### **Badawi, Samar**

Samar Badawi is a Saudi Arabian human rights activist. She has been arrested several times, imprisoned and been subject to a travel ban. She has campaigned for women driving, women voting and other women and human rights issues. She has received international recognition for her activism. Her arrest in 2018, alongside fellow activist Nassima Al-Sadah, prompted a defence from Canada and then a response from Saudi Arabia leading to a major diplomatic falling out between the two countries. She was released from prison in June, 2021.

### **Al-Hathloul, Loujain**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 145

### **Obaid, Thoraya Ahmed**

Thoraya Obaid is one of the few Saudi women on the Shura Council. She was formerly the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, the world's largest multilateral fund for population assistance. She was the first Saudi national to head a UN agency and was also Chair of the High-level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the principal inter-agency organization for coordinating

# UN World Interfaith Harmony Week

[www.worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com](http://www.worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com)

In September 2010, His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan proposed a World Interfaith Harmony Week at the Plenary session of the 65th United Nations General Assembly in New York. This was a call to establish a week every year where people of all faiths, and those of no faith, would promote the message of *'Love of God, and Love of the neighbour'*, or *'Love of the Good, and Love of the Neighbour'*. The Draft Resolution for the World Interfaith Harmony Week was later written and presented by HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, Chief Advisor to King Abdullah II for Religious and Cultural Affairs and Personal Envoy of King Abdullah II, before the United Nations General Assembly where it was unanimously adopted on 20 October 2010.

UN Resolution A/65/PV. 34; the World Interfaith Harmony Week, as it is called, recognises the first week of February of every year as a time when people of all faiths, and those of no faith, work together to promote and celebrate religious and cultural understanding and cooperation, to address each other in favourable terms drawn from their own traditions and to accept and respect 'the other' based on the foundations of *'Love of God, and Love of the Neighbour'*, or *'Love of the Good and Love of the Neighbour'*. Remarkably the World Interfaith Harmony Week excludes no one and includes and unites everyone.



## The HM King Abdullah II World Interfaith Harmony Week Prize

The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought in Jordan established the World Interfaith Harmony Week Prize in 2013 to recognise the three best events or texts organised during the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week (first week of February) which best promote the goals of the World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Prizes are awarded to each event or text that is judged to have been most successful in promoting interfaith harmony and impacting religious understanding. Since 2014, this prize has been known as the King Abdullah II World Interfaith Harmony Week Prize. The prizes are:

- |        |                            |
|--------|----------------------------|
| First  | \$5,000 and a gold medal   |
| Second | \$3,000 and a silver medal |
| Third  | \$1,000 and a bronze medal |

In 2023, 1,065 events held in over 50 countries were registered on the site. They were arranged by groups as diverse as government agencies, social groups, schools, private individuals and of course the numerous interfaith organisations that exist worldwide.

In 2023 the winners were, first prize, Ethiopia Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA), Ethiopia; second prize, Cross-cultural Ministry of Kolding Deanery in cooperation with the Office of Migrant Cooperation and Encounter with Other Religions of the Haderslev Diocese, Denmark; joint third prize, Afrogivenness Movement & Positive Youth Africa, Cameroon; and joint third prize, Oxford Interfaith Forum, UK



management matters within the UN. She underlined religion and culture as important aspects for the agency's development work.

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

### **Al-Ameri, Khalid**

Khalid Al-Ameri is a content creator with over 17 million followers on his social media platforms and hundreds of millions of views on his YouTube channel. His videos showcase humanitarian efforts as well as global multiculturalism with the aim of promoting better understanding and harmony. Many of his videos have also looked at aspects of family life and love.

### **Barakat, Maha**

Maha Barakat is Assistant Minister for Health and Life Sciences, UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She is Director-General of the recently established Front-line Heroes Office, which aims to support all front-line workers in the UAE. She also serves as the Board Chair of the RBM Partnership to End Malaria, having previously been the Director General of the Health Authority Abu Dhabi from 2013-2018. Prior to that she worked at the Imperial College London Diabetes Centre which she founded in Abu Dhabi. She was awarded an OBE in 2010 and given the Imperial College Medal in 2013. An outstanding academic with a PhD from Cambridge University, she serves on various boards and committees related to research and development issues in the medical field.

### **Mattar, Dr Maryam**

Dr Maryam Mattar is Director General of the Community Development Authority (CDA), a newly launched Dubai government authority that takes responsibility for setting up and developing frameworks for social development. She is also the founder and Executive Director of two non-profit civil associations: UAE Down's Syndrome Association and UAE Genetic Diseases Association. She has also initiated several national community outreach programmes such as UAE Free of Thalassaemia by 2012 and established a number of wellness centres. She received the Arab Women's Pioneer Award for Health Innovation 2019.

## YEMEN

### **Karman, Tawakkol**

Karman was one of three women jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. She is a Yemeni journalist

and activist who has regularly led protests against the government. Over the past several years, she has campaigned for the release of political prisoners and advocated freedom of expression and other human rights. These activities have caused her to be jailed several times. She has repeatedly called for an end to US drone strikes in Yemen. More recently, she has spoken out against both the Houthi coup and the "Saudi-UAE occupation" of Yemen. Much of her work is done through the Tawakkol Karman Foundation.

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## *Sub-Saharan Africa*

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## GAMBIA, THE

### **Bensouda, Fatou**

Bensouda has been serving as the Gambian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom since 3 August 2022. She is the former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, being the first African woman to hold such a position. She was the International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor from 2012-2021, after having served as Deputy Prosecutor in charge of the Prosecutions Division of the ICC since 2004. She is the former Attorney General and Minister of Justice of The Gambia. In September 2020, the Trump administration named Bensouda a "specially designated national" forbidding all US persons and companies from doing business with her. The Biden administration revoked this in 2021.

## GHANA

### **Ibrahim, Sheikh Mustapha**

Sheikh Mustapha Ibrahim is a religious scholar who has written over 20 books. He is among the few Islamic scholars in Ghana who have had the benefits of both classical Islamic training (the madrasah study circle) and the modern secular model. He founded the Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services (ICODEHS) in 1996 to help reduce the high level of poverty in society and empower the less privileged. In collaboration with several partner NGOs in the Arab and Muslim world, ICODEHS' humanitarian footprints have spread throughout Ghana and into 12 other countries in West Africa.

## MALAWI

### **Chabulika, Sheikh Dinala**

Sheikh Chabulika is the Muslim Association of Malawi's spokesperson. He is known as an Islamic rights activist and has taken it upon himself to present the need to address social issues as religious duties. Chabulika works on health and exploitation issues as well as building bridges with non-Muslims in Malawi. He also fought against the forced teaching of religious texts to school children.

## NIGER

### **Mindaoudou, Dodo Aichatou**

Mindaoudou is a former Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, and African Integrity. She has served the government since the mid-1990s and is also the former Secretary-General for the Network for Rural Law. Ms Mindaoudou has written extensively about economic development and women's issues. She is one of the most senior-level women politicians in West Africa having been the UN Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) from 2013-2017 and in 2020 she was appointed co-chair by the World Health Organization (WHO) of an independent commission to investigate claims of abuse by aid workers.

## NIGERIA

### **Ashafa, Imam Muhammad**

Imam Ashafa is the Co-director of the Muslim-Christian Interfaith Mediation Centre in the city of Kaduna (Northern Nigeria), a leading task force that resolves conflicts across the country. He works with Christian Pastor James Wuye to promote peace between religions. Previously, both leaders encouraged hatred of others, but they changed their ways after being injured and affected by inter-religious violence. Pastor Wuye and Imam Ashafa have gained a worldwide audience and intense interest in their story by speaking about their successful work in resolving conflicts. In April 2013, they were awarded the first prize in the World Interfaith Harmony Week.

## SENEGAL

### **Kane, Zeinaba**

Zeinaba Kane is the President of Women of the Rassemblement Islamique du Sénégal (Alwahda), the

largest Islamic organization in Senegal, having over 40 Islamic associations operating within it. Kane works on the improvement of living conditions for rural women in Senegal. She has written many articles and is frequently interviewed by the media.

## SOMALIA

### **Dayib, Faduma**

Dayib is a development expert and a social change activist. In 2016, defying many death threats, she became the first woman to run for President of Somalia. Despite pulling out at the last minute, she has nevertheless raised awareness on the monumental roles Somali women continue to play in peacebuilding and statebuilding since independence. Born in Kenya to illiterate parents, she did not learn to read and write until she was 14. At 17, she moved to Finland and completed two masters degrees before winning a fellowship to study public administration at Harvard.

### **Elmi, Asha Haji**

Asha Haji Elmi is a peace activist and a former member of the Federal Parliament of Somalia. In 2008, she won the Right Livelihood Award (known as the alternative Nobel Prize). She is an activist for women's rights and formed the Six Clan 125 movement when women were excluded from the peace process in Somalia that involved the five traditional clans. Elmi is also the founder of Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC) and campaigns internationally against female genital mutilation in Somalia and in other areas of Africa.

### **Ismail, Dr Edna Adan**

At the age of 85, Dr Edna Adan Ismail was awarded the 2023 Templeton Prize in recognition of her decades long work in health care. A nurse and midwife, she has been a tireless healthcare advocate for women in her region, campaigning especially against FGM. She founded a hospital which has significantly improved maternity mortality rates. She was the first lady of Somalia, as the wife of Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal, Prime Minister of a united Somalia in the late 1960s and also served as the director of the Ministry of Health.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### **Pandor, Naledi (new)**

Naledi Pandor is a distinguished South African politician, educator, and academic who gained

international prominence for her role in advocating for an International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation into alleged war crimes in Gaza. She called for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to be held accountable and potentially face an arrest warrant. Pandor has been a Member of Parliament (MP) for the African National Congress (ANC) since 1994 and has held several high-profile ministerial positions. These include Minister of International Relations and Cooperation (2019-2024), Minister of Higher Education and Training (2018-2019), Minister of Science and Technology (2014-2018), Minister of Home Affairs (2012-2014), and Minister of Education (2004-2009). Pandor converted to Islam during her university years upon marrying her husband, Sharif Joseph Pandor.

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## Asia

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### AFGHANISTAN

#### Joya, Malalai

Malalai is a well-known activist, writer, and a former politician from Afghanistan. She was a Parliamentarian in the National Assembly of Afghanistan, later to be dismissed for publicly condemning the Afghan Parliament. She was the first ever to speak against the democratically elected Karzai administration and its western supporters, specifically the United States. She is renowned for her attempts to teach women and girls to read and write in the refugee camp where she resided during the Soviet-Afghan war. She fled Afghanistan after the Taliban took over and is now taking refuge in Spain.

#### Samar, Dr Sima

Dr Sima Samar is a medical doctor who lived as a refugee for over a decade. She established the Shuhada Clinic to provide health care for fellow Afghan women refugees in Pakistan. Upon her return to Afghanistan she served as Minister of Women's Affairs of Afghanistan (2001 to 2003). She has established an institute of higher education and carries on human rights work both nationally and internationally. She was State Minister for Human Rights and International Relations in Afghanistan before the ministry was dissolved in 2020. Her Book *Outspoken: My Fight for Freedom and Human Rights in Afghanistan*, was long-listed for the 2024 Moore Prize.

### BANGLADESH

#### Hossain, Dr Hameeda

Dr Hossain has published many books and articles relating to human rights and women's issues in Bangladesh and around the world. She is a founding member of Ain o Salish Kendra, a legal aid and human rights organization. She received the Bangladesh Development Initiative's (BDI) Lifetime Achievement Award in 2021.

#### Sultana, Razia

Razia Sultana is a Bangladeshi lawyer and human rights activist who has worked tirelessly for the Rohingya people. She interviewed hundreds of Rohingya women and published their accounts of sexual violence by the Burmese security forces. She is a coordinator of the Free Rohingya Coalition (FRC) and a director of the Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO). She won the International Women of Courage Award 2019.

### CHINA

#### Tohti, Ilham

Ilham Tohti is the most renowned Uyghur public intellectual in the People's Republic of China. For over two decades he has worked tirelessly to foster dialogue and understanding between Uyghurs and Chinese. Frequently harassed and arrested, in 2014 he was sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of separatism. Much of the evidence against him included his teaching materials and interviews with foreign journalists. For his work in the face of adversity he was awarded the PEN/Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award (2014), the Martin Ennals Award (2016), the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize (2019), and the Sakharov Prize (2019). Current reports estimate over a million Uyghurs have been detained in internment camps undergoing 're-education' and forced abortions and sterilization as the intensity of the Chinese crackdown on Muslim practice in the eastern region continues.

### INDIA

#### Bano, Bilkis

Bilkis Bano, known popularly as Dadi (grandmother), is an 86-year-old woman who inspired protests in India against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), both of which discriminate against Muslims.

Her Gandhian style of protest attracted thousands of mainly Muslim women in the Delhi locality Shaheen Bagh and continued unabated for 100 days until a COVID-19 lockdown was enforced. The Indian government's arrests and assaults on the protesters are another front in the battle for India's soul (Gandhi vs RSS – Hindu Nationalism) and democracy.

### **Khan, Dr Saniyasnain**

Dr Saniyasnain Khan is a prolific author of children's literature, known for establishing Goodword Books in 1996. To date, he has written over 100 children's books with a primary focus on Islamic themes. His works have gained international recognition and been translated into numerous languages. Goodword's Qur'an translations are available in 40 languages, with over 10 million free copies distributed worldwide, particularly in Africa and Latin America. Additionally, Khan serves as a trustee of CPS International, which aims to foster the culture of peace and spirituality.

### **Parvez, Khurram**

Khurram Parvez is an internationally recognized human rights activist based in Srinagar, Kashmir, who has been in prison since his arrest under India's draconian anti-terrorism legislation in November 2021. UN and Human rights groups have demanded his release calling his detention an act of reprisal for his human rights work, and an attempt to silence him and Kashmiri civil society as a whole. In 2023, Parvez was awarded the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders.

### **Ramzan, Dr Mubeena**

Dr Mubeena Ramzan educates and empowers women in Kashmir. She runs the Jamia Islamia Mahdul Muslimat, based in Sopore and in Srinagar and also heads a socio-religious organization, Ansar un Nisa. The former institute graduates religious scholars while the latter provides a helping hand to the needy, would-be brides, widows and orphans and also establishes vocational training centres.

## **INDONESIA**

### **Siradj, Professor KH Said Aqil**

Professor Siradj served as the Nahdlatul Ulama Chairman from 2010 to the end of 2021. He had previously served on Indonesia's National Commission for Human Rights and was a strong advocate for minority rights. He has an extensive academic

background in the Islamic sciences and regards education as a tool for development. He founded the Said Aqil Centre in Egypt, a study centre that focuses on developing Islamic discourse, particularly in the Arab World. He is involved in various organizations addressing social and religious issues.

## **MALAYSIA**

### **Anwar, Zainah**

Zainah Anwar co-founded two ground-breaking women's groups to promote the rights of women living in Muslim contexts. She is the Co-Founder and Director of Musawah: A Global Movement for Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family. Prior to this, she founded and was Executive Director of Sisters in Islam, an organization committed to gender issues and increasing respect for women. She is also a journalist who has contributed to the *New Straits Times* and *The Star*—the country's two main newspapers—and has written a book about Islam in Malaysia. She addressed the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos and delivered a keynote address at Harvard University titled 'Islam, Human Rights, and Activism.' *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast* named Anwar one of the 150 women 'Who Shake the World'.

## **NEPAL**

### **Siddiqui, Mohammadi**

Mohammadi Siddiqui is a pioneering female Muslim politician, social worker, and human rights activist. She established the Fatima Foundation in 2003 to ensure Muslim women's rights on two related fronts: the personal daily struggle of women against discrimination, and the social and legal practices that influence women's independence and access to basic rights. The foundation organizes Muslim women's groups and works with religious scholars and women leaders to educate women and raise awareness of their rights in order to advocate for the practice of actual Islamic law and ensure social justice for women.

## **PAKISTAN**

### **Mazari, Muniba**

Muniba Mazari also known as the 'Iron Lady of Pakistan' is a prominent artist, a global motivational speaker, humanitarian, disability rights advocate, Pakistan's first wheelchair-bound female TV host, model and goodwill ambassador to UN Women Pakistan. Mazari derives her strength from a tragic car crash



that took place in February, 2008 when she was 21 that left her paralyzed from the waist down. Despite facing immense challenges, she refused to let her disability define her and embarked on an extraordinary journey of resilience and determination. Muniba Mazari serves as a powerful symbol of strength, courage, and resilience. Through her art, activism, motivational speaking, and television hosting, she continues to inspire people worldwide, demonstrating that disabilities cannot hinder one's spirit and capacity to achieve greatness.

#### **Yousafzai, Malala**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 145

### **PHILIPPINES**

#### **Rasul-Bernardo, Amina**

Amina Rasul-Bernardo, an advocate for peace and democracy, is President and co-founder of the Philippine Centre for Islam and Democracy (PCID) and a columnist with *Business World*. Appointed Director of the Mindanao Development Authority, she was a member of the cabinet of former President Fidel V Ramos, former Commissioner for Women, former Director of the Development Bank of the Philippines, and Director of the Philippine National Oil Corporation. She led the organization of the National Ulama Conference of the Philippines and the Noorus Salam (Light of Peace), a national network of female scholars and Muslim women civil society leaders. She also led the development of an Islamic Model for Peace Education for Mindanao. The UN Act for Peace Programme named her the Mindanao Peace Champion in 2010. In 2013, she won second place in the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week Prize and in 2023 won the Intercultural Achievement Award in Austria.

#### **Rasul, Santanina Tillah**

The first Muslim woman elected to the Senate of the Philippines, former Senator Santanina Tillah Rasul is also the founder and Chair of the Magbassa Kita ('Let us Read') Foundation Inc, which focuses on literacy and education. She is noted for her work on women's empowerment, effective civil service, improved literacy for the Muslims of Mindanao, and equitable treatment of Muslims of the Philippines. She authored much landmark legislation, including the Women in Development and Nation-Building Act that empowered women. She also allocated

development funds for women's initiatives and opened the Philippine Military Academy to women. A peace champion, she was a member of the government panel during the peace talks with the Moro National Liberation Front that led to a peace agreement that was signed in 1996. In 2019 she was conferred the Tandang Sora Award.

### **SINGAPORE**

#### **Izzuddin, Dr Mustafa**

Dr Mustafa Izzuddin's decades of voluntary leadership have churned out a range of sustainable socio-cultural programmes as well as being a leading voice in interfaith bridge-building. His foundation champions educational causes, including scholarships to university students. Izzuddin is also an academic with hundreds of published writings and presentations done in relation to Southeast Asia, and the nexus between Islam and International Relations. He became the first Singaporean to be designated an ASEAN Fulbright Fellow by the US State Department, and remains the only Singaporean to be awarded the prestigious fellowship on civilizational dialogue by ICESCO. He was presented with the national appreciation plaque by the President of Singapore for his services.

#### **Yacob, HE Halimah**

Halimah Yacob became Singapore's eighth, and first female, President in September 2017. She decided against running for a second term in the September 2023 elections. As President she promoted initiatives for supporting a cohesive society, strengthening interfaith and recognizing all workers who contribute to Singapore's growth. She has a strong international profile, regularly meeting world leaders. She entered politics in 2001 and a decade later was appointed Minister of Community Development, Youth and Sports and later on Minister of Social and Family Development. She was elected Speaker of Parliament in 2013, becoming the first woman to hold the post.

### **SRI LANKA**

#### **Ismail, Jezima**

An educator for over three decades, Jezima Ismail is the Chairperson of People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL), President Emeritus and Founder of the Sri Lanka Muslim Women's Conference (SLMWC), Founder and Chairperson of the Academy of Adult Education for Women (AAEW),

Member of the Board of Management for the Center for Human Rights at the University of Colombo, Coordinator of the Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum, Vice President of the Girl Guides Association, and a member of the Board of Directors of Helpage in Sri Lanka. In 1989, the Government of Sri Lanka conferred on her the title of Deshabandhu, the third highest national honour.

### **Marsoof, Justice Dr Saleem**

Justice Dr Saleem Marsoof is a former President of the Court of Appeal, a Judge of the Supreme Court and Acting Chief Justice. Throughout his career Justice Marsoof has played major roles in the fields of higher education and law reform as well as major contributions in the field of Company Takeovers and Mergers, Arbitration Law and Muslim Matrimonial Law. He is the founding President of the University of Colombo Muslim Majlis, Vice President of the YMMA Central and Chairman of the Zahira College Colombo Board of Governors.

## **THAILAND**

### **Sabur, M Abdus**

Sabur is the Secretary General and co-founder of the Asian Resource Foundation and the Asian Muslim Action Network. He is also Co-director of the School of Peace Studies and Conflict Transformation in Bangkok. In the 1990s, Sabur served as coordinator of the Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD). He has edited a number of publications on peace and dialogue in Southeast Asia, including: 'Understanding Human Rights: Perspectives from South Asia,' 'Interfaith Conference on the Culture of Peace,' 'Globalization and Asian Perspectives for an Alternative Development,' and 'Towards Peace in Multi-Ethnic Asia.'

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## *Europe*

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## **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

### **Muftić, Elmedina**

Elmedina Muftić is a journalist, author and social and political activist having published over 500 articles on the impact of the genocide in Bosnia and the role of women in Bosniak society. Elmedina's life mission is to ensure that the victims of the Bosnian genocide are never forgotten. Her passion is to raise Bosniaks'

awareness of who they are, to awaken their dignity and cultural pride, and to fight for their historical and traditional heritage.

## **UNITED KINGDOM**

### **Abu-Sittah, Dr Ghassan (new)**

Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah is a British-Palestinian plastic and reconstructive surgeon specializing in craniofacial surgery, trauma-related injuries, and conflict medicine. His career has been marked by extensive work in conflict zones, particularly in Gaza, where he has provided critical medical assistance during numerous conflicts, including the 2023-24 Gaza genocide. His description of the horrors he saw in Gaza include testimony that he treated patients suffering from white phosphorus burns. He shared testimony with Scotland Yard and, in January 2024, met with International Criminal Court investigators in The Hague. He was elected Rector of the University of Glasgow in March 2024. His activism led to travel bans in Germany and France, later overturned by legal efforts.

### **Ali, Zeeshan**

Zeeshan Ali runs the hugely popular "Smile2Jannah" youtube channel as well as other social media platforms. He addresses contemporary topics in a light-hearted way, often showing up geo-political double standards and expressing a layperson's frustrations with mainstream reporting. His videos combine animation and special effects. Ali made his name alongside others (Muhammad Hijab and Ali Dawah) through debates at Hyde Park Speaker's corner. His calm demeanour, insights and wit have appealed to many in the global English speaking Muslim community, but especially the youth. He has over a million social media followers and over 330 million views on his YouTube channel.

### **Hijab, Mohammed (new)**

Mohammed Hijab is a well-known debater and public speaker who discusses topics such as religion, politics and society on his social media platforms. He has several university degrees and is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Birmingham. He has hosted figures such as Naom Chomsky and Jordan Peterson and had two high-profile engagements with Piers Morgan on the Palestine issue, which garnered tens of millions of views. He is the co-founder of Sapience Institute, and is the author of several books including: *The Burhan: Arguments for a Necessary Being*

*Inspired by Islamic Thought; The Double Standard: Media Reactions to Zionist Terror; and Kalam Cosmological Arguments.* Other influential voices in this field are Hamza Andreas Tzortzis, Subboor Ahmad, Muhammed Ali, Ali Dawah and Zeeshan Ali. With significant social media following, they have instilled confidence in young Muslims on how to navigate and address the intellectual and social challenges of modernity.

#### **Patel, Sir Mufti Hamid (new)**

Sir Mufti Hamid is Chief Executive of the education charity Star Academies, a multi-academy trust operating 35 schools which yield excellent results despite being located in deprived areas. He has led the trust since its inception, spurred by a passion to instill and realize the highest aspirations through excellent teaching, an inspiring curriculum and proactive pastoral support. He is a highly influential leader in the education sector and has national prominence as a faith and civic leader. He is well known for his influence on policy and practice. An honorary Professor of Education at the University of Birmingham, he also serves as the Senior Board Member of Ofsted and Vice Chair of the National Institute of Teaching. In addition, he chairs the Education Honours Committee and the Confederation of School Trusts. His service to education was recognized by the award of CBE in 2015 and a knighthood in 2021.

#### **Qureshi, Khawar**

Khawar Qureshi QC is one of the world's leading advocates on international arbitration, administrative and constitutional law, public international law and commercial litigation. He was the youngest advocate ever to have appeared before the International Court of Justice in 1993 for Bosnia's genocide case against Yugoslavia. From 1999 to 2006, he remained one of only 20 barristers which the UK Government had appointed for representing it in civil matters. He routinely appears at the International Court of Justice, most recently as the counsel for Pakistan in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case, the Indian spy convicted on charges of terrorism, espionage and sabotage. He has been a Deputy High Court Judge and Bencher of Middle Temple since 2014, as well as having taught Commercial Law, International Law and International Arbitration at Cambridge University, King's College, University of London.

#### **Williams, Paul**

Paul Williams is behind the hugely influential

'Blogging Theology' social media platforms (primarily YouTube). A former evangelical Christian, Williams converted to Islam and started engaging in debates with people of differing creeds. He still frequents Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park but much of his activity has now moved online. His YouTube channel invites scholars and intellectuals to discuss their various areas of expertise. His polite and sincere manner in understanding and presenting these views has enabled him to build a significant following. In 2024, Williams founded Blogging Theology Academy in collaboration with philosopher Hasan Spiker. This online learning platform offers instruction in both the Islamic and Western philosophical and theological traditions, and features expert guest lecturers, many of whom are past contributors to the Blogging Theology channel.

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## *Oceania*

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### AUSTRALIA

#### **Chowdhury, Sheikh Tawfique**

Chowdhury is the Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Mercy Mission, one of the world's fastest-growing Muslim social enterprises. Its premier programme is the AlKauthar Institute, which offers courses in Islamic disciplines to the general public through a medium that is accessible to working professionals. When AlKauthar initially launched in 2005, its offerings were limited to Australia. AlKauthar Institute has since spread its reach across the Western world, South Africa, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. A medical doctor by profession, Chowdhury studied Islamic theology in Madinah, specializing in Islamic finance, personal law, and Islamic medical ethics. He also runs a successful multinational IT company, and is a corporate trainer and business coach to many successful people worldwide.

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## *North America*

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### CANADA

#### **Dayrit, Flordeliza**

Flordeliza Dayrit is the co-founder and CEO of *MuslimKids TV*, the category leader in children's streaming services for Muslim audiences. The *MuslimKids*

TV platform has over 5,000 video titles, interactive games, and eBooks available in over 60 countries. Flordeliza began her career in 2004 as co-producer of the documentary series *A New Life in a New Land: The Muslim Experience in Canada* (Vision TV, SCN, CLT). In 2006, Flordeliza worked as an art director for several TV projects in Cairo, Egypt. She then started writing and directing TV series in 2007 with the *Hurray for Baba Ali* series, which has been viewed over 17 million times on YouTube.

#### **Kutty, Faisal**

A leading North American Muslim lawyer, academic and public intellectual, Faisal Kutty is outspoken on issues of human rights, Islamic thought, religion and law, and national security. He is an associate professor at Southwestern Law School, an affiliate faculty member at Rutgers University Center for Security, Race and Rights, and counsel to a respected Toronto law firm with an international client base. He co-founded the Canadian Muslim Civil Liberties Association and served as its first legal counsel and previously served as the vice chair and legal counsel to the Canadian Council on American Islamic Relations (now renamed the National Council of Canadian Muslims). He is a frequent keynote speaker, widely quoted commentator, and he has written hundreds of op-eds, academic articles, papers, reviews and essays on a wide range of topics.

### **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

#### **Awad, Nihad**

Nihad Awad is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR). CAIR is the most prominent Muslim lobby group in the US and is frequently sought out by the media and politicians for the Islamic perspective on events. Awad is one of the signatories of *A Common Word Between Us and You* and participates regularly in the US Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. Awad coordinated the formal release of the *Open Letter to Al-Baghdadi*, signed by over 120 leading Muslim scholars and academics, which rejected the extremist teachings promoted by DA'ISH.

#### **Beydoun, Khaled A**

Khaled A Beydoun is a scholar on Islamophobia, civil liberties and constitutional law. He lectures frequently and regularly writes for leading media outlets. His 2008 book, *American Islamophobia: The Roots and*

*Rise of Fear* has been published to wide acclaim, as has his latest book, *The New Crusades: Islamophobia and the Global War on Muslims*. He serves as professor at the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, and currently serves on the US Commission for Civil Rights. He has been outspoken about the genocide in Gaza as well as Sudan and Congo and he has raised awareness and millions of dollars for humanitarian causes. Beydoun holds degrees from the University of Michigan, UCLA and Harvard.

#### **Khan, Salman**

Salman Khan is a pioneer of online learning, having founded *Khan Academy* in 2008. The online educational website features more than 10,000 mini-lectures, free of charge, to anyone in the world. The videos are hosted on YouTube and teach a variety of subjects, such as: mathematics, history, healthcare, medicine, finance, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, economics, cosmology, organic chemistry, American civics, art history microeconomics, and computer science. Khan published his international best seller, *The One World School House*, in October 2012. As of September 2024, the Khan Academy channel on YouTube has 8.57 million subscribers, and its videos have been viewed more than 2 billion times.

#### **Mogahed, Dalia**

Dalia Mogahed is currently the CEO of Mogahed Consulting, having previously been the Director of Research at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. She has also been a Senior Analyst and Executive Director at the Gallup Centre for Muslim Studies, as well as the Director of the Muslim West Facts Project. Former President Obama appointed her to serve on the Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, making her the first hijab-wearing Muslim woman to hold a White House advisory position. Mogahed has also held high positions in the US-Muslim Engagement Project and is co-author of the book *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*.

#### **Sarsour, Linda**

Linda Sarsour is an American-Palestinian human rights and social justice activist, and a campaigner against increasing Islamophobia in the United States. Sarsour is the Executive Director of the Arab American Association of New York and Senior Strategist for the Campaign to Take on Hate. She is also the

Co-founder of the Muslim Democratic Club of New York, the first of its kind in New York City. Her numerous distinctions include: the White House's Champion of Change, the New York City Council's Shirley Chisholm Women of Distinction Award, and CAIR's inaugural American Muslim of the Year. Linda has also written for—and been featured in—local,

national, and international media on issues related to Arab-Muslim American communities, immigration, criminal justice issues, and Middle East affairs. In March 2020, Simon & Schuster published Sarsour's autobiography, *We Are Not Here to Be Bystanders*.

عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ لِي بِعَجَلٍ نَدِيخُنِي وَالْحَنِيءُ وَيَسْأَلُنِي عَنِ النَّارِ قَالَ الْقَائِلُ يَا سَيِّدِي عَظِيمًا  
 وَإِنَّ لِي سِيرًا عَلَى نَسِيرَةِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ تَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ لَا تُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَتَقِي الصَّلَاةَ وَتُؤْتِي الزَّكَاةَ وَتَصُومُ رَهْصًا وَتُحِجُّ الْبَيْتَ  
 ثُمَّ قَالَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى إِمَارَةِ الصَّوْمِ حَبْنَةُ وَالصَّدَقِ رِطْفَةٌ وَالْحَنِيءُ مَا يُطْفِئُ الْمَاءَ النَّارَ وَالصَّلَاةُ الْحَاكِمُ فِي جُودِ الْبَيْتِ وَالزَّكَاةُ  
 تَجَاوِزُ حُجْرَهُمْ إِلَى الْمَضَاجِعِ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ يَوْمَ يُؤْتَى فِيهَا الْأَخْبَارُ بِمَا أَسْرَأُوا وَعَمُورُهُمْ وَذُرُؤُهُمْ سَبَّامَةً فَلْتَبَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ  
 أَسْرَأُوا أَمْ لَا وَعَمُورُهُمْ الصَّلَاةُ وَذُرُؤُهُمْ الْجَاهِدُ قَالَ الْأَخْبَارُ بِمَا أَسْرَأُوا كَلِمَةً قَالَ لِي يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَأَخْبَرْتَنِي وَقَالَ  
 كَلِمَةً عَلَيْكَ هَذَا قَائِلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَنَا لَمْ نَجِدْ مِنْ سَائِلِكُمْ نَزَقْنَا فَقَالَ كَلِمَةً عَلَيْكَ مُعَاذُ وَهِيَ كَلِمَةُ النَّارِ عَلَى وَجْهِ هَيْدٍ  
 وَقَالَ عَلِيٌّ مِنْ أَخْبَارِهِمْ الْأَحْصَاءُ وَالسُّنْبُطُ

On the authority of Muadh bin Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

I said, "O Messenger of Allah, tell me of an act which will take me into Paradise and will keep me away from the Hellfire." He ﷺ said, "You have asked me about a great matter, yet it is easy for him for whom Allah makes it easy: worship Allah, without associating any partners with Him; establish the prayer; pay the zakat; fast in Ramadhan; and make the pilgrimage to the House." Then he ﷺ said, "Shall I not guide you towards the means of goodness? Fasting is a shield; charity wipes away sin as water extinguishes fire; and the praying of a man in the depths of the night." Then he ﷺ recited: "[Those] who forsake their beds, to invoke their Lord in fear and hope, and they spend (charity in Allah's cause) out of what We have bestowed on them. No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do." [as-Sajdah, 16-17] Then he ﷺ said, "Shall I not inform you of the head of the matter, its pillar and its peak?" I said, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He ﷺ said, "The head of the matter is Islam, its pillar is the prayer and its peak is jihad." Then he ﷺ said, "Shall I not tell you of the foundation of all of that?" I said, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." So he took hold of his tongue and said, "Restrain this." I said, "O Prophet of Allah, will we be taken to account for what we say with it?" He ﷺ said, "May your mother be bereaved of you, O Muadh! Is there anything that throws people into the Hellfire upon their faces — or: on their noses — except the harvests of their tongues?"

Related by at-Tirmidhi, who said it was a good and sound hadeeth.

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## *Middle East and North Africa*

### BAHRAIN

#### **Al-Zayani, Afnan**

Afnan Al-Zayani is the CEO of Al-Zayani Commercial Services (AZCS), a multimillion dollar corporation. She is responsible for the passing of personal status laws in Bahrain that ensure the protection of Muslim women's rights in divorce and custody proceedings, something she oversaw during her leadership of the Bahrain Businesswomen's Society (BBS). Subsequently, Al-Zayani led the Middle East and North Africa Businesswomen's Network. In 2010, she received the Leadership in Public Life Award from Vital Voices, a women's empowerment organization. In 2016, she was honoured by the IWEC Foundation at the annual conference in Belgium.

### IRAN

#### **Ansari, Anousheh**

Anousheh Ansari is Chairman, CEO, and Co-founder of Prodea Systems, a private US-based company offering technological solutions for businesses. In 2006, she became the first privately funded woman, and first Iranian, to explore space. In 2015, the National Space Society awarded Ansari the Space Pioneer Award for her service to the space community. She received an Honorary Doctorate of Science from Utah Valley University. In 2017, Ansari co-represented Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi at the 89th Academy Awards, accepting the Oscar on his behalf for his film *The Salesman*. Farhadi did not attend himself due to his opposition to President Trump's immigration ban.

### JORDAN

#### **Abu-Ghazaleh, Talal**

Abu-Ghazaleh is the Chairman and Founder of the Organization by his name. He is credited with introducing the concept of intellectual property to the Arab World. Abu-Ghazaleh has been selected as Deputy Chairman of the UN Global Compact, as well as being appointed by the UN as Chair of UN Global Alliance for ICT and Development. He is the

only person who is not from one of the G8 countries to be listed in the IP Hall of Fame in Chicago, US.

#### **Sadik, Randa (new)**

Randa Sadik has been the CEO of Arab Bank since February 2022. Under her leadership, Arab Bank has demonstrated impressive financial performance, with its extensive network of over 600 branches spanning five continents contributing to its robust global presence. As of September 2022, the bank's assets stood at a substantial \$64.7 billion, underscoring its financial strength in the competitive banking sector.

### KUWAIT

#### **Al-Bahar, Shaikha**

Shaikha Al-Bahar is the Deputy CEO of the National Bank of Kuwait, valued at over \$100 billion in total assets. She is in charge of loans, investment banking, marketing, and treasury. Al-Bahar is also Chairperson of Al-Watany Bank of Egypt, Vice Chair at NBK Capital (a subsidiary of the National Bank of Kuwait), and sits on the board of the International Bank of Qatar. She studied at Harvard Business School, Stanford, Duke, and the University of California. In 2023, Al Bahar oversaw the first batch of a global leadership program for women training 20 women for executive management and board roles.

#### **Al-Ghunaim, Maha**

Al-Ghunaim is a pivotal figure in Arab and Kuwaiti banking and finance. In 1998, she founded Global Investment House, one of the most renowned companies in the Arab World. She is well-known for taking the company international and onto the London Stock Exchange in 2008, making it the first Kuwaiti company to be listed there. The firm is also listed on the Kuwait, Dubai, and Bahrain stock exchanges.

### MOROCCO

#### **Bouhia, Dr Hynd**

Dr Hynd is a strategic entrepreneur and founded the Believe Act Lead Method to empower women to become great leaders by creating wealth and making an impact. She has accumulated more than 20 years of professional experience in high-level leadership positions. She was nominated by Forbes among the

100 most influential women, in the Arab Women in Business list, and honoured as a member of the Johns Hopkins Society of Scholars (2018). With a Harvard PhD in engineering, she started her career at the World Bank in Washington before joining Morocco's Prime Minister and Casablanca Stock Exchange as the Managing Director. Dr Hynd is the author of two motivational and inspirational books about women empowerment.

## SAUDI ARABIA

### **Al-Amoudi, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Ali**

Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Ali Al-Amoudi has a portfolio of businesses in oil, mining, agriculture, hotels, hospitals, finance, operations, and maintenance in various countries including Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia. His charitable and philanthropic works are substantial, especially in Ethiopia. In November 2017, Al-Amoudi, alongside several Saudi princes

and other billionaires, was detained in an anti-corruption crackdown. He was eventually released in January 2019.

### **Bin Laden, Bakr**

Bakr bin Laden, half-brother of the deceased Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, is the Chairman of the Saudi Binladin Group. Revenue of his company is estimated at \$6 billion. His company is responsible for construction projects in the Al-Haram Al-Makki in Mecca, such as the expansion and the *jamarat* projects. The group has been involved with several major projects in the country, including the King Abdullah Economic City, the King Abdul Aziz International Airport, and the King Saud University. In November 2017, he was detained, along with several Saudi princes and billionaires, on an anti-corruption drive. He spent three months at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh before being released in January 2018.

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Altafsir.com is a completely free, non-profit website providing access to the largest and greatest online collection of Qur'anic Commentary (tafsir or tafseer), translation, recitation and essential resources in the world.

Over  
**213** MILLION  
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It was begun in 2001 by the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, Jordan, being the brainchild of HRH Prince Ghazi, the Chief Advisor for Religious and Cultural Affairs to H. M King Abdullah II. Today the website is fully operational in Arabic and English and provides the original Arabic texts of 150 or more books of Qur'anic Commentary, Interpretation and Explanation (tafsir or tafseer), recitation (tajwid) tutorials and Hadith collections, and other fields, pertaining to the study of Qur'anic exegesis. Translations of the meanings of the Qur'an are currently available in 24 different languages, and in several cases more than one translation is available. The site also includes audio Qur'an recitations; resources on Qur'an syntax; resources on the Contexts of Revelation (asbâb al-nuzûl); resources on the meanings of words found in the Qur'an, and other works on the Qur'anic sciences. It contains over a million pages of Qur'anic Commentary and translation. Some of the texts presented here exist only as manuscripts and have never previously been published in book form despite their historical importance and influence. Altafsir.com is thus a complete website for the study of the Qur'anic Sciences.

In addition to presenting the standard Classical and Modern Commentaries on the Holy Qur'an (tafsir or tafseer) texts of all eight schools of jurisprudence, the site also contains works of various mystical, philosophical, linguistic and theological currents. Moreover, the first time in one place, comparative studies between the Shafi'i, Hanafi, Maliki, Hanbali, Ja'fari, Zaydi, Ibadi and Thahiri schools can be carried out complete with multi-screen displays and search programs.

In 2012 [altafsir.com](http://altafsir.com) added the highly praised *Love in the Holy Qur'an* as a free downloadable pdf, and received 8 million visits bringing the total number of visits to over 27 million visitors.

In 2013, the Prince Ghazi Trust for Qur'anic Thought put up a sister website with a special emphasis for mobile devices. You can now read tafsir wherever you go by visiting [www. GreatTafsirs.com](http://www.GreatTafsirs.com) and downloading the app for Android or iOS.

### **HRH Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal Al-Saud**

Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal is a member of the Saudi royal family who built his fortune through entrepreneurship and investment in real estate and the stock market. His philanthropic contributions are wide-ranging and include a contribution of \$20 million to found the Centre for Christian-Muslim Understanding at Georgetown University, which remains one of the key institutions globally working on Christian-Muslim relations. In November 2017, he was one of several Saudi princes and billionaires detained on an anti-corruption drive. In April 2020, Alwaleed Philanthropies allocated \$30m to the battle against COVID-19. He has over 15 million social media followers.

### **Olayan, Lubna**

Lubna Olayan is internationally recognized as Saudi Arabia's top businesswoman. She was Chief Executive Officer of the Olayan Financing Company, and a board member for organizations such as Saudi Hollandi Bank, Rolls Royce, and Citigroup, among others. She was reappointed in January 2023 to serve a three-year term at Saudi British Bank.

### **Al-Suhaimi, Sarah**

Al-Suhaimi is the first woman to chair the Saudi Arabian stock exchange (Tadawul), which is the largest in the Middle East. Additionally, she holds the position of CEO and Member of the Board of Directors of NCB Capital, where, in 2014, she was tasked with reviving the flagging investment bank and raising morale in the workforce. Within two years she had reversed NCB Capital prospects and returned it to growth. Previously, she held the position of CIO at Jadwa Investment. She sits on the boards of the Saudi Arabian Airlines Public Agency, the Cultural Development Fund, and the Regional Voluntary Carbon Market company.

## **SUDAN**

### **Ibrahim, Dr Mohamed "Mo"**

Dr Mohamed Ibrahim—more commonly known as Mo Ibrahim—is a Sudanese-born entrepreneur currently based in the UK. A successful telecommunications businessman, he founded one of Africa's largest cellular phone companies, Celtel. He came into prominence for establishing the Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership in 2017, an award that provides the recipient a \$5 million initial payment, plus \$200,000 annually for life. The prize

was conceived as a way to promote good governance and curb corruption by African leaders seeking financial security when they leave office. Ibrahim was appointed Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (KCMG) in the 2023 UK New Year Honours for services to charity and philanthropy.

## **UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

### **Alabbar, Mohamed Ben Ali**

Mohamed Ben Ali Alabbar is a member of the Executive Board of the Government of Dubai and the Director of the Department of Economic Development. Under his leadership Dubai has been one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. He has been successful in increasing the financial regulations requiring transparency, making Dubai a more attractive place to invest and do business in. He is one of the main assistants of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, and is the Managing Director of Emaar, one of the world's largest real estate companies.

### **Al Gurg, Raja**

Raja Al Gurg is Managing Director of the Easa Saleh Al-Gurg Group LLC (ESAG). Al-Gurg is the first Emirati woman on the board of HSBC Bank Middle East Limited and is also on the advisory board of Coutts Bank, the wealth management division of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group. She also plays an active role in several philanthropic, social, and women's societies, including serving as Deputy Chair of the Dubai Healthcare City Authority and President of the Dubai Business Women Council. Her autobiography: *Raja Al Gurg - An Autobiography* was published at the end of 2019. In 2022, she was appointed as Honorary Pro-Chancellor at Heriot Watt University and in 2023 she was awarded the highest French civilian award: the Legion of Honour Chevalier (Knight).

### **Al-Jaber, Fatima**

Al-Jaber is an Emirati businesswoman and Chief Operating Officer of the Al-Jaber Group. She supervises more than 50,000 employees and manages around \$4.9 billion in assets. She is also a regular speaker at economic conferences. Al-Jaber was the first ever Emirati woman to be elected to the Board of Directors at the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce in December 2009. She has received many awards and has been featured in Forbes and Arabian Business.



### **Al-Rostamani, Hana**

Al-Rostamani is the Group CEO of the First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) and was responsible for turning the bank's focus towards a digital-first approach. Previously, she held the position of Independent Director in Emirates Integrated Telecommunication Company (Du) and Vice-chairperson of the Emirates Institute for Banking and Financial Services. She has over 20 years experience in the financial world and was ranked first in Forbes Middle East's Power Business Women 2023 and 2024 lists.

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## *Sub-Saharan Africa*

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### **NIGERIA**

#### **Dangote, Alhaji Aliko**

Dangote is the Chairman and CEO of the Dangote Group, the largest industrial group in Nigeria. He is the richest man in Africa in 2022, with an estimated net worth of \$15.3 billion. In January 2009, Dangote was honoured for being the leading provider of employment in the Nigerian construction industry. In 2011, Dangote was also awarded Nigeria's second highest honour, Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON) by the President of Nigeria. As a philanthropist, he has donated to the National Mosque, the Presidential Library, and a host of charities. In March 2020, Dangote donated 200 million Naira towards curbing the spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria.

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## *Asia*

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### **BRUNEI**

#### **HM Sultan Hajji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah**

HM Hajji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah became the 29th Sultan of Brunei following his father's abdication in 1967. He became Prime Minister following independence from the UK in 1984. This makes him both the world's longest-reigning current monarch and the longest-serving current head of state. He is also one of the wealthiest people in the world with a net worth of \$30 billion. His official residence has over 1,800 rooms and he maintains a car collection in the thousands. He owns many

properties (via the Brunei Investment Authority) in the UK including the famous Dorchester Hotel.

### **INDONESIA**

#### **Indrawati, Sri Mulyani**

Sri Mulyani Indrawati is one of a few Indonesian policymakers with an international profile. During her first time as Finance Minister (2005-2010), Southeast Asia's largest economy became one of the 20 leading economies in the world and one of the fastest-growing economies in the region, partly thanks to a combination of sound economic policies and a stable political environment. She was then appointed Managing Director of the World Bank in 2010, where she served until 2016 before returning to be Finance Minister for a second time.

#### **Thohir, Erick**

Erick Thohir is an Indonesian businessman and politician who has served as Indonesia's Minister of State Owned Enterprises and as a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) since 2019. He founded the Mahaka Group, a conglomeration that focuses on sports and entertainment in the print, radio, and television media. He also owns solely and in partnership several football and basketball teams in Indonesia and abroad. He is the president of SEABA (Southeast Asian Basketball Association).

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## *Europe*

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### **TÜRKIYE**

#### **Sabancı, Güler**

Sabancı is a renowned, award-winning Turkish businesswoman and the Chairperson of the family-controlled Sabancı Holding, a \$25 billion industrial and financial corporation, the second largest in Türkiye. Ban Ki-moon appointed Sabancı as a member of the Board of United Nations Global Compact, the UN's highest-level advisory body involving business, civil society, labour, and employers' organizations. She was recently honoured with the David Rockefeller Bridging Leadership Award for her philanthropic contributions.

#### **Ulukaya, Hamdi**

Hamdi Ulukaya is the founder and CEO of the multi-billion dollar yoghurt business, Chobani. He

immigrated to the USA in 1994, purchased a yoghurt factory in 2005 and developed his own recipe based on his Kurdish ancestry and the eastern Turkish farm he grew up on. He has developed a humane working culture for his 2,000-plus employees. He focused on employing from the local community as well as refugees and has given his employees a 10% stake in the company. He has won numerous awards.

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## UNITED KINGDOM

### **Aziz, Asif**

Asif Aziz is a billionaire property entrepreneur, philanthropist and diversity advocate. As the founder of Criterion Capital, he leads a real estate business with 1,000+ employees, which is projected to exceed £6bn AUM by 2027. Asif has earned numerous accolades, including the 'Entrepreneur of the Year' PROPS Award, an honorary fellowship from Goldsmiths, University of London, and the 'Tun Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad Leadership Award'. Asif established a family philanthropic foundation in 2015 and The Aziz Foundation has awarded 600+ scholarships to British Muslims across over 50 universities, and paid internships with prestigious partnerships. The Foundation also sponsors Europe's first Ramadan and Eid lights in London's West End, the Trafalgar Square Iftar, and the soon-to-open Piccadilly Community Centre. Through Criterion Capital and The Aziz Foundation, Asif continues to shape a future where British Muslims and broader communities thrive through compassion, cooperation and creative innovation.

### **Issa, Mohsin and Issa, Zuber**

Mohsin and Zuber Issa grew up in humble circumstances to parents who had migrated to the UK from India. They started working in a garage and then acquired petrol stations, owning over 6000 forecourts (EG group), before acquiring the retail chain Asda and its 600-stores-plus, bringing it back into British ownership. Zuber recently sold his stake of Asda (22.5%) to focus on leading and managing the EG petrol sites, and spend more time on charitable endeavours. They are estimated to be worth over £5 billion.

### **Randeree, Shabir**

Randeree is a hugely successful entrepreneur and philanthropist and was recognized for his efforts with a CBE. He is the Chairman of DCD Group, Deputy Chairman of Al Baraka Bank South Africa and

Founder Director at IBB Bank plc. He is the Chair of Mosaic (founded by King Charles III) and involved in a number of other educational institutes. He has served on government task forces and in 2016 was inaugurated as the Chancellor of the University of East London. In 2020 he was elected the new Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Woolf Institute.

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## North America

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## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### **El-Erian, Mohamed**

El-Erian's career started at the International Monetary Fund, where he worked for 15 years and served as deputy director. He also served as Managing Director at Citigroup in London and PIMCO, a global investment management firm and one of the world's largest bond investors, where he was CEO and CIO. He is currently Chief Economic Adviser at Allianz, the world's largest insurance company, and President of Queens' College, Cambridge University. El-Erian contributes to major economic publications such as the *Financial Times*, *Bloomberg*, *Business Insider*, *CNN*, and *Foreign Policy*. *Foreign Policy* named him on the list of the "top 100 Global Thinkers" for four years in a row. He has authored two *New York Times* bestselling books, sits on several boards, and received various professional and philanthropic awards.

### **Khan, Shahid**

Khan moved to the USA from Pakistan in 1967, aged 16, graduated in Industrial Engineering and since then has gone on to become a billionaire businessman. His main company is Flex-N-Gate, which manufactures components for companies in the automobile industry. It currently has a revenue of over \$6 billion and a workforce of 13,000 employees. He is also the owner of the American national football league team, the Jacksonville Jaguars and the English football team, Fulham. More recently he has launched All Elite Wrestling, a professional wrestling entertainment company and is a major financial backer of Black News Channel, a 24-hour cable news channel.

## *Middle East and North Africa*

### EGYPT

#### **El-Baz, Farouk**

Farouk El-Baz is a geologist who worked with NASA on the selection of landing sites on the moon and the training of Apollo astronauts in visual observations and photography. He is well known for applying satellite images to groundwater exploration in arid lands. The Geological Society of America established two awards in his honour: the Farouk El-Baz Award for Desert Research (1999); and the Farouk El-Baz Student Research Award (2007). He has received numerous honours and awards, including Egypt's Order of Merit (First Class). El-Baz ranked number 51 in the Power 100 of Arabian Business. In 2019, the International Astronomical Union named an asteroid after Farouk El-Baz in recognition of his outstanding scientific contributions.

#### **El-Naggar, Dr Zaghoul**

Dr El-Naggar is an Egyptian geologist and scholar who writes and speaks on science and the Qur'an. He is a fellow of the Islamic Academy of Sciences, and is well-respected by the global scientific community for his work in geology. He has published close to 200 academic articles and scientific studies. He also works for the Arab Development Institute.

### IRAN

#### **Khademhosseini, Professor Ali**

Dr Khademhosseini is the CEO and Director of the Terasaki Institute in Los Angeles, one of the leaders in researching the use of nanotechnology for minimally invasive medical procedures. Formerly, Khademhosseini was the Levi Knight Professor of Bioengineering, Chemical Engineering, and Radiology at UCLA and a Professor at Harvard Medical School. He is the author of more than 650 peer-reviewed journal articles, editorials and review papers and holds more than 70 patents. He is the recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE); and every year since 2014 Khademhosseini has been selected by Thomson Reuters as one of the World's Most Influential Minds as

a Highly Cited Researcher. He has been awarded many more honours, such as the Mustafa Prize, the Pioneers of Miniaturization Prize from the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) and the Clemson Award of the Society for Biomaterials.

#### **Shokrollahi, Professor M Amin**

Dr Shokrollahi is a renowned Iranian mathematician working in the field of information communication. He is the inventor of tornado codes and one of the principal developers of raptor codes and chordal codes, which are specifically designed for communication on electrical wires between chips. Shokrollahi holds over 150 patents in the area of information transmission and was the Chief Scientist of Digital Fountain, which Qualcomm Inc acquired in 2009. He is the CEO and Founder of Kandou, a research firm in Switzerland specializing in improving speed and efficiency in communication between microchips. Shokrollahi has won multiple awards for his work, including the IEEE IT Best Paper Award (2002), the ISSCC Jan van Vessel Award (2014), and the Mustafa Prize (2017).

### JORDAN

#### **Dajani, Professor Rana**

Rana Dajani is a professor of molecular biology at the Hashemite University in Jordan and visiting professor at Harvard, Yale, MIT and Cambridge University. She is currently a Robert Bosch Fellow in Germany. She is President of the Society for the Advancement of Science and Technology in the Arab World. Rana is also a social entrepreneur and global thought leader. She is the founder of We Love Reading, a grassroots initiative to create changemakers in underserved communities by fostering a life-long love of reading. A recipient of the UNESCO International Literacy Prize, We Love Reading has established more than 8,000 locally run libraries in over 60 countries. Her 2018 book *Five Scarves: Doing the Impossible — If We Can Reverse Cell Fate, Why Can't We Redefine Success?* challenged global policy makers to address ongoing inequities in education and employment, while also putting forward a new paradigm for measuring success in an evolving world.

## SAUDI ARABIA

### **Al-Namankany, Dr Abeer**

Dr Al-Namankany made history when she developed a new standard for measuring patient anxiety and treating it with drug-free psychotherapy, thereby protecting patients from the risks of general anaesthesia and the side-effects of sedatives. She is the winner of six distinguished clinical and research awards from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry, the Emirates Medical Association, and others. In addition to her brilliant medical career, Dr Al-Namankany is also a social activist and a defender of women's and children's rights.

### **Sindi, Dr Hayat**

Dr Hayat Sindi is a pioneer in the field of medical science with a number of significant groundbreaking scientific contributions. She is Advisor to the President of Saudi Arabia's Islamic Development Bank Group on Science, Technology and Innovation. She was the first female member of the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia, the first Saudi to complete her studies at Cambridge University in the field of biotechnology, and the first Arab to complete a doctoral degree in the field. Sindi has been appointed by UNESCO as a Goodwill Ambassador in recognition of her efforts in promoting science education in the Middle East and been chosen as National Geographic Emerging Explorer. Her other distinctions include membership at the Clinton Global Initiative 2014 and receiving the Leadership in Civil Society Prize.

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## *Asia*

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## INDIA

### **Hasan, Dr Hashima**

Dr Hashima Hasan is a key scientist behind the James Webb Space Telescope project, which is sending the earliest images of the universe we currently have. Educated at Aligarh, Mumbai and Oxford, she is widely published and has received numerous awards. She joined NASA in 1994 and has worked on various programmes cementing her reputation as one of the top scientists in the organization.

## INDONESIA

### **Afifa, Dr Nadhira Nuraini**

Nadhira Afifa, MD is an Indonesian medical doctor and public health consultant graduated from Harvard University. On a daily basis, she focuses on treating patients with nutrition-related issues. Nadhira also founded Limitless Foundation, a Jakarta-based non-profit organization that aims to provide equitable access to education for young Indonesians. In her free time, Nadhira produces video essay series' on her social media platforms, as well as contributing to national news media. She is currently a Clinical Nutrition Resident at the Universitas Indonesia.

### **Mumpuni, Tri**

Tri Mumpuni spent 30 years improving rural communities in Indonesia through electrification initiatives based on developments with micro-hydroelectric power plants. Her influential work, which offers economic incentives for implementation of the micro-hydro system, has been applied in villages across Indonesia and in the Philippines. She was presented with the Award for Community Power at the Ashden Awards in 2012. Mumpuni is the Executive Director of IBEKA, a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote community development via the provision of local energy, mainly hydroelectricity, and also clean water. She pioneered a community private partnership model to build small power plants equally owned by the community and private sector, and is responsible for introducing an energy garden to remote villagers. In 2021, the President of Indonesia, Mr Joko Widodo, appointed her as a member of the Board of Governors of the Indonesian Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN).

## MALAYSIA

### **Shukor, Dr Sheikh Muszaphar**

Dr Shukor, an orthopaedic surgeon by profession, was the first Malaysian in space. He was selected as one of two astronauts to be trained at Star City in Russia and was subsequently selected to be the astronaut to further Malaysia's Angkasawan programme, which sent him to the International Space Station in 2007. Images of him praying and celebrating Eid increased his popularity in the Muslim world. His launch also prompted the Malaysian National Fatwa Council to issue specific rulings regarding observance of religious obligations (praying and fasting) while in space. He is the author of best-selling books

including *My Way of Parenting* and *49th Rule*. Dr Shukor is currently at the National University of Malaysia UKM as a Research Fellow focusing on global issues like climate change, world hunger and humanitarian aid.

## PAKISTAN

### **Professor Atta-Ur-Rahman**

Professor Atta-Ur-Rahman is one of Pakistan's most distinguished scientists. After obtaining his Masters degree in organic chemistry from Karachi University, he completed his doctoral degree at Cambridge University, where he remains a Fellow. He helped develop the higher education landscape in Pakistan and has received the highest national awards. In 1999, he became the first Muslim scientist to win the UNESCO Science Prize. In 2013, the largest Malaysian university, Universiti Teknologi Mara, named its Research Institute of Natural Products in honour of him. In 2014 he was awarded the International Cooperation Award, the highest award of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. In 2016, he was elected as Emeritus Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, thereby becoming the first scientist from the Islamic world to be granted this honour. The same year, Professor Rahman was appointed Co-Chairman of a United Nations Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation covering the member countries of UNESCAP.

### **Saif, Dr Umar**

An award-winning scientist, entrepreneur, innovator, and a tech tycoon, Dr Saif studied at Cambridge University and was a core member of the \$50 million Project Oxygen at MIT. He created the first startup incubators in Pakistan: the Saif Center of Innovation. He is also the founding Vice Chancellor of the Information Technology University in Punjab. In recognition of his services to the country, in 2014 the Government of Pakistan conferred on him the *Sitara-i-Imtiaz* (Star of Excellence), one of the highest civilian awards in Pakistan. In 2019 he received an investment directly from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop innovative Artificial Intelligence models for data collection. He served as a Federal Minister of IT, Science and Technology in Pakistan between 2023-2024 and introduced many landmark reforms during his tenure. His company aiSight.ai is the fastest growing AI company in Pakistan, with business operations in ten countries.

### **Siddiqi, Irfan**

Irfan Siddiqi is an award-winning pioneering scientist who is best-known for the development of the Josephson bifurcation amplifier. He was born in Karachi and moved to the USA where he studied at Columbia, Harvard and Yale universities. He is Director of the Advanced Quantum Testbed and Professor of Physics at the Quantum Nanoscience Laboratory (established by him) and the Department of Physics at the University of California, Berkeley. In 2021, he received the Joseph F Keithley Award and in 2024 was elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

## THAILAND

### **Dahlan, Professor Dr Winai**

Professor Dr Winai Dahlan is the Founding Director of the Halal Science Center Chulalongkorn University (HSC) in Thailand, named the best innovation in the halal industry and the world's first halal science institution by Malaysia's Halal Journal. HSC promotes halal industry and commerce through digital platforms, namely SPHERE, HALPLUS, and scientific regional cooperation with halal laboratories in Indonesia, Malaysia and worldwide. Dr Winai Dahlan has produced many intellectual properties and written more than 50 books and several thousand articles on science and nutrition.

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## Europe

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## FRANCE

### **Guiderdoni, Dr Bruno Abd al Haqq**

Dr Guiderdoni is an astrophysicist and French convert to Islam. A specialist in galaxy formation and evolution, he has published more than 150 papers and organized many conferences on these subjects. Guiderdoni serves as Director of the Observatory of Lyon. Besides his extensive writings on science, he has also published around 80 papers on Islamic theology and mysticism and the relationship between science and religion, and is now Director of the Islamic Institute for Advanced Studies.

## GERMANY

### Şahin, Dr Uğur

Dr Uğur Şahin is an immunologist who co-founded BioNTech, the company which developed one of the major vaccines against Covid-19. His family emigrated to Germany from Türkiye, where he studied medicine at the University of Cologne. He has worked as a professor and lecturer at various university hospitals across Germany. In 2008 Şahin founded BioNTech with his wife, Özlem Türeci and mentor, Christoph Huber. The main focus of his research work is the discovery of mRNA-based drugs for use as individualized cancer immunotherapies, but with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, BioNTech pivoted to using mRNA-based drugs towards fighting this new threat. By the end of 2020, BioNTech developed the BNT162b2 vaccine and reported a 95% efficacy against the Covid-19 disease and became the first mRNA drug approved for human use. Subsequently, Şahin entered a partnership with Pfizer pharmaceutical company to distribute it worldwide.

## TÜRKIYE

### Gelenbe, Dr Erol

Erol Gelenbe studied in Türkiye and the USA, and held Professorships at the University of Liege (Belgium), the University of Paris-Saclay and Paris-Descartes, and named Chairs at NJIT, Duke, the University of Central Florida in the USA and Imperial College London. A pioneer in the field of modelling and performance evaluation of computer networks, the inventor of the random neural network, the G-networks, and the Cognitive Packet Network, he is currently Professor in the Institute of Theoretical and Applied Informatics of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and Chair of the Academia Europaea Informatics Section. Also affiliated with the University of Cote d'Azur, CNRS I3S (Nice), Research Professor at Yasar University, Izmir, Türkiye, and Honorary Professor University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, he has graduated 95 PhDs and received multiple fellowships, awards and honours for his work

### Sancar, Dr Aziz

Sancar was co-awarded (along with Tomas Lindahl and Paul Modrich) the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2015 for his work on DNA repair. His contributions over the years have shed light on the processes of ageing, causes of cancer and how cells work. Sancar

studied at Istanbul University before moving to the USA where he is currently Professor at the University of North Carolina. He is also a co-founder of a foundation which promotes Turkish culture and supports Turkish students in the USA (the Aziz & Gwen Sancar Foundation). He is the 2019 recipient of the Hyman L. Battle Distinguished Cancer Research Award.

### İmamoğlu, Dr Ataç

Dr İmamoğlu is an award-winning physicist whose alma maters include the Middle East Technical University in Istanbul and Stanford. He was Professor at the University of California and then the University of Stuttgart before becoming the head of the research group on Quantum Photonics, at ETHZ (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology), Switzerland. His academic interests are quantum optics, semiconductor physics, and nonlinear optics.

## UNITED KINGDOM

### Al-Hassani, Dr Salim

Dr Salim Al-Hassani is a former Professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, and the celebrated author of *1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in Our World*, a best-selling account of scientific and technological developments in Islamic history. Dr Al-Hassani also serves as the Chairman and Founder of the Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilisation. The Foundation partners with the Abdul Latif Jameel Foundation, a British charity which showcased the 1001 Inventions Global Touring Exhibition across the UK, United States, and Türkiye in 2010.

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## North America

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## CANADA

### Ghilan, Dr Mohamed

Dr Mohamed Ghilan is a Canadian Muslim who has managed to combine a high degree of learning of modern science and traditional Islam. Born in Riyadh, to parents from Sudanese and Yemeni backgrounds, he attended high school and university after immigrating to Canada. In 2007 Mohamed began his full-time studies in the Islamic Tradition after having made connections with several Muslim

scholars. In May 2015, Mohamed earned a PhD in neuroscience at the University of Victoria, where he studied synaptic plasticity in Huntington's disease, as well as the effects and molecular mechanisms of stress on the brain in Fragile X syndrome. He hopes his research can eventually be used to develop new therapies which can be used to assist individuals with movement disorders or intellectual disabilities.

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### **Elgamal, Dr Taher**

Dr Taher Elgamal, widely known as the “father of SSL (Secure Sockets Layer)”, is a world-renowned, Egyptian-American cryptographer. In addition to being the driving force behind SSL, the technology used to secure web browsing online, his work is also used as the basis for Digital Signature Algorithm (DSA) adopted by the National Institute of Standards and Technology as the Digital Signature Standard (DSS). He is a recipient of the RSA Conference 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award and received the 2019 Marconi Prize with Paul Kocher.

### **Hatamleh, Dr Omar (new)**

Dr Omar Hatamleh was recently announced the Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. With a career at NASA spanning over 27 years, Dr Hatamleh has been instrumental in shaping the organization's AI strategies and fostering innovation across various missions. His extensive work has garnered him international recognition, including prestigious awards such as the NASA Innovation Award and the Silver Achievement Medal. He has co-authored *Between Brains*, a seminal work exploring AI's impact on society.

### **Khan, Dr Mehmood**

Dr Mehmood Khan is the Chief Executive Officer and member of the board of directors of Life Biosciences. He was the former PepsiCo Vice Chairman and Chief Scientific Officer. He previously consulted for the Mayo Clinic on diabetes and other diseases and was President of Takeda Pharmaceuticals. He is one of the world's leading thinkers in food, nutrition, and innovation. Dr Khan sits on numerous boards.

### **Siddique, Professor Teepu**

Professor Siddique is a neurologist and scientist known for his ground-breaking discoveries concerning genetic and molecular abnormalities. He was head of the team that discovered the cause behind

the mysterious and deadly disorder known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). He studied at Dow Medical College in Karachi, where he earned his medical degree in 1973 before moving to the USA. He was a Professor of neurology and cell and molecular biology at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine before becoming director of the university's division of neuromuscular medicine.

### **Ying, Professor Jackie Y**

Professor Jackie Y Ying is a pioneer in the use of nanotechnology for human health. She heads the NanoBio Lab at the Agency for Science, Technology and Research in Singapore. She received her PhD from Princeton University and was Professor of Chemical Engineering at MIT before becoming the Executive Director of the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (IBN), Singapore. Her interdisciplinary research is focused on nanostructured materials and systems for catalytic and biomedical applications. She has authored over 390 articles and has over 170 patents issued or pending. In 2017, she was awarded the Abdeali Taybali Lifetime Achievement Award and was also named a Fellow of the United States National Academy of Inventors (NAI). In 2018 she was awarded the TÜBA Academy Prize, in 2021 she was elected to the National Academy of Engineering, and in 2023 she won the King Faisal Prize in Science.

*Middle East and North Africa*

## ALGERIA

**Mosteghanemi, Ahlam**

Ahlam Mosteghanemi is a best-selling author who has won numerous prizes, including the Naguib Mahfouz Prize for *Memory in the Flesh*, a novel about Algeria's struggle against foreign domination and the problems that plagued the emerging nation after its independence. Written in Arabic, the book has sold over a million copies. She earned her PhD at the Sorbonne in France and now lives in Beirut. She is the first contemporary Arab author to sell millions of copies of her work and dominate book charts for years in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, and the UAE. In 2016, she was named UNESCO Artist for Peace. She has over 15 million social media followers.

## EGYPT

**Al-Aswany, Alaa**

Alaa Al-Aswany is the recipient of many distinguished international literary honours and awards. His novels are acclaimed in the field of contemporary literature, selling millions of copies in three dozen languages and adapted into film and theatre performances. Al-Aswany reached international literary acclaim with his ground-breaking 2002 novel *The Yacoubian Building*. Through the prism of a fashionable downtown Cairo building, he exposes the corrupt dealmaking and exploitative relationships of power in Mubarak's Egypt. His latest novel *The Republic, As If*, published in 2018, is set during the events of Egypt's 2011 revolution. Al-Aswany is the author of 17 books—novels, short story collections, and compendiums of his articles. He has taught and lectured at universities and leading cultural institutions around the world. A leading democracy advocate, his op-eds have appeared in influential publications and he also pens a weekly column for Deutsche Welle's Arabic news site.

**Badreya, Sayed**

Badreya is an Egyptian-born actor who played significant roles in a number of Hollywood films such as *Iron Man* and *The Dictator*. His production company

Zoom in Focus emerged with the purpose of showing the world the Arab-American story. Much of his efforts in this regard have been published in prominent news outlets such as *The New York Times*, BBC, ABC, and Fox News. In 2024 he starred in the BAFTA-winning British short film *Jellyfish and Lobster*.

**Namira, Hamza**

Hamza Namira is an Egyptian singer and a songwriter who became known as the "Voice of the Revolution" after the 2011 Arab Spring in Egypt. His songs focus on subjects related to sociopolitical, humanist interest, hope, alienation and resistance against oppression. Namira enjoys a wide following and recently celebrated 1 billion views on his YouTube channel, in addition to having almost 19 million followers on different social media outlets. He lived in exile after being accused of opposing the Egyptian regime but recently returned to Egypt where he settled and hosts concerts. Namira also participates in philanthropy working alongside organizations like Human Appeal International and United Muslim Relief.

**Waked, Amr**

Amr Waked is an Egyptian actor who has become a crossover star in Hollywood. Politically active with over 7 million X followers, Waked was involved in the street protests that eventually toppled Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and was also active in the 2013 protests that led to the overthrow of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi. In 2019 an Egyptian military court sentenced him, in absentia, to eight years in prison for "publishing fake news and insulting state institutions". Since late 2021 Waked has been producing and presenting an award-winning documentary series on Al-Jazeera called 'Decoded' (*Dahaleez* in Arabic) which has racked up millions of views on YouTube. He currently lives in Spain.

**El-Wakil, Abdel-Wahed**

Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil is an international architect and a contemporary icon of Islamic architecture. A student of the famous Hassan Fathy, El-Wakil has designed over 50 buildings around the world, including one for King Charles. He is the two-time recipient of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and received first prize for the design of contemporary mosque architecture in Riyadh. In 2024 he was a recipient



of The Institute of Classical Architecture & Art (ICAA) Arthur Ross Awards for Excellence in the Classical Tradition.

## IRAN

### **Alidoosti, Taraneh**

Taraneh Alidoosti was named as one of the best actresses of the decade by *Film Monthly* magazine and was the youngest person ever to win the Crystal Simorgh for Best Actress. She starred in *The Salesman* which won the Oscar for best Foreign Language Film in 2017. She boasts over 8 million followers on different social media networks. She was imprisoned briefly after taking part in demonstrations against the Iranian government.

### **Farhadi, Asghar**

Asghar Farhadi is an award-winning Iranian film director and screenwriter who explores the depths and complications of everyday relationships and themes of jealousy and trust in an evocative way and often includes strong female leads. He has won two Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film for his films *A Separation* (2012) (becoming the first Iranian to win an Oscar) and *The Salesman* (2016), as well as receiving a Golden Globe Award and numerous other awards. He famously did not attend the 2017 Academy Awards citing President Trump's travel ban as the reason. He sent two famous Iranian Americans to receive the Oscar on his behalf. In 2021, he received the Cannes Film Festival's Grand Prix for his film *A Hero*.

### **Majidi, Majid**

Majid Majidi is an Iranian film director whose films have won many international awards. His *Children of Heaven* was nominated for Best Foreign Film at the Academy Awards. In August 2015, he released the first part of an intended trilogy on the life of the Prophet ﷺ, with *Muhammad ﷺ: The Messenger of God* being the most expensive film in Iranian movie history (\$40 million). His film *Sun Children* was shortlisted for the 2021 Oscars best foreign film.

### **Nazeri, Shahram**

Shahram Nazeri is a world-famous icon of classical Persian, folkloric Kurdish, and Sufi music. Hailed as "Iran's Pavarotti" by the *Christian Science Monitor*, Nazeri has released over 50 albums to date and performed in major venues worldwide. In 2014, Nazeri received France's National Order of Merit.

## LEBANON

### **Assaf, Roger**

Roger Assaf is a prominent Lebanese director, actor, and playwright. With his actress wife Hanane Hajj-Ali, he co-founded the Al-Hakawati Theatre Company and the Shams Cultural Cooperative for Youth in Theatre and Culture, an organization providing underprivileged individuals with a forum for self-expression through drama.

## MOROCCO

### **Lalami, Laila**

Laila Lalami is an award-winning novelist and essayist. Her many books include *The Moor's Account*, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction and *The Other Americans*, a finalist for the National Book Award in Fiction. Her opinion pieces and political commentary appear regularly in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation*, and *The New York Times*. She has received a British Council Fellowship, a Fulbright Fellowship, and a Guggenheim Fellowship, and has been honoured by the World Economic Forum (WEF) as a Young Global Leader. She is currently Professor of creative writing at the University of California at Riverside as well as being a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University

## PALESTINE

### **Al-Barghouti, Dr Tamim**

Dr Tamim Al-Barghouti is a Palestinian poet and columnist who has a weekly programme on AJ+ entitled 'Ma' Tamim'. Al-Barghouti has been nicknamed the "Poet of Jerusalem" and has been compared to the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. Tamim's rousing poetry is eagerly anticipated on social media. Al-Barghouti has a PhD in political science from Boston University and he has taught at the American University in Cairo, the Free University of Berlin and Georgetown University. His 2007 critically acclaimed poem 'Fil-Qudsi' (In Jerusalem), which he presented on the Emirati television show 'Amir al-Shu'ara' (Prince of Poets), has been watched by millions. His first book, *In Jerusalem and Other Poems* was translated into English and published by Simon & Schuster.

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## QATAR

### HH Sheikha Al-Mayassa Al-Thani

Sheikha Al-Mayassa is the Chairperson of Reach Out To Asia, an NGO under the Qatar Foundation that contributes to the development of societies in Asia, including the Middle East. Its specific area of emphasis is improving the quality of both primary and secondary education in addition to achieving some of the goals of UNESCO's Education For All (EFA) and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). She is the Chair of the Board of the Qatar Museums Authority and has spearheaded Qatar's recent massive investment in art. She was named as the most powerful person in the art world by *Art and Auction* magazine.

## SAUDI ARABIA

### Al-Esa, Majed

Al-Esa has produced several music videos which have gone viral online. The video 'Hwages' highlights issues faced by women in Saudi Arabia and has already more than 65 million views on YouTube, bringing the total number of views of all his videos to over 256 million. His work is resonating with the younger generation of Saudis and his videos are causing concern in more conservative circles.

## SUDAN

### Aboulela, Leila

Leila Aboulela FRSL was born in Cairo, grew up in Khartoum and moved in her mid-20s to Scotland. She is the author of six novels among them *River Spirit*, *The Translator*, *Minaret* and *Lyrics Alley*, which won the Fiction Winner of the Scottish Book Awards. Leila's life was filled with multi-cultural influences, which she often portrays in her writing, featuring migrant Muslims facing struggles in the West. She is a winner of the Caine Prize for African Writing and her story collection, *Elsewhere*, *Home* won the Saltire Fiction Book of the Year Award. Her books have been translated into 15 languages and her plays *The Mystic Life*, *The Lion of Chechnya* and others were broadcast on BBC Radio.

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## Sub-Saharan Africa

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## MALI

### Keita, Salif

Known as the "golden voice of Africa", Salif Keita is an Afro-pop singer-songwriter from Mali. His West African music is combined with influences from Europe and the Americas. In 1977 Keita received a National Order Award from Guianese President Sekou Toure. His music is very popular in the Francophone world, and more broadly in Europe. After a 40-plus-year career and having produced over 25 albums, Keita announced his retirement after his album 'Un Autre Blanc' was released in 2018; however 2024 has seen him back on tour and about to release a new album *So Kono*, with another one due next year.

## NIGER

### Souleymane, Mahamadou

Mahamadou Souleymane, known as Mdou Moutar, is a Tuareg songwriter, musician and actor from Agadez, Niger who became famous through a music trading network of cell phones and memory cards in West Africa. He is one of the first musicians to perform modern electronic adaptations of Tuareg guitar music. He reached a global audience when Sahel Sounds released his music on the Music from Saharan Cellphones: Volume 1 compilation. His fifth studio album 'Ilana' (The Creator), released in 2019 to international acclaim, has been called "the most fiery psych-rock of the 21st century" and one of "the 25 best psychedelic rock albums of the 2010s". He also has the starring role in the 2015 film *Akounak Tedalat Taba Tazoughai*, which translates as "Rain the Colour of Blue with a Little Red in It". It is the world's first feature film in a Tuareg language.

## SENEGAL

### N'Dour, Youssou

Youssou N'Dour is a legendary composer, singer and percussionist actively involved in social issues. His mix of traditional Senegalese mbalax with eclectic influences ranging from Cuban rumba to hip hop, jazz, and soul has won him an international fan base of millions. A member of the Mouride brotherhood, one of the large four Sufi orders in Senegambia, he often incorporated aspects of Islamic music and chants into his work. He wrote and performed the official

anthem of the 1998 FIFA World Cup with Axelle Red "La Cour des Grands (Do You Mind If I Play). He worked with the United Nations and UNICEF, and he started Project Joko to open internet cafés in Africa and to connect Senegalese communities around the world. He is the subject of the award-winning films *Return to Gorée* (2007) and *I Bring What I Love* (2008).

## SOMALIA

### **Abdumajid, Iman**

Iman Abdumajid was born Zara Mohamed Abdumajid in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1955. She is a super-model, entrepreneur, and activist. She became a muse to many prominent designers, including Halston, Gianni Versace, Calvin Klein, Issey Miyake and Donna Karan. Iman started her own cosmetics firm in 1994, focusing on difficult-to-find shades for women and built the company into a \$25-million-a-year business. She has also appeared in several TV series and films. In 2010, she received a Fashion Icon lifetime achievement award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA). Iman is also actively involved in a number of charitable endeavours including the Enough Project to end the global trade in conflict minerals and played a key part in the public campaign against blood diamonds. She was married to David Bowie from 1992 until his death in 2016.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### **Bhikha, Zain**

Zain Bhikha is a South African singer-songwriter and a pioneer performer of English *nasheed* songs. He is a much-loved household name amongst Muslims worldwide. He is also known for his collaborative efforts with other prominent Muslim entertainers, including Yusuf Islam and Dawud Wharmsby-Ali. Bhikha writes and directs plays as well as holding creative expression workshops conducted specifically within schools. He has released over ten albums in his career spanning 30 years.

## TANZANIA

### **Gurnah, Abdulrazak**

Abdulrazak Gurnah was awarded the 2021 Nobel Prize for Literature. He writes on culture and post-colonialism and is the author of ten novels, some of which have been shortlisted for the Booker prize, the Whitbread Prize and the Los Angeles Times Book

Award. Born in Zanzibar, Gurnah emigrated to Britain as a student in 1968, at the age of 20, and went on to become Professor of English and Postcolonial Literatures at the University of Kent.

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## Asia

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## AFGHANISTAN

### **Hosseini, Khaled**

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965. Following the USSR invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, his family was granted political asylum in the United States. Hosseini earned a medical degree in 1993. In March 2001, while practising medicine, Hosseini began writing his first novel, *The Kite Runner*, which launched his literary career. His books, *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *And the Mountains Echoed*, have been published in over 70 countries and sold more than 40 million copies worldwide. In 2006 Khaled was appointed a Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. Inspired by a trip he made to Afghanistan with the UNHCR, he later established The Khaled Hosseini Foundation, a nonprofit, which provides humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. He lives in Northern California with his wife and two children.

### **Sayeed, Aryana**

A singer, songwriter and TV personality, Sayeed emigrated from Afghanistan with her family at an early age due to the civil war. Her family eventually settled in Switzerland where, at the age of 12, she was admitted to a music school where she would often perform with a choir. She released her first music single in 2008 and soon went on to become a household name in Afghanistan. She has won numerous music awards and, in 2017, she was named "Voice of Afghanistan" by the Afghanistan National Television and Radio Network. She continued her musical success with a television career, where she judged at talent shows, such as Afghan Star and The Voice of Afghanistan. She fled the country when US troops withdrew and the Taliban took control.

## AZERBAIJAN

### Qasimov, Alim

Alim Qasimov is an Azerbaijani musician and one of the most recognized singers of Islamic folk music in the world. In 1999, he was awarded the prestigious International IMC-UNESCO Music Prize. Qasimov has recorded nine albums and performed in many concerts around the world. According to *The New York Times*, Alim Qasimov is simply one of the greatest singers alive. Back in 2010, Alim Qasimov was nominated for the United States National Public Radio's "50 great voices" series.

## CHINA

### Noor Deen, Haji (Mi Guang Jiang)

Haji Noor Deen Mi Guang Jiang is a renowned master of Arabic calligraphy. He was born in Yucheng in the Shandong Province of China in 1963. In 1997, Haji Noor Deen was awarded the Certificate of Arabic Calligrapher in Egypt, the first Chinese person to be honoured with this prestigious award. His work has been displayed—often as the first Chinese-Arabic artist—in galleries and museums around the world, including the British Museum, the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the National Museum of Scotland, and Harvard University. His work focuses on writing Arabic using a combination of traditional Chinese calligraphic brushes with quick organic strokes to fuse both the Chinese and Arabic arts uniquely. After ten years of preparation and persistent practice, he completed the transcription of the entire Qur'an in the traditional Chinese *Mushaf* style in 2021. Meanwhile, he published the *Guiding Criterion for Calligraphy* in the Chinese *Mushaf* in 2022.

## INDIA

### Azmi, Shabana

Azmi has been described as one of India's finest actresses of film, television, and theatre. She has been involved in over 150 movies, both in Hindi and foreign languages, many to international acclaim. During her extraordinary career, Azmi won the National Film Award for Best Actress five times and garnered several international honours. She has also received four Filmfare Awards. In addition to her successful career, Azmi is a social activist and supports issues such as women's rights, child survival, and fighting AIDS and injustice through the use of mainstream media. She was appointed as a Goodwill

Ambassador for India by the United Nations Population Fund in 1998. She is also a member of Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian parliament. She was conferred with an honorary doctorate by TERI University in 2014.

### Khan, Aamir

Aamir Khan is one of the leading stars of Bollywood. His phenomenal success has won him awards in India and acclaim abroad. His film *Lagaan* was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the Oscars while his venture *Dhoom 3* was the highest-grossing Bollywood film of all time. He is also a UNICEF brand ambassador, promoting child nutrition.

### Rahman, Allah Rakha

Rahman is a prolific composer, record producer, and musician for the Indian film industry. In 2011, *Time* described him as the world's most prominent and prolific film composer. He is the first Indian to receive a Golden Globe Award and two Academy Awards for the soundtrack of *Slumdog Millionaire*, a movie for which he also received two Grammy Awards. He was named CNN IBN Indian of the Year for 2009. He is the Global Ambassador of the Stop TB Partnership, a World Health Organization project. A street was named in his honour in Markham, Ontario, Canada.

## INDONESIA

### Nadia, Asma

Asma Nadia is a prolific Indonesian author, songwriter, creative consultant for TV programmes and international public speaker. She has written over 70 books, including short stories, novels, and nonfiction on topics such as self-improvement, the family, and motivational books. Thirteen of her books have been made into movies, and seven books became TV series. She is also a producer of Islamic movies, a columnist for *Republika* daily newspaper and a hijab traveller who's been to 72 countries and 545 cities. Nadia also established the I Can Write Community which aims to help young writers and has opened 290 libraries around Indonesia for unprivileged children and youth.

### Rosa, Dr Helvy Tiana

Dr Helvy Tiana Rosa has written more than 80 books and is widely recognized as a pioneer of contemporary Islamic literature in Indonesia. Some of her works have been translated into various foreign languages, while others have been adapted into films.

Over her 35-year career, she has received more than 50 awards in literature and women's empowerment. Helvy founded the Writing Community Forum Lingkar Pena in 1997, which is spread across more than 200 cities in Indonesia and abroad, and has helped to grow a numbers of prominent writers, particularly in the field of Islamic-themed literature. In addition to being a Creative Writing lecturer, she is also an Islamic film producer. Her latest film, *Gaza* (2024), was made as an effort to aid the recovery of Gaza, Palestine.

### Sulis

Born in 1990 in Java, Indonesia, Sulis grew to fame as a protege of the famous *nasheed* singer, Haddad Alwi. At nine years old, she released her first album with her teacher, Alwi, called 'Cinta Rasul Vol. 1.'. Millions of copies were distributed across Indonesia and she quickly gained popularity nationwide. This was later followed by six more albums in the Cinta Rasul series. As part of the new wave of *nasheed* singers, she is known for incorporating guitars and drums in her tracks as backing instruments to her vocals.

## KAZAKHSTAN

### Kudaibergen, Dimash

Dimash (Dinmukhammed Kanatuly) Kudaibergen is a singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist with a wide vocal range, spanning from bass to soprano. He became an overnight sensation in China following an appearance at a popular singing show and has gained popularity since then, winning every major singing award in China, Russia and his home country of Kazakhstan. He's known for his charitable efforts in his own country and his hometown of Aktobe recently announced a museum dedicated in his honour. In 2024 he was named United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for Migration. He has nearly half a billion views on his YouTube channel.

## MALAYSIA

### Hamidun, Hafiz

Hafiz Hamidun is currently the most influential *nasheed* singer in the Far East. He is a multi-platinum award winner with approximately 4 million followers on social media. His albums have sold more than 5 million copies and have been streamed more than 3 billion times over various digital platforms. Besides being a *nasheed* singer, Hamidun is also an award-winning music producer and music arranger.

### Nurhaliza, Dato' Siti binti Tarudin

Dato' Siti binti Tarudin Nurhaliza is a Malaysian singer who has won numerous musical awards. She has also been honoured for her contributions to charitable venues, and was one of the recipients of the Icon of Malaysia Award. She has over 15 million followers on different social media outlets and released her 20th album in June 2023.

## PAKISTAN

### Ismail, Al-Hajj Siddiq

Al-Hajj Siddiq Ismail is a world-renowned *naat* and *hamd* reciter, philanthropist, and spiritual leader. He has been reciting for the past 50 years in over ten languages. Ismail has performed in the presence of presidents, prime ministers, governors, chief ministers, and foreign dignitaries. He was presented with Pakistan's national award, the *Sitara-i-Imtiaz*, and the prestigious Pride of Performance Award, which he donated to the victims of Swat and Malakand.

### Obaid-Chinoy, Sharmeen

Obaid-Chinoy is an internationally acclaimed journalist, filmmaker and activist, initially known for her film work highlighting women's rights. She has gone on to win two Oscars, six Emmy awards for her films (three personally), and become the first artist to co-chair the World Economic Forum (WEF). The Government of Pakistan has honoured her with the *Hilal-i-Imtiaz*, the second highest civilian honour in the country, and Canada has awarded her a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. In 2020, Sharmeen co-directed the 'Ms. Marvel' series for Disney+, bringing a Muslim superhero to the big screen. In 2023 it was announced that she would direct one of three new *Star Wars* films, making her the first woman and person of colour to direct an episode.

### Parveen, Abida

Abida Parveen is an internationally acclaimed vocalist, often referred to as "the Queen of Sufi mystic singing". She is the only woman to reach this level of influence in devotional music. She specializes in traditional *ghazals*, and often performs before stadium-sized audiences across South Asia and globally. In 2017, she was designated a Peace Ambassador by SAARC. In 2020, Parveen received the PISA Lifetime Achievement Award and in 2021 was awarded the highest civilian award, the *Hilal-e-Imtiaz*, by the President of Pakistan.

## Qadri, Muhammad Owais Raza

With millions of followers, Qadri is considered a legend in the field of *naat* recitation. He is known for his passionate performances as well as his beautiful voice. A devout Muslim, he is particularly vocal on the subject of his love for the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. He has over 4 million followers on social media and his YouTube videos have over 90 million views.

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## Europe

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### NETHERLANDS

#### El Mouhandiz, Rajae

Rajae El Mouhandiz is a Dutch/Moroccan/Algerian interdisciplinary artist, producer, curator, art consultant and policy advisor, with extensive experience in the arts/culture sector in the Netherlands and abroad. In 2005 she started her own label, Truthseeker records, and in 2015 she transformed it into Kahina Productions. In 2019 she launched Ellae Foundation, to counter the gender, culture and socioeconomic gap in the arts/culture sector. She is Senior Advisor to the founder/MD of Caravane Earth Foundation, an international foundation which promotes social, cultural and ecological transformation. She combines these roles with advisory roles to various large cultural departments and institutions, specialized in music, performing arts, visual representation and interdisciplinary formats. She still creates produces and curates her own music, interdisciplinary art and larger projects.

### SWEDEN

#### Zain, Maher

Multi-platinum, award-winning Swedish singer, songwriter and music producer of Lebanese origin, Maher Zain is a household name across global Muslim audiences. Maher's debut album 'Thank You Allah' reached the number one spot on Amazon's World Music charts. He is the most popular Muslim artist on social media with 37 million fans and the most viewed Muslim artist on YouTube with over 600 million views. Maher has performed in over 100 charity concerts across 35 countries and is a high-profile supporter of UNHCR.

## TÜRKIYE

#### Duzyatan, Engin Altan

Engin Altan Duzyatan is a Turkish actor who plays the starring role in the hit Turkish drama 'Dirilis Ertugrul' ('Resurrection Ertugrul') which is about the legendary father of Osman the First, the founder of the Ottoman Empire. The series centres around the migrations of the Kayi Tribe and their struggles against betrayal from within as well as battles against the Templars, the Mongols, Crusaders and the Byzantine Empire. It also gives a prominent role to the famous mystic Ibn Al-Arabi. The series has captivated audiences not just in Türkiye, but also huge numbers of Muslims globally. Engin is also well-known for his charitable works in Africa where he has set up access to clean drinking water for over 100,000 people.

#### Pamuk, Orhan

Pamuk is one of Türkiye's most prominent writers and was the first ever Turkish Nobel laureate. His ten novels to date have been translated into over 60 languages and sold more than 13 million copies. His novels explore many aspects of Türkiye's rich culture past and present as well as philosophical questions. As an academic and intellectual, his voice is important nationally and internationally and he has voiced opinions on Kurds, Armenia and the current presidency. He teaches at Columbia University, USA.

#### Yalçın, Rabia

Rabia Yalçın is a Turkish fashion designer. Her creations represent a synthesis of local and international cultures and are inspired by the opulence of her homeland's Ottoman past. With her line Rabia Yalçın Haute Couture, Yalçın has a strong presence on the European fashion scene.

#### Çelebi, Master Hasan

Master Hasan Çelebi is an eminent Turkish calligrapher who is hailed for his classical Ottoman calligraphy style. His exhibitions have been featured globally, and he is celebrated for his restoration of calligraphic panels in mosques around the world, from the Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi in Madinah to the Blue Mosque in Istanbul.

### UNITED KINGDOM

#### Ahmed, Riz

The multi-talented Riz Ahmed continues to advocate for a variety of issues ranging from fundraising

for Syrian and Rohingya refugees to highlighting the lack of positive representation of Muslims in the media at the British House of Commons. Riz became a household name through his acting work in films such as *Star Wars: Rogue One*, *Nightcrawler* and 2018's *Venom* along with his Emmy-winning turn in HBO's *The Night Of*. His performance in *The Sound of Metal* was met with critical acclaim and earned him his first Academy Award nomination for best actor which he followed up with his feature writing debut, *Mogul Mowgli*, which touched on a number of the themes of his 2020 album, 'The Long Goodbye'. He received the Excellence Award Davide Campari at the 2023 Locarno Film Festival and his latest short film, *Dammi*, was premiered at the Swiss festival, which champions indie cinema.

### **Aslam, Syima**

Syima Aslam is the CEO and Artistic Director of the Bradford Literature Festival (BLF); a 10-day literary and cultural celebration hailed as 'one of the most innovative and inspirational festivals in the UK'. Since Aslam founded the festival in 2014, BLF has become one of the top three largest literature festivals in the UK and awarded the title of 'Europe's Most Diverse & Inclusive Arts Festival 2024'. BLF's reach extends across the UK and the world, having so far welcomed an audience of over 708,000 from 30 countries. Aslam has been made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Bradford. In 2022, she became a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in recognition of her achievements to date for services to literature.

### **Islam, Yusuf**

Formerly known as Cat Stevens, Yusuf Islam is a globally influential British musician and singer-songwriter. In 1977, he converted to Islam and left the music industry for educational and philanthropic causes. His international fame and high regard have probably made him the single most influential figure in the field of arts and culture in the Muslim world. Islam is a vocal opponent of terrorism and extremism, and in 2004 was recognized with the Man of Peace award by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Committee. He made a gradual return to music over the past five years with his latest albums 'An Other Cup' and 'Roadsinger'. He was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2014. Islam received three distinctions in 2015: the Global Islamic Economy Award, the Steiger Award, and BBC's Lifetime Achievement

Award. In 2019, Islam was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. His 2023 performance at Glas-tonbury confirmed his legend status.

### **Khan, Qaisra (new)**

Qaisra M Khan is a curator specializing in the Arts of Pilgrimage. She has a law degree and an MPhil in Oriental Studies from Cambridge University as well as an MA in Islamic Art and Architecture. She worked for the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar and then joined the British Museum as the co-curator for the acclaimed and pioneering 2012 exhibition, *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam*. Qaisra has lectured and broadcast globally on the arts of Muslim pilgrimage and has been Curator for Hajj and the Arts of Pilgrimage at the Khalili Collections in London for ten years. Qaisra's publications include *Hajj and the Arts of Pilgrimage* and she is editor of a significant two-volume compilation of essays *Hajj and the Arts of Pilgrimage, Essays in Honour of Nasser David Khalili*. She is also co-curating an important new exhibition entitled *William Morris & Art from the Islamic World*.

### **Sanders, Peter**

Peter Sanders began his career photographing the music icons of the 1960s. He was amongst the first Europeans to photograph the Hajj in 1971 and has continued to travel internationally, giving presentations and undertaking international photographic workshops. In the last five years, he has published, *Meetings with Mountains: Encounters with the Saints and Sages of the Islamic World, Exemplars for Our Time*, a collaboration with Michael Sugich and finally this year, *Heaven, Earth and The Ten Thousand Things: the Lives of the Muslims of China*. He has also launched a large retrospective photographic exhibition in Ithra Gallery, Saudi Arabia. Sanders continues to act as a translator of Islam to those interested in acquiring a greater understanding and to encourage broader and deeper interactions between people of different races and faiths.

### **Yusuf, Sami**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 146

CANADA

Wharnsby, Dawud

A Canadian singer-songwriter, poet, performer, educator, and television personality, Dawud Wharnsby is best known for his pioneering efforts in the musical/poetic genre of English-language *nasheed* and spoken word. His songs have influenced a whole generation of English-speaking Muslims by promoting the spirit and love of Islam.

Aden, Halima

Halima Aden is a trailblazer in the world of fashion and beauty. She was the first ever contestant to wear a hijab and burkini in a USA pageant. She was the first hijab-wearing model to be signed by a major modeling agency and the first to appear on the front cover of *Allure*, *Vogue*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Essence* magazines wearing a hijab and burkini. Aden quit the industry in November 2020, citing that the profession was not compatible with her beliefs, but she seems to have returned a year later. All this is a far cry from her birth in a Kenyan refugee camp to Somali parents 24 years ago.



Recite: In the Name of your Lord Who created  
*The Clot 96 : 1*

Calligraphy by Hasan Kan'an © FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com

Free Islamic Calligraphy

[www.FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com](http://www.FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com)



FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com is an established website that is doing much to make high quality Islamic calligraphy available more widely.

Having noticed that the Divine Names, key Qur'anic verses and sacred formulas were not available free online in the most perfect and beautiful styles of Arabic calligraphy, the Prince Ghazi Trust for Qur'anic Thought commissioned prize-winning calligrapher Mothana Al-Obaydi and other calligraphers to draw them and digitise them onto JPG, vector files and 'Word document' files so that they can be adapted, coloured and printed out by anyone according to their taste from the website. Thus, instead of paying for decorating their home with drawings or Western posters, or instead of paying for expensive name-brand calligraphy, any Muslim in the world can adapt the most beautiful pieces.

FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com is a non-profit website owned by the Prince Ghazi Trust for Qur'anic Thought, an Islamic charity (waqf) set up by HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal in 1433 AH / 2012 CE. of calligraphy and decorate his or her home with it for the price of a piece of a paper. This, God willing, will not only make people's homes more beautiful, but also their lives more beautiful as they see and remember God's Name more often.

The calligraphy pieces featured in this publication are used courtesy of [www.FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com](http://www.FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com).



### **Chappelle, David Khari Webber**

Dave Chappelle is an American stand-up comedian and actor best known for his satirical comedy sketch series *Chappelle's Show* (2003–2006). He has appeared in several films and TV series and has a \$20-million-per-release comedy-special deal with Netflix. Chappelle converted to Islam in 1991. Chappelle has received many awards and nominations for his work in stand-up and television including three consecutive Grammy Awards for Best Comedy Album. He has also received five Primetime Emmy Awards and one Screen Actors Guild Award. In 2019, Chappelle was awarded the prestigious Mark Twain Prize for American Humor.

### **Henry, Aisha Gray**

Aisha Gray Henry is the Founder and Director of the non-profit publishing house, Fons Vitae, which specializes in the translation of classics from the spiritual heritage of Islam. It continues bringing out Imam al-Ghazali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* in English—now nearing completion—as well as an Educational Series based on these volumes for children, parents and teachers. The Books of Knowledge, Creed, Purity, Prayer, Zakat, Fasting, Hajj and the Banes of the Tongue are now available and being used worldwide in pilot and home schools. Resources can be found on the interactive website: [ghazalichildren.org](http://ghazalichildren.org). Translations into Urdu, Arabic, Indonesian, French, Uzbek, Spanish, Dutch, Finnish, German, Malay and other languages are complete or underway. The many other Fons Vitae titles are used as university texts, for interfaith involvement, and in Fons Vitae's prison outreach program.

### **Wilson, Willow**

Wilson is a writer and artist, notable for her works such as *Alif the Unseen*, which won the World Fantasy Award in 2013. She is also known for her comic series, *Ms. Marvel*, featuring a Muslim teenager who becomes a superhero. *Ms. Marvel* won the Hugo award for best Graphic Novel in 2015. Wilson has received multiple awards and nominations throughout her career and is currently contributing to Neil Gaiman's Sandman comic book series.

### **Youssef, Ramy**

Ramy, a comedian, actor and writer, is best known for his eponymously titled show which explores an Egyptian-Muslim family navigating the various challenges of reconciling their religious and cultural identity within 21st-century America. Ramy Youssef

created, co-wrote, executive produced and played the titular role of the show which won him the Golden Globe Award for best actor in a TV series (musical or comedy) ahead of Hollywood heavyweights like Paul Rudd and Michael Douglas. A second series of Ramy debuted in 2019, and in its second season added multiple Oscar winner Mahershala Ali to the cast. He also directed an episode of 'The Bear', which is a multi award-winning TV series.

### **Zakariya, Mohamed**

A machinist by training, American-born Mohamed Zakariya is a classically educated Islamic calligrapher who earned diplomas in three calligraphic scripts from the Research Center for Islamic History, Art, and Culture in Istanbul. His work has been collected and displayed worldwide, including most recently at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar. Zakariya designed Eid holiday stamps for the US Postal Service in 2009, 2011 and 2013. He has been featured in several movies, including the 2002 PBS documentary *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*. mFons Vitae have recently published a book about him: *Mohamed Zakariya – A 21st-century Master Calligrapher*.

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## *South America*

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### **GUYANA**

#### **Shah, Ryhaan**

Ryhaan Shah is considered to be among the best contemporary writers in Guyana and the Caribbean, best known for her 2005 novel *A Silent Life*. Shah is also an active public figure as the President of the Guyanese Indian Heritage Association. She came under criticism for race baiting in Guyana's 2015 election.

# QUR'AN RECITERS

## Middle East and North Africa

### EGYPT

#### Sobhi, Islam

Sobhi is an Egyptian medicine graduate who started reciting Qur'an and uploading his videos on YouTube, now reaching more than 654 million views. His beautiful voice has attracted millions of followers, and the young reciter boasts more than 8 million followers on different social media outlets.

### IRAQ

#### Al-Kurdi, Raad Muhammad

##### Abd al-Rahman Salih

Raad Muhammad Al-Kurdi is from Kirkuk, Iraq. Raad began memorizing the Qur'an at a young age and won many recitation competitions as a child. He obtained a traditional license in recitation from Sheikh Ibrahim bin Fadel Al-Mashhadani. At the age of 15 he became the imam of Imam al-Shafi'i Mosque in Kirkuk. Since gathering a following of over 3.5 million subscribers on YouTube, he has become a visiting imam at Al-Kharafi mosques in Sulaibikhat, Kuwait and often leads prayers during Ramadan at the Ahmad Al-Habbai Mosque in Dubai, UAE.

### KUWAIT

#### Al-Afasy, Sheikh Mishary bin Rashid

Al-Afasy is Imam at Masjid Al-Kabir in Kuwait, and is also a singer of Arabic-language *nasbeeds*. He has gained international acclaim through his innovative use of technology to promote Islam through two satellite channels, a website, and videos on YouTube. He has more than 47 million followers on social media.

#### Al-Nufais, Sheikh Ahmed (new)

Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nufais is the Imam of the Grand Mosque of Kuwait. His expertise in Qur'anic recitation is particularly noteworthy, having trained under renowned scholars such as Sheikh Ibrahim Al-Akhdar and Sheikh Dr Abdullah Jarullah. He has successfully leveraged modern platforms to reach a wider audience with his YouTube channel garnering over 300 million views. He travels internationally to

lecture and has raised awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

### SAUDI ARABIA

#### Al-Ajmi, Sheikh Ahmad Ali

Al-Ajmi is a Qur'an reciter from Khobar Province in Saudi Arabia. Prior to gaining prominence for his recitation style as an imam at mosques in Khobar and Jeddah, he studied Qur'anic interpretation in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

#### Al-Ghamdi, Sheikh Saad ibn Said

Al-Ghamdi has served as Imam to Muslim communities across the globe, and is currently the Imam of Kanoo Mosque in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Al-Ghamdi studied the fundamentals of Islam and hadith transmission, and is recognized as an influential Saudi theologian. In 2009, he was appointed by royal decree as a co-imam for the *taraweeh* prayers in the Al-Haram Al-Madani in Madinah.

#### Al-Mueaqly, Sheikh Maher bin Hamad

Al-Mueaqly is an imam at the Grand Mosque in Makkah. He left his career as a mathematics teacher to become a scholar in Makkah and is now a popular preacher and teacher of Qur'anic studies. He has over 150 million views on his YouTube channel.

#### Al-Shatri, Sheikh Abu Bakr

Al-Shatri is a leading reciter of the Qur'an. Although he studied accounting, he became increasingly influential for his recitation of the Qur'an at international Islamic events, particularly across the Middle East and in Saudi Arabia. He is now based in London.

#### Al-Shuraim, Sheikh Saud ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad

Al-Shuraim is a leading reciter of the Qur'an known for his unique recitation style across the world. He formally studied the fundamentals of Islam in Saudi Arabia before becoming a teacher, and subsequently became Imam of the Grand Mosque in Makkah for 32 years before retiring recently.

#### Al-Sudais, Sheikh Abdul-Rahman

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 146

INDONESIA

**Hasballah, Muzammil**

Muzammil Hasballah is from the Paya Tijue Village in Indonesia. He holds a degree in architecture from Bandung Institute of Technology. He began studying recitation at the age of four and later enrolled in Madrasah Ulumul Quran. During his secondary education, he won several recitation competitions. Because of his melodious recitation, he was given the position

of imam at the mosque where he attended university. He began uploading videos of himself leading prayers in the mosque and has gained millions of followers on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook.

**Ulfah, Hajjah Maria**

Hajjah Maria Ulfah is an internationally acclaimed reciter of the Holy Qur'an, and is the first woman to win an international Qur'an recitation competition. She has popularized the Egyptian style of recitation, and currently serves as Director of the Women's Department at Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an in Jakarta. She also lectures at the Islamic University of Indonesia.



Al-Baqarah 2, 269

He gives wisdom to whomever He will, and he who is given wisdom, has been given much good; yet none remembers, but the people of pith.

#### ALGERIA

##### **Benganna, Khadija**

Benganna is an award-winning journalist who began her journey on an Algerian TV and radio station. She went on to become part of the founding team at Al Jazeera, where she remains as Senior News anchor and journalist. Benganna has covered major historical and political events, interviewed heads of state and key personalities in government. In addition to being a renowned journalist, Benganna has worked with the United Nations' High Commission for Refugees and boasts over 3 million followers on different social media outlets.

#### EGYPT

##### **Mansour, Ahmed**

Ahmed Mansour is a journalist and TV presenter for Al Jazeera. He is best known for his coverage of wars, most prominently in Iraq and Afghanistan from where he published more than 1000 reports. He is also the presenter of a widely watched TV programme 'Bela Hodod' (Without Borders) and 'Shahed Ala Al-Asr' (A Witness to History). He was arrested in Berlin by German police at the request of the Egyptian Government, but was later released. Mansour has published 25 books.

#### JORDAN

##### **Al-Fares, Ola**

Al-Fares is a Jordanian lawyer, TV presenter and journalist currently working for *Al Jazeera*. She has over 13 million followers on various social media outlets and has won several awards including: Young Arab Media Professionals Award (2009), Best Jordanian Media Award (2009), Creative Youth Shield (2010), Jordanian Model for Successful Youth (2011) and Arab Woman Of The Year (2015). She is considered to be one of the most influential media figures in the Arab world.

##### **AlSuwaidan, Sheikh Dr Tareq**

Dr Tareq AlSuwaidan is the CEO and owner of Gulf Innovation Group in Kuwait, and was the General Manager of Al-Resalah Satellite TV. An entrepreneur and TV personality, his shows rank among the highest in the Middle East. AlSuwaidan is also prominent as a motivational speaker and author of books on Islam, history, management, leadership, strategic planning, and mastering change. AlSuwaidan has over 11 million social media followers and uses the history of prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a source for leadership and strategic skills.

#### PALESTINE

##### **Azaiza, Motaz (new)**

Motaz Azaiza is a Palestinian photojournalist from Gaza, renowned for his impactful coverage of the Gaza genocide, which has earned him a significant social media following. Raised in the Deir al-Balah Camp, Azaiza graduated from Al-Azhar University in Gaza with a degree in English studies. Initially focused on capturing everyday life in Gaza, his work gained global attention during the 2023 conflict. His powerful photograph of a girl trapped in rubble was named one of Time's top 10 photos of 2023. Azaiza's work has earned him accolades, including being named GQ Middle East's Man of the Year and featuring on *Time's* list of the 100 most influential people of 2024. Despite facing immense personal loss and trauma, Azaiza continues to use his platform to raise awareness and support against the genocide.

##### **Khanfar, Wadah**

Khanfar was at the helm of Al Jazeera for eight years as Managing Director and Director General. During that time, the network transformed from a single channel into a media network. During this period, the Arab world witnessed historic transformation, including the Arab Spring. Khanfar, who resigned from the network in September 2011, has been named as one of Foreign Policy's Top 100 Global Thinkers of 2011 as well as one of Fast Company's Most Creative People in Business of the Year. Khanfar has a diverse academic background with post-graduate studies in philosophy, African studies, and

international politics. He is currently the President of Al Sharq Forum. He recently had his book translated into English: *The First Spring: Political & Strategic Praxis of the Prophet of Islam* (🕌)

### **Khoudary, Hind (new)**

Hind Khoudary has become one of the most recognized voices reporting from Gaza, using her social media platforms to shed light on the unfolding genocide. A graduate of the American International School in Gaza, Hind worked as a freelance journalist for Amnesty International and has been reporting for Al Jazeera English since 7 October 2023. With a large following on X and Instagram, her reporting is unflinchingly raw and often deeply emotional, fearlessly exposing the atrocities committed by Israeli forces in Gaza. Despite being offered a chance to leave Gaza with her family, Hind chose to stay, continuing her coverage even as over 160 journalists and media workers have been targeted, assassinated, and killed by Israeli forces. Her bravery has earned her a nomination for the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize, solidifying her status as a heroic figure in journalism.

### **El-Kurd, Mohammed, El-Kurd, Muna**

During the most recent crisis in Palestine, the evictions at Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, Mohammed El-Kurd was one of the few activists to post daily on social media and keep the world updated. His message resonated globally and contributed to widespread rallies opposing the relentless continued displacement of the Palestinian people and the Judaization of Jerusalem. It marked a shift in the media discourse, which managed to connect the current aggression as a continuation of the plight of the Palestinians over the past 70 years. In 2021, Mohammed and Muna El-Kurd were named in the *Time* magazine's annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world and have subsequently received other international honours. He has continued to speak about the Gaza genocide and the complicity of mainstream media reporting on any platform willing to host him.

### **Owda, Bisan (new)**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 146

## **QATAR**

### **Al-Ruwaini, Nashwa**

Al-Ruwaini worked for Qatar TV and MBC before establishing her own production company,

Pyramedia Ltd. Pyramedia is one of the largest and most successful production companies in the region, producing some of the highest-rated TV shows, including the Million's Poet and Prince of Poets TV competitions on Abu Dhabi TV, as well as her self-titled 'Nashwa' talk show on Dubai TV. Forbes listed her among The Top 100 Most Powerful Arab Businesswomen 2020 while the *Hollywood Reporter* selected her as one of the 25 Most Powerful Women in Global TV.

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

### **Al-Ibrahim, Waleed bin Ibrahim**

Waleed Al-Ibrahim is the Chairman of Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC). He founded MBC in London in 1991 as the first independent Arabic satellite TV station. In 2003, he launched Al Arabiya, a 24-hour news channel. MBC now includes 11 channels catering to all viewers in Arabic, English, and Persian. In November 2017, he was detained, along with several Saudi princes and billionaires, on an anti-corruption drive. He spent three months at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh before being released in January 2018. The Government of Saudi Arabia arranged to acquire 60% of MBC, leaving the remaining 40% of the company in Al-Ibrahim's hands.

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## *Asia*

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## **AFGHANISTAN**

### **Mohseni, Saad**

Mohseni is a successful businessman, as well as the founder and head of the Moby Group, Afghanistan's largest media company. The Moby Group has interests in television, radio, print, production, online news services, directories, IT&T, and retail. His story about trying to build an independent media organization in Afghanistan is told in: *Radio Free Afghanistan: A Twenty-Year Struggle for an Independent Voice in Kabul*.

## **CHINA**

### **Hoja, Gulchehra**

Gulchehra Hoja was a prominent figure in various Chinese media, including producing and hosting the first TV programme in Uyghur for children. With the Chinese crackdown on anything Uyghur, her

image was banned on Chinese media and she was forced to flee the country. She has continued to speak out for the rights of the Uyghurs despite huge personal loss; 25 members of her family are currently held in 're-education' camps which aim to remove all traces of Uyghur identity and replace it with the majority Han culture. This policy extends to those Uyghurs who are also not in camps by having Han Chinese officials forcibly live in Uyghur houses and report on 'un-Chinese' behaviour. In 2020, Hoja received the Courage in Journalism Award by the International Women's Media Foundation. Her book: *A Stone is Most Precious Where It Belongs* is a memoir which is testament to the cultural genocide of the Uyghur people at the hands of the Chinese government.

## INDONESIA

### Mohamad, Goenawan

Goenawan Mohamad is a writer, editor, activist and award-winning journalist. He is the Founder and Editor of *Tempo* magazine, Indonesia's most widely circulated weekly. His criticisms of the regime resulted in the magazine being forcibly closed twice by President Suharto's New Order administration. He has 1.4 million followers on Twitter.

## PAKISTAN

### Iqbal, Salman

Salman Iqbal owns ARY Digital Network, the largest media network in Pakistan. The network's reach covers Pakistan, the Middle East, Europe, North America, and many other regions of the world. He is recognized as an independent media voice in Pakistan and one of the most powerful and influential media personalities in the Muslim World.

### Mir, Hamid (new)

Hamid Mir is a prominent Pakistani journalist, columnist, and television host. Over his extensive career, Mir has gained recognition for his fearless reporting and outspoken stance against the Pakistani Establishment, advocating for press freedom and human rights. He has survived two assassination attempts and faced multiple bans from television. Mir began his journalism career with Daily Jang in 1987 and joined Geo News in 2002, where he still hosts the political talk show *Capital Talk*. He is one of the few journalists to have interviewed Osama bin Laden after the September 11 attacks. Despite threats and challenges, Mir continues to be an influential voice in

journalism, both nationally and internationally. His work has earned him several prestigious awards, including the *Hilal-i-Imtiaz* and the SAARC Lifetime Achievement Award.

### Shakil-ur-Rahman, Mir

Shakil-ur-Rahman is the owner of the Independent Media Corporation, Pakistan's largest media conglomerate. The Geo TV network and Jang Group are both under this umbrella organization. Shakil-ur-Rahman is also President of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society and the Chief Executive and Editor-in-Chief of the Jang Group, which publishes a number of newspapers and magazines in Urdu and English. Shakil-ur-Rahman was arrested on 12 March 2020 on the allegation of land fraud, was granted bail after eight months and then acquitted two years later.

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## Europe

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## UNITED KINGDOM

### Hasan, Mehdi

Mehdi Hasan's reputation as a formidable journalist, known for his incisive reporting and challenging interviews, has been built over years of experience. His career includes roles such as Political Editor for HuffPost UK, a columnist and senior contributor at The Intercept, and hosting Al Jazeera English's 'Head to Head'. He further solidified his influence with 'The Mehdi Hasan Show' on NBC's Peacock. After MSNBC canceled his show, Hasan quickly rebounded by launching his own media organization, Zeteo. Amidst declining trust in mainstream media, Zeteo has distinguished itself with its commitment to adversarial journalism, offering bold perspectives and scrutinizing prevailing narratives. As media coverage of the Gaza genocide revealed significant bias, Zeteo and Al Jazeera have emerged as critical voices, providing a more balanced and nuanced view of the situation. In 2023 Mehdi's book, *Win Every Argument: The Art of Debating, Persuading, and Public Speaking*, was published to an enthusiastic reception.

### Husain, Mishal

Husain has worked as a producer and presenter for the BBC for more than 20 years. As well as being a newsreader for BBC TV and BBC Radio, Husain has hosted high-profile shows which have seen her

interview figures such as Boris Johnson, San Suu Kyi, and Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. She has won a variety of awards including the Broadcaster of the Year Award at the London Press Club Awards in 2015. She is a judge for the Amnesty International Media Awards and is an ambassador for the charity Mosaic which supports young people from deprived communities. In 2024, Husain published a memoir, *Broken Threads: My Family From Empire to Independence*.

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## North America

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### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

#### **Mohyeldin, Ayman**

Ayman Mohyeldin currently hosts 'Ayman' on MSNBC and 'Peacock' on MSNBC. He has interviewed world leaders, politicians, and diplomats, including President Erdoğan after the failed coup attempt in Türkiye. He reported on DA'ISH in Iraq, Syria, Europe, and Türkiye. He participated in the network's coverage of the 2016 US Presidential Elections. Mohyeldin was previously an international correspondent. He covered the Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine, the revolutions of the Arab Spring, and the attacks on the US Consulate in Benghazi, where he was one of the first journalists to report the situation. His coverage of the 2014 Israeli War was widely cited and praised. Prior to joining NBC News, Mohyeldin was a correspondent for Al Jazeera English. From 2008-2010, he was the only foreign broadcast journalist based in the Gaza Strip, and during the 2008-2009 War on Gaza, he was the only American journalist reporting live from Gaza.

#### **Oz, Dr Mehmet**

Dr Oz first came to prominence in 2004 with appearances as a health expert on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show' before spinning off and hosting his own hugely popular television show. The show focused primarily on medical issues and healthy living and he often drew upon his Turkish heritage when giving advice. It aired its final episode in January 2022. Since then, Dr Oz, a cardiothoracic surgeon and a Columbia University Professor, has moved into politics, becoming the Republican nominee for the 2022 United States Senate election in Pennsylvania. He has co-authored, with Michael F Roizen, six *New York Times* best sellers, and has a regular column in *Esquire* magazine

amongst others. He has almost 10 million followers on different social media outlets.

#### **Youssef, Bassem (new)**

Bassem Youssef is a prominent Egyptian-American comedian, television host, and political satirist who has had a significant impact on mainstream media reporting on the Gaza genocide. Often referred to as the "Jon Stewart of the Arab world", Youssef is recognized for his sharp humour, fearless political satire, and his talent for tackling complex social issues through comedy. Originally trained as a cardiac surgeon, Youssef shifted his focus to comedy during the Arab Spring of 2011. He launched '*Al-Bernameg*' ('The Programme'), a satirical news show popular for its commentary on political and social issues in Egypt and beyond. On 2 May 2024, he was honoured with the Gold Medal for Outstanding Contribution to Public Discourse by the College Historical Society at Trinity College, Dublin. With around 26 million followers across various social media platforms, Youssef's influence is substantial.

#### **Zakaria, Fareed**

Fareed Zakaria is one of the United States' foremost public intellectuals. He was born in India where he completed his early schooling before moving to the USA. He hosts CNN's 'Fareed Zakaria GPS' and is a *Washington Post* columnist. Prior to this, he was Editor-at-Large for *Time* magazine and Editor of *Newsweek International* and *Foreign Affairs*. His latest book is: *Age of Revolutions: Progress and Backlash from 1600 to the Present*.

# CELEBRITIES & SPORTS

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## *Middle East and North Africa*

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### ALGERIA

#### **Khelif, Imane (new)**

Imane Khelif became the first Algerian, Arab, and African woman to win an Olympic gold medal in boxing at the Paris Olympics. Her achievement was even more noteworthy given accusations about her gender eligibility and subsequent online harassment fueled by misinformation highlighted issues of discrimination in sports. Her victory became a source of national pride for Algeria, sparking widespread celebrations across her home country, with public viewings of her matches and murals painted in her honour. Khelif's triumph in the face of adversity has made her a powerful symbol of perseverance and a role model for aspiring athletes in Algeria and beyond.

### EGYPT

#### **Aboutrika, Mohamed**

Aboutrika is regarded as one of the best African football players of all time, having lifted 28 major titles, including three Africa Cup of Nations titles over his 16-year career. He has also been named UNDP Goodwill Ambassador and is widely followed, having almost 24 million fans on different social media outlets. He has criticized African fans for excessively following European football clubs and for European football not acknowledging African leagues and merely using the talent of their players. He currently works as a commentator for BEIN sports in Qatar.

### PALESTINE

#### **Assaf, Mohammed**

Mohammed Assaf won first place in the popular TV programme 'Arab Idol 2013' after his final performance of *Ali al-Keffiyeh* ('Raise Your Keffiyeh'), a nationalistic Palestinian song and de facto anthem which has now garnered over 90 million views. Raised in Khan Yunus refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, he has become the face and voice of Palestinian youth and the voice of its people's suffering. Assaf became UNRWA's Goodwill Ambassador, was named Ambassador of Culture and Arts by the Palestinian National

Authority, and was given a position with diplomatic standing by the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. He has over 22 million fans on social media. His song 'Dammi Falestini' was controversially removed from Spotify following pressure from a Zionist advocacy group; however, it was reinstated following a public backlash. The song has spread alongside the global protests against the genocide in Gaza.

### TUNISIA

#### **Jabeur, Ons**

Jabeur was born and raised in Tunisia, and started her trailblazing tennis career by winning the junior Grand Slam title in 2011, the first for a North African woman. 2022 proved to be somewhat of a breakthrough year in that she reached the final of both Wimbledon and the US Open, but lost both. She reached the 2023 Wimbledon Final but despite being the favourite this time, she lost again. She currently has five WTA titles and has reached a ranking of 2.

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## *Sub-Saharan Africa*

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### SENEGAL

#### **Mané, Sadio**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 147

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## *Asia*

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### MALAYSIA

#### **Yusof, Vivy**

Vivy Yusof is an entrepreneur, a fashion icon and a social media influencer with millions of followers. She co-founded the international e-commerce fashion company FashionValet and the dUCk group, which focuses on hijabs. She has won multiple prestigious awards, including in the fields of entrepreneurship and social media. Her popular show 'Love Vivy', which follows her life as a mother and



businesswoman, is in its third season.

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## Europe

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### DENMARK

#### **Nadim, Nadia**

Nadim currently plays as a striker for Serie A club AC Milan. She fled Afghanistan and settled in Denmark where she started playing professional football in 2005. Since then she has represented major clubs in the USA, UK and French leagues, winning league titles. She has also played for the Danish national team since 2009, reaching 100 caps in 2022, quickly becoming one of their most important players. In parallel to her sports career, she has continued her medical studies and graduated as a surgeon from Aarhus University in January 2022. She also speaks 11 languages and was awarded the title UNESCO Champion for Girls and Women's Education in 2019.

### FRANCE

#### **Benzema, Karim**

Karim Benzema is a French footballer of Algerian origin. Benzema started senior football in 2005 in Lyon with his hometown club Olympique Lyonnais. In 2009, he moved to Real Madrid and has been a prolific striker ever since. He has scored over 400 career goals scoring over 320 goals for Real Madrid, second only to Cristiano Ronaldo. Benzema has also been awarded French Player of the Year four times by France Football and in 2022 won the UEFA Player of the Year and the *Ballon d'Or*. He joined the growing list of high-profile players to move to the Saudi Pro League when he signed for Al-Ittihad.

#### **Zidane, Zinedine**

Zinedine Zidane is a French footballing legend of Algerian descent. Born in a poor neighbourhood of Marseilles, he went on to become one of the greatest footballers ever, winning all major prizes on the personal, club, and country levels and winning player of the year three times. In 2018, Zidane, managing Real Madrid, became the first manager in the history of football to win three consecutive UEFA Champions League titles. A few days after the victory, he resigned as Real Madrid coach. After Real Madrid's poor performance the following season, Zidane returned and won the La Liga for the second time in his managerial

career before leaving again. He was given a leading role in the opening ceremony of the 2024 Olympics.

### ITALY

#### **Lame, Khaby**

Khaby Lame is a Senegalese-born Italian who is currently the most followed Tik Toker in the world with over 162 million followers. His TikTok videos are mainly silent and mock overly complicated life hack videos. Although living in Italy since he was one, he was only granted nationality in 2022 (aged 22). He studied in a Qur'an memorization school in Senegal for a year when he was 14 years old.

### RUSSIA

#### **Nurmagedov, Khabib**

Please read bio in Honourable Mentions section on page. 147

### UNITED KINGDOM

#### **Farah, Mohamed**

The most successful British athlete ever, Farah won the gold in the 5000m and 10,000m at the 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games as well as six other global golds. Born in Somaliland but raised in the UK from the age of 8, Farah has captured the hearts of the British public with his hard work, success, smile and warm personality. He is a popular role model to follow for people from all over the world, especially in the Muslim world. He was awarded a CBE in 2013 and knighted in 2017. He announced his retirement from running in 2023. His winning celebration, the 'mobot', is mimicked internationally.

#### **Hussain, Nadiya**

Since winning the BBC's 'The Great British Bake Off' in 2015, Nadiya Hussain has gone from being the most famous British baker to being a columnist, author and television presenter. She has produced a popular documentary giving insight into Bangladesh, her country of origin, as well numerous TV cooking series and cookbooks. She has become a household name and an instantly recognizable face in the UK, Bangladesh and for Muslims worldwide. She was bestowed with the honour of being asked to produce a cake for the 90th birthday celebrations of the late HM Queen Elizabeth II and has also received an MBE for services to broadcasting and the culinary arts.

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## Oceania

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### NEW ZEALAND

#### **Williams, Sonny**

Sonny Williams is an international rugby player and former heavyweight boxing champion from New Zealand. Williams converted to Islam in 2008, and is the first Muslim to play for the legendary All Blacks. In 2013, he was judged the World's Best Rugby League Player at the annual RLIF Awards. He memorably gave away his World Cup winner's gold medal to a young supporter just after the 2015 final.

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## North America

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### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

#### **Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem**

Abdul-Jabbar played basketball for 20 seasons for the Milwaukee Bucks and the LA Lakers before being honoured as one of the 50 Greatest Players in NBA History. In 2012, he was selected by the Secretary of State to be a US Global Cultural Ambassador and in 2016 he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest US civilian honour. Abdul-Jabbar is also a best-selling author of 17 books and is a nine-time Columnist of the Year for his essays in *The Hollywood Reporter*. He has acted in numerous television series and movies including *Airplane*, *Game of Death* and FX's number one rated comedy, *DAVE*. He has also taken on activism in his later years, speaking out against Islamophobia and other forms of social injustice. In 2021, the NBA created the Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Social Justice Champion Award. He publishes weekly at [Kareem.substack.com](http://Kareem.substack.com)

#### **Hadid, Bella; and Hadid, Gigi (new)**

Bella and Gigi Hadid, Palestinian-Dutch supermodel sisters, have emerged as influential voices for Palestinian rights in the global fashion industry. Their advocacy, particularly during the ongoing Gaza genocide, has significantly raised awareness about the Palestinian cause among their millions of followers. Bella, known for her more outspoken stance, has consistently used her platform to highlight Palestinian issues, even at the risk of losing modeling jobs. Gigi, while more reserved, has also made impactful statements condemning violence against civilians on

both sides. Their \$1 million donation to Palestinian relief efforts and Bella's symbolic fashion choices at high-profile events demonstrate their commitment to their heritage. Despite facing backlash and controversy, including criticism from the Israeli government, the Hadid sisters continue to leverage their celebrity status to bring attention to the Palestinian struggle.

#### **Kattan, Huda (new)**

Huda Kattan is a highly influential Iraqi-American entrepreneur and founder of one of the world's most iconic makeup brands. Born in 1983 in Oklahoma to Iraqi immigrant parents, she initially pursued a career in finance but eventually followed her passion for beauty. She launched Huda Beauty in 2013, which quickly expanded into a full range of beauty products, making her a global leader in the beauty industry. With over 78 million followers on social media, Huda is not only a beauty influencer but also a strong advocate for social justice. She has been a vocal supporter of Palestinian rights, speaking out despite backlash from pro-Israel groups. Huda's unwavering stance for justice, combined with her entrepreneurial success, makes her a role model for both aspiring businesspeople and activists alike.

#### **Tyson, Mike (Malik Abdul Aziz)**

Tyson won his first title in 1986 at 20 years old making him the youngest heavyweight champion in history. His dominance in the ring faded as his wild personal life grew out of control leading him to serve three years in prison where he converted to Islam. After his release, he went on to regain his WBC and WBA titles. He retired in 2006 and was inducted in both the International Boxing Hall of Fame and the World Boxing Hall of Fame. After his retirement, Tyson went on to publish books and act in television and movies. In 2012, he launched a foundation for troubled youth. Though he has had episodes of controversial behaviour after retirement, his sincerity in trying to uphold the values of his religion and improve himself morally and spiritually inspire millions. He is due to enter the ring again with a fight scheduled November 2024 against Jake Paul.

# TOP EXTREMISTS

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## *Middle East and North Africa*

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### JORDAN

#### **Al-Maqdisi, Abu Muhammad**

Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi (born Isam Muhammad Tahir Al-Barqawi) is a Jordanian-Palestinian Salafi leader who became a mentor for Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, the founder of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, while they were in prison together. Al-Maqdisi's writings are still a source of inspiration for many Salafi-Jihadis despite his criticism of the extreme violence of Al-Zarqawi and other jihadis. He is especially known for his book in which he declared *takfir* on the Saudi regime. Al-Maqdisi was found guilty on terrorism charges and sentenced to five years in prison by a Jordanian court.

### SYRIA

#### **Al-Julani, Abu Muhammad**

Al-Julani is the current Emir and founder of the Syrian militant group now known as Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS). This group was formed in 2017 with the merging of several other militant groups. It is the main force fighting the Syrian regime and until recently was allied to Al-Qaeda. It formally renounced links with Al-Qaeda in July 2016 in an attempt to show that the group is focused on regime change in Syria alone, and does not have wider regional goals.

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## *Sub-Saharan Africa*

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### SOMALIA

#### **Diriye, Ahmad**

Ahmad Diriye has been the Emir of Al-Shabaab since 2014, after US airstrikes killed the previous Emir (Ahmed Abdi Godane). When Diriye became advisor to Godane in 2013, he purged Al-Shabaab of its foreign fighters, and oversaw all the domestic policies of the group. Diriye adheres to *takfiri* ideology and strives to fulfil Godane's vision for Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab still carries out terrorist attacks in Mogadishu, Somalia, despite the presence of thousands of Somali government and African Union troops. They have targeted hotels and resorts as well as Ugandan and Kenyan troops.

# NEW ADDITIONS TO THE 450 LISTS

## SCHOLARLY

- Grand Mufti Nazir Mohamed Ayyad, Egypt
- Grand Mufti Abdul Latif Derian, Lebanon
- Dr Recep Şentürk, Türkiye
- Dr Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad, USA

## POLITICAL

- HE Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait
- Hodayfa (Abu Obaida) Al-Kahlout, Palestine
- Mustafa Barghouti, Palestine
- HE President Masoud Pezeshkian, Iran
- HE President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Senegal

## ADMINISTRATION OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

- Sheikh Aïma Ousmane Diakité, Côte d'Ivoire
- Hafiz Naeem Ur Rehman, Pakistan

## PREACHERS & SPIRITUAL GUIDES

- Mohamed Ould Cheikh Hamahoullah, Mali
- Cheikh Ould Al Khairy, Mauritania
- Dr Haifaa Younis, USA

## PHILANTHROPY, CHARITY & DEVELOPMENT

- Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al-Jasser, Saudi Arabia
- Hissein Brahim Taha, Chad

## SOCIAL ISSUES

- Saleh Al-Jafarawi, Palestine
- Naledi Pandor, South Africa
- Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah, UK
- Mohammed Hijab, UK
- Sir Mufti Hamid Patel, UK

## BUSINESS

- Randa Sadik, Jordan

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- Dr Omar Hatamleh, USA

## ARTS & CULTURE

- Qaisra Khan, UK

## QUR'AN RECITERS

- Sheikh Ahmed Al-Nufais, Kuwait

## MEDIA

- Motaz Azaiza, Palestine
- Hind Khoudary, Palestine
- Bisan Owda, Palestine
- Hamid Mir, Pakistan
- Bassem Youssef, USA

## CELEBRITIES & SPORTS

- Imane Khelif, Algeria
- Bella and Gigi Hadid, USA
- Huda Kattan, USA

# OLYMPIANS



PARIS 2024





# PARIS 2024



## ALBANIA



**Islam Dudaev**

Men's Freestyle 65kg Wrestling

## ALGERIA



**Imane Khelif**

Women's 66kg Boxing



**Djamel Sedjati**

Men's 800m

## AZERBAIJAN



**Hidayat Heydarov**

Men's 73kg Judo



**Zelym Kotsoiev**

Men's 100kg Boxing



**Gashim Magomedov**

Men's 58kg Taekwondo



**Hasrat Jafarov**

Men's Greco-Roman 67kg Wrestling



**Magomedkhan Magomedov**

Men's Freestyle 97kg Wrestling



**Giorgi Meshvildishvili**

Men's Freestyle 125kg Wrestling



**Adil Osmanov**

Men's 73kg Judo

## BAHRAIN



**Akhmed Tazhudinov**

Men's Freestyle 97kg Wrestling



**Salwa Eid Naser**

Women's 400m Athletics



**Gor Minasyan**

Men's 102kg Weightlifting

## BELGIUM



**Bashir Abdi**

Men's Marathon



**Sarah Chaâri**

Women's 67kg Taekwondo

## BULGARIA



**Magomed Eldarovitch Ramazanov**

Men's Freestyle 86kg Wrestling

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## DENMARK



**Turpal Ali Bisultanov**  
Men's Greco-Roman 87kg Wrestling

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## EGYPT



**Ahmed Elgendy**  
Modern Pentathlon



**Sara Ahmed**  
Women's 81kg Weightlifting

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## ETHIOPIA



**Tamirat Tola**  
Men's Marathon



**Tigst Assefa**  
Women's Marathon

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## FRANCE



**Shirine Boukli**  
Mixed Team Judo



**Shirine Boukli**  
Women's 48kg Judo



**Djamili-Dini Moindze**  
Men's Super Heavyweight Boxing

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## GEORGIA



**Lasha Talakhadze**  
Men's 102kg Weightlifting

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## GERMANY



**Nelvie Tiafack**  
Men's Super Heavyweight Boxing

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## IRAN



**Saeid Esmacili Leivesi**  
Men's Greco-Roman 67kg Wrestling



**Arian Salimi**  
Men's +80kg Taekwondo



**Mohammadhadi Saravi**  
Men's Greco-Roman 97kg



**Rahman Amouzad**  
Men's Freestyle 65kg Wrestling



**Mehran Barkhordari**  
Men's 80kg Taekwondo



**Alireza Mohmadipiani**  
Men's Greco-Roman 87kg



**Hassan Yazdanicharati**  
Men's Freestyle 86kg Wrestling



**Amir Hossein Zare**  
Men's Freestyle 125kg Wrestling



**Amir Ali Azarpira**  
Men's Freestyle 97kg Wrestling



**Amin Mirzazadeh**  
Men's Greco-Roman 130kg Wrestling



**Mobina Nematzadeh**  
Women's 49kg Taekwondo

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## JORDAN



**Zaid Kareem**  
Men's 68kg Taekwondo

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## KAZAKHSTAN



**Yeldos Smetov**  
Men's 60kg Judo



**Nariman Kurbanov**  
Men's Pommel Horse



**Nurbek Oralbay**  
Men's 80kg Boxing



**Demeu Zhadrayev**  
Men's Greco-Roman 77kg Wrestling



**Gusman Kyrgyzbayev**  
Men's 66kg Judo



**Nazym Kyzaibay**  
Women's 50kg Boxing



**Alexandra Le**  
10-metre Mixed Team Air Rifle Shooting



**Islam Satpayev**  
10-metre Mixed Team Air Rifle Shooting

## KYRGYZSTAN



**Meerim Zhumanazarova**  
Women's Freestyle 68kg Wrestling



**Uzur Dzhuzupbekov**  
Men's Greco-Roman 97kg Wrestling



**Akzhol Makhmudov**  
Men's Greco-Roman 77kg Wrestling



**Zholaman Sharshenbekov**  
Men's Greco-Roman 60kg Wrestling

## MOROCCO



**Soufiane El Bakkali**  
Men's 3000m Steeplechase

## NETHERLANDS



**Sifan Hassan**  
Women's Marathon



**Sifan Hassan**  
Women's 10,000 metres



**Sifan Hassan**  
Women's 5000 metres

## PAKISTAN



**Arshad Nadeem**  
Men's Javelin Throw

## QATAR



**Mutaz Barshim**  
Men's High Jump

## SPAIN



**Ayoub Ghadfa**  
Men's Super Heavyweight Boxing

## TAJKISTAN



**Davlat Boltaev**  
Men's 92kg Boxing



**Somon Makhmadbekov**  
Men's 81 kg Boxing



**Temur Rakhimov**  
Men's 100kg Boxing

## TUNISIA



**Firas Katoussi**  
Men's 80kg Taekwondo



**Mohamed Khalil Jendoubi**  
Men's 58kg Taekwondo

## TÜRKIYE



**Buse Naz Çakıroğlu**  
Women's 50kg Boxing



**Yusuf Dikeç**  
Mixed Team 10m Air Pistol Shooting



**Sevval Tarhan**  
Mixed Team 10m Air Pistol Shooting



**Taha Akgül**  
Men's Freestyle 125kg Wrestling



**Buse Tosun Çavuşoğlu**  
Women's Freestyle 68kg



**Esra Yıldız Kahraman**  
Women's Featherweight Boxing





**Nafia Kuş**  
Women's +67kg Taekwondo

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### UKRAINE



**Parviz Nasibov**  
Men's Greco-Roman 67kg Wrestling

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### UZBEKISTAN



**Bakhodir Jalolov**  
Men's +92kg Boxing



**Diyora Keldiyorova**  
Women's 52kg Judo



**Abdumalik Khalokov**  
Men's 57kg Boxing



**Lazizbek Mullojonov**  
Men's 92kg Boxing



**Asadkhuja Muydinkhujaev**  
Men's 71kg Boxing



**Razambek Zhamalov**  
Men's Freestyle 74kg Wrestling



**Akbar Djuraev**  
Men's 102kg Weightlifting



**Svetlana Osipova**  
Women's +67kg Taekwondo



**Munarbek Seiitbek Uulu**  
Men's Featherweight Boxing



**Gulomjon Abdullaev**  
Men's Freestyle 57kg Wrestling



**Muzaffarbek Turoboyev**  
Men's 100kg Judo



**Alisher Yusupov**  
Men's 100kg Boxing





عن عمران بن حُصَيْن رضي الله عنهما أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ((إن الله أحبُّ إذا أنعم على عبده نعمةً أن يرى أثرَ نعمته عليه))، رواه البيهقي.

From 'Imran ibn Husayn (may Allah be pleased with them both) who reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Indeed, Allah loves that when He bestows a blessing upon His servant, that the effect of that blessing be visible upon him." (Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi).

# THE OBITUARIES

رَبِّ قَدْ أَيَّدْتَنِي بِالْمَلِكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي تَأْوِيلَ الْأَحَادِيثِ  
 فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْزِلْنِي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ تَوْفِيقِي يَا مُسْلِمًا وَالحَقِّنِي يَا صَالِحِينَ

My Lord, indeed You have given me of sovereignty and You have taught me the interpretation of events. Originator of the heavens and the earth! You are my Protector in this world and the Hereafter. Take me to You in submission and join me to the righteous

Joseph 12 : 101

Calligraphy by Hasan Kan'an © FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com

Haniyeh, HE Ismail, Head of Hamas Political Bureau

Political

Country: Palestine

Born: 29 January 1962

Died: 31 July 2024 (62 years)



Ismail Haniyeh, a prominent Palestinian political leader and a figurehead of the Palestinian resistance, was assassinated on 31 July 2024 while attending the inauguration of President Masoud Pezeshkian as a guest of the Iranian government. He was 61 years old.

Born in the Shati refugee camp on the coast of Gaza City in 1963 to parents displaced from Asqalan in 1948, Ismail Haniyeh rose from humble beginnings to become one of the leading figures in Palestinian politics. He was educated at the Islamic University of Gaza, where he earned a degree in Arabic literature and was a student activist and joined the Islamic Student Bloc; an organisation widely seen as the forerunner of Hamas. He would later join the Muslim Brotherhood before transitioning to Hamas, which was founded in 1987 during the First Intifada. Haniyeh quickly became one of the most prominent leaders within the organization, known for his pragmatic approach and deep connection to the Palestinian people. His charisma and eloquence further solidified his place in the hearts of many Palestinians.

After the signing of the first Oslo Accord, Haniyeh became a confidant of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Hamas's founder and spiritual leader. In 2006 Hamas ran in the Palestine legislative elections for the first time since its establishment and won, making Haniyeh Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Western governments subsequently halted aid to the PA and amid Western pressure and tensions between Hamas and Fatah, President Mahmoud Abbas dismissed Haniyeh and dissolved his government. This

resulted in an independent Hamas-led government in Gaza in 2007, headed by Haniyeh. In 2017, he replaced Khaled Meshal as head of Hamas's political bureau. Haniyeh conducted Hamas's diplomacy from a number of locations, including Türkiye and Doha and he also maintained close ties to Tehran.

Haniyeh was a major force in the cause of Palestinian liberation and was in Israel's crosshairs for a long time. Throughout his life, he faced hardships such as several periods in Israeli prisons. Like many Gazans, a large number of Haniyeh's close relatives were killed after October 7th. In April, three of his sons were killed in an Israeli air strike on their vehicle. Four of his grandchildren were also killed – three girls and a boy. Sixty of his relatives were killed in the first 10 months of the war.

Despite the personal toll, Haniyeh was a strong and calm advocate for dialogue and negotiation. He played a crucial role in several rounds of negotiations between Hamas and Israel, as well as intra-Palestinian reconciliation talks between Hamas and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority. Haniyeh believed that unity among Palestinians was essential for achieving peace and justice. His involvement in peace negotiations, particularly his attempts to broker long-term truces with Israel, put him at odds with more hard-line elements within the region. His assassination has been seen as part of a broader strategy by Israel to destabilize potential avenues for peace. Haniyeh was highly respected in Tehran and often met with top officials there. Iran, which has long supported Palestinian resistance groups, saw Haniyeh as a key ally. His assassination is thought to be a strategic move to weaken this alliance and disrupt the support between Palestinian groups and Iran. The respect Haniyeh commanded was evident in the outpouring of grief and tributes from leaders and ordinary citizens alike. In a rare gesture, the Supreme Leader of Iran led the

funeral prayers in person. Ismail Haniyeh's legacy is one of resilience and a relentless pursuit of justice for his people. He was both a man of resistance, and a man of peace. His vision of a unified Palestinian front, willing to engage in dialogue without abandoning its principles, remains an unfinished chapter in the Palestinian story. Haniyeh is survived by his wife, children, and grandchildren, who continue to live in Gaza.

### Raisolsadati (Raisi), Sayyid Ebrahim, President of Iran

Political

Country: Iran

Born: 14 December 1960

Died: 19 May 2024 (63 years)



Raisi (Sayyid Ebrahim Raisolsadati) served as the 8th President of Iran from 2021 until his untimely death in a helicopter crash in May 2024. He was a Muslim jurist and was viewed as more conservative than his predecessor. Raisi was born in Mashhad and was raised in a clerical family. He attended the famous Qom seminary and attained a PhD in law. He served as Deputy Chief Justice, Attorney General and Chief Justice, before winning the 2021 Iranian presidential election. He was accused by Amnesty International of overseeing the executions of political prisoners in the 1980s and 1990s and faced US sanctions during his Presidency. Raisi frequently pressed for economic reform, such as the development of the agriculture sector over the commercial sector, tripling the monthly state benefits, and tackling corruption and increasing employment. He was also a strong advocate of women's rights, as well as the arts and culture sector. His death received mixed reactions in Iran, with some mourning and others celebrating, thus showing mixed opinions about the man whose term as President ended so abruptly.

### HH Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Political

Country: Kuwait

Born: 25 June 1937

Died: 16 December 2023 (86 years)



HH Emir Sheikh Nawaf was born in Kuwait to the tenth ruler of Kuwait. He served as Crown Prince from 2006 until 2020. On the passing of his half-brother he assumed the title of the Emir of Kuwait in 2020 until his death in December 2023. He was 86 years old. Prior to that he served as Home Minister for a decade and Defence Minister from 1988. After the Iraqi invasion of 1991, he served as Social Affairs and Labour Minister. His three years as ruler was marked by the coronavirus pandemic, a significant decline in oil prices and ongoing political crises and domestic and political challenges before his passing in December 2023.

### Al-Zindani, Sheikh Abdul Majeed

Preachers & Spiritual Guides

Country: Yemen

Born: 1 January 1942

Died: 22 April 2024 (82 years)



Al-Zindani was an active Yemeni politician and preacher and the founder of Iman University in Yemen. He was also the Founder of the Commission on Scientific Signs in the Qur'an and Sunnah, the Chairman of the Shura Council of the Islah party (the Yemeni Congregation for Reform), and the Head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen. He was a vocal critic of terrorism and any killing of civilians. At the same time, he was an outspoken critic of US policies, declaring that jihad against any army that invades Yemen is self-defence and is the right of its citizens. The US Treasury labelled him a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) for his indirect association with Al-Qaeda. Born in Ibb, al-Zindani spent time studying and living in Egypt, then Saudi Arabia, then back to Yemen, before fleeing from the Houthis when they took over Sanaa in 2014. The charismatic preacher, known as the "provocative cleric with the flaming red beard", moved from Saudi Arabia to Türkiye in 2020 where he passed away.

Nasrallah, HE Seyyed

Hassan

Political

Country: Lebanon

Born: 30 August 1960

Died: 27 September 2024 (64 years)



Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah was one of the founding members of Hezbollah and was elected as its third Secretary-General in 1992, a position he served in for 32 years.

Nasrallah was born in Beirut and studied in seminaries in Baalbek and Najaf, Iraq, where he studied under Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr. Nasrallah briefly joined the Amal Movement, a Lebanese Shia political group, before becoming a member of Hezbollah in 1982 following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. He became the leader of Hezbollah in 1992 after the assassination of his predecessor, Abbas al-Musawi, by an Israeli airstrike.

Hezbollah emerged to fight Israel during its second invasion of Lebanon, in 1982 when Nasrallah was just 22. He was a charismatic leader and orator and had a loyal support base among Shia Muslims in Lebanon and beyond. At the height of his popularity shops sold DVDs of his speeches, some parts of which people used as their ringtones. Due to security concerns, since 2006 he rarely appeared in public and was mostly seen through his fiery televised speeches that were broadcast from a secret location and were widely anticipated events

Nasrallah led Hezbollah in its war against Israel which occupied Southern Lebanon and eventually forced them to withdraw in May 2000, ending an 18 year occupation. He was hailed as a hero throughout the Muslim and Arab worlds. In 2006 he fought a 34 day war with Israel to a stalemate which saw Nasrallah enjoy the height of his popularity in the Arab and Muslim worlds as the head of the only force that had stood up to Israeli aggression.

The Maghen Abraham Synagogue, one of the main synagogues in Lebanon, was damaged by Israeli bombardment during the war. Nasrallah welcomed its renovation, saying "This is a religious place of worship and its restoration is welcome." A Hezbollah spokes-

man said that they "respect the Jewish religion just like we do Christianity. The Jews have always lived among us. We have an issue with Israel's occupation of land."

Nasrallah transformed Hezbollah from a guerrilla group formed in the Lebanese civil war into a political and military force, stronger than the Lebanese state in whose government it served as a political party. Hezbollah cultivated a social welfare system that provides schools, clinics and housing in the predominantly Shia parts of Lebanon. It also runs Al Manar—an influential television station. Hezbollah fighters supported the Syrian regime during the Syrian civil war, and although their presence there helped push out DA'ISH, this led to him losing some popularity.

In 2023, Hezbollah opened a front against Israel to help lessen the intensity of the Israeli war on Gaza. Key Hezbollah leaders were assassinated and the group suffered many losses, including the massive attack of exploding pagers and walkie-talkies that left 32 dead and thousands injured throughout Lebanon. But Nasrallah remained defiant till the end. On Friday 27th September, 2024, Israel dropped 85 tonnes of Bunker-Buster bombs—which are illegal to use in densely populated areas according to the Geneva Convention—on the Southern Dahiyeh area of Beirut where Nasrallah was meeting with Hezbollah members. Nasrallah's assassination by Israel marked a dangerous inflection point in regional dynamics and seriously increased the threat of a regional war.

Nasrallah's legacy extends far beyond seeking justice for the Palestinians and other issues in the Middle East. His influence resonates with those who challenge imperialist narratives and fight against colonial legacies. His staunch anti-imperialist stance has garnered recognition on the global stage, particularly through his meetings with influential figures such as Noam Chomsky and Julian Assange. These interactions underscore his alignment with broader movements that advocate for the rights of marginalized and oppressed peoples. Nasrallah embodied a significant voice in the collective struggle against exploitation and oppression, championing the human right of all peoples to live free and dignified lives.

GUEST  
CONTRIBUTIONS

# Contents

## **Transforming Perceptions, Improving Lives**

Sir Mufti Hamid Patel 243

## **Defining the Core Identity of a 21st-Century Islamic University**

Osman Bakar, PhD 248

## **Bangladesh's Intellectual Renaissance: A Call to Action**

Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari 253

## **The World's Open Wounds – and the Remedy**

Sheikh Faid Muhammad Said 255

## **Gaza: The Graveyard of Liberal Values**

Faisal Kutty 257

## **A Comment on the Paris Olympics Opening Ceremony**

Paul Williams 259

## **Mirror of Reality**

Usman Isa Modibbo 260

## **Bradford Literature Festival – Culture as Social Interven**

Syima Aslam 262



# Transforming Perceptions, Improving Lives

**Sir Mufti Hamid Patel**

Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel 'The Handmaid's Tale' includes the following dark reflection from the morally ambivalent character Aunt Lydia: "Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom from. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it."<sup>1</sup> Her words are spoken in the context of a totalitarian society in which liberty exists within narrow parameters and there is little opportunity for women in particular to achieve self-fulfilment. It is a world far removed from twenty-first century Britain in which freedom from oppression and discrimination is enshrined in statute and freedom to flourish as an individual is encouraged through education. Yet the very essence of cherished freedom seems fragile for Muslims as a narrative of hatred and mistrust leads to violent flash-points and a disturbing sense of alienation.

Prior to 29 July 2024, the quiet seaside town of Southport would have seemed an unlikely place for the ignition of national riots. However, the tragic murder of three young girls attending a dance event in their summer holidays distorted its profile terribly<sup>2</sup>. The horrific loss in itself was a heavy burden for the peaceful community to bear. What happened next revealed the intense hatred of a faction of British society for people they regard as being unwelcome outsiders.

Misinformation posted on social media claimed that the girls' killer - wrongly attributed a Muslim name - was an asylum seeker who had arrived in England by boat<sup>3</sup>. The impact of this claim, peddled by people far from Merseyside, was incendiary. Rioters, many from outside the area, gathered following the town's peaceful vigil of mourning with the intention of releasing their venom on the Muslim community. Hurling bricks at the local mosque and attacking nearby shops, they engendered fear in a grieving neighbourhood. Their actions were replicated over the next few days in other towns and cities – Rotherham, Hartlepool, Manchester, Aldershot, Blackpool, Belfast, Liverpool, Bolton, London. These were the worst extremes of civil disorder seen in the United

Kingdom for a decade, and to date over a thousand people have been arrested, and over six hundred charged following extensive police operations<sup>4</sup>. Culprits have ranged in age from 12 to 81 years. Far-right social media personalities with neo-Nazi opinions encouraged the angry mobs to storm hostels housing



refugees and defy police attempts to enforce the law. Being a Muslim felt dangerous.

Narratives purporting the incompatibility of Muslim and Western culture are not limited to Britain. Widespread unrest was seen in France in June 2023, sparked by the police killing of Nahel Merzouk, a teenager of North African descent<sup>5</sup>. This incident fuelled significant riots and highlighted deep-seated issues in French society, including tensions related to immigration and integration. In Germany, the growing popularity of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), particularly among Generation Z voters, is a cause for concern as anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant rhetoric carries pernicious echoes of Nazism<sup>6</sup>. Then there's the American political landscape - particularly hostile territory during election periods when leaders' policies and statements can fuel xenophobic fervour<sup>7</sup>. Muslims are of course not the only ones to suffer the impact of nativism: its corrosive poison seeps into the whole of society, adversely affecting the economy and social cohesion by fostering suspicion, mistrust, resentment and hatred. Inevitably, this cauldron of loathing yields no winners and countless losers. The leaders – self-styled or elected – who stoke division often appeal to people whose own communities are suffering - from poor

1 Atwood, Margaret (1985) *The Handmaid's Tale*, p 24 (ISBN 9780385539241)

2 Southport stabbings - what we know so far about knife attack - BBC News

3 Social media fuelled Southport misinformation; UK home secretary says (ft.com)

4 Policing response to the 2024 summer riots (parliament.uk)

5 France shooting: Who was Nahel M, shot by French police in Nanterre? - BBC News

6 Going to the extreme: Inside Germany's far right - BBC News

7 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/sep13/trump-repeats-lies-haitian-immigrants>

housing, limited job prospects, and fractured societal infrastructure. Fabricated or exaggerated anti-immigrant narrative too easily convinces people enduring economic disadvantage that resources are being diverted from them to 'incomers.' And it is all too easy to conflate Islam and immigration in a public imagination that is not informed by history.

Despite the gnawing anxiety that is generated through social and political unrest, there are reasons to be hopeful and optimistic about the future. Following the horrendous events in Southport, the local community rallied to rebuild the mosque and repair shops, epitomising solidarity and resilience<sup>8</sup>. As people from varied backgrounds stood shoulder to shoulder during peaceful counterdemonstrations in opposition to anti-immigration protesters, acts of courage and humanity shone through. In Liverpool, an Imam walked out of his mosque to greet far-right protesters and provide them with hot food, knowing that speaking with other people, even in extreme situations, is key to building bridges and finding solutions<sup>9</sup>. Similar examples were seen elsewhere. Following the terrorist attacks in Paris, people from all walks of life participated in unity rallies, demonstrating their commitment to peace and solidarity<sup>10</sup>, whilst in Germany numerous community groups have actively supported refugees, providing language lessons, job training, and cultural orientation to help them integrate and thrive in their new environment<sup>11</sup>. Community solidarity in the United States is often manifested in diverse groups of people uniting to support victims of hate crimes. For example, after a mosque was vandalised in Texas, local residents of different faiths showed support and solidarity by cleaning and rebuilding it<sup>12</sup>. On a larger scale, New York and Los Angeles have established city-wide programmes to welcome and support refugees, providing them with resources to construct new lives through initiatives including housing assistance, job training, and community integration. These examples, and so many others, highlight that the majority of people are driven by love and compassion. They inspire us to stand together and push back against hate. As Tolkien writes in *The Lord of the Rings*<sup>13</sup>, 'The world is indeed full of peril, and in it, there are many dark places; but still, there is much that is fair, and though

in all lands love is now mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater.'

Irrefutably, the answer to hate is not more hate. Addressing anti-Muslim sentiment in the West involves embodying the example of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who brought mercy for humanity, as emphasised in Quraan 41:34: '*Repel evil with what is better, and your enemy will become as close as your intimate friend.*' Indeed, we need to counter hate with love. We must allay the groundless suspicions that our detractors hold, perceptions that are the result of ignorance that has flourished in part because we have not always succeeded in building the relationships to underpin trust and understanding.

There are two key practical strategies for Muslims in the West to demonstrate the positivity and capacity that they bring to their communities, and these can involve everyone - citizens, business leaders, scholars, politicians.

Firstly, we must ensure that we provide the highest quality education to enable Muslim children to be literate, numerate, speak fluently, write convincingly and flourish within an increasingly digital world. We must cultivate the highest levels of moral character (grounded in their Muslim faith) and a commitment to improving the lives of humanity while simultaneously providing them with the skills which are indispensable for meaningful employment. Our children hold the future in their hands and we must provide them with secure foundations.

Education is key to regeneration and cohesion within all of our diverse communities, and there are many ways in which Muslims can contribute. Learning has always been of crucial importance to Muslims. Indeed, the first word revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was "*Iqra*" (Read) in Surah Al-Alaq (96:1): "*Read in the name of your Lord who created - Created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous - Who taught by the pen - Taught man that which he knew not.*" The prominence of literacy and learning from the very beginning of Islam is indisputable. Furthermore, during the Islamic Golden Age, a period spanning the mid-7th century to the mid-13th century, Muslim artists, engineers, scholars, poets, philosophers, geographers and traders evolved thinking

8 Southport residents clean-up streets amid protest 'heartbreak' - BBC News

9 Imam hugs man protesting against mosque, saying 'our hearts were broken as well' | UK News | Metro News

10 Paris attacks: Millions rally for unity in France - BBC News

11 Who supports refugees? Diversity assent and pro-refugee engagement in Germany | Comparative Migration Studies | Full Text (springeropen.com)

12 <https://colorlines.com/article/community-responds-texas-mosque-desecration>

13 Tolkien, John Ronald Reuel (1954) *The Lord of the Rings*, book 2: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p465 (ISBN 9789510468463)



and achieved remarkable intellectual and cultural innovations. They preserved earlier traditions, translating copious ancient texts at the House of Wisdom in Baghdad, and added their new ideas and inventions in many fields as the Muslim world became a powerful centre for science, philosophy, medicine, and education. Muslims were the first to establish hospitals, and scholars such as Al-Razi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) wrote comprehensive medical encyclopaedias that were used in Europe for centuries. Muslim astronomers developed the first astrolabe, which became indispensable for navigation. The Persian mathematician Al-Khwarizmi introduced the concept of solving quadratic equations and laid the foundation for modern algebra. Islamic countries are the home of many of the world's oldest universities and libraries.<sup>14</sup> This is our heritage: we should be fiercely proud of it and ensure that our own young people are educated to be the engineers, scientists and creative thinkers of the future. We must translate our pride in the achievements of our predecessors into meaningful action to realise our children's dreams.

As members of school governing boards in community schools, we can be positive advocates for all children, regardless of their faith or heritage. We can offer the support and challenge to school leaders that promotes growth and raises standards. We also need to train more Muslim teachers and leaders to serve in our community schools, absolutely not to proselytise, but to be positive role models. We should establish further mentoring initiatives to provide our children with tailored individual support from successful individuals, to prepare them for prestigious career paths and benefit from the myriad of new employment opportunities. Those of us with the resources to do so should consider investing in scholarships to enable disadvantaged young people to benefit from studying

academic programmes at prestigious universities. We can set up initiatives to build young people's leadership skills, equipping them to be the principled decision makers of a future they will help shape.

Aside from our practical commitment to providing children with the education to succeed in whatever career they choose to pursue, we must continue to invest in Islamic education so that children grow into adults who understand and practise their faith with fidelity. We should do this by enhancing the supplementary schools in our mosques, improving the teaching and resources available within Islamic schools and developing inspirational Islamic higher education so that our future scholars are expertly prepared to undertake their valuable work.

Secondly, we should continue actively and positively contributing to local communities, towns and cities in the West, where we have made our homes. After all, our prophet brought mercy for the whole of humankind. As the Quraan states, "*We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.*" (Quraan 21:107). The mission of Prophet Mohammed ﷺ was one of support for universal creation. He instructed us to follow his example in the hadith: "The merciful are shown mercy by the All-Merciful. Show mercy to those on earth, and He who is in heaven will show mercy unto you." (Sunan At-Tarmidhi). When He returned from the Cave of Hira, disturbed following the first revelation from the Angel Gabriel, Lady Khadija reassured her husband, "By God, God will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your family, you help the poor and the destitute, you serve your guests generously, and you assist those who are in need." (Sahih Al-Bukhari). These beautiful words emphasise that we should reach out to people of all faiths and beliefs who may be in need of our support.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.1001inventions.com>



Every year Muslims donate millions of pounds<sup>15</sup> to charitable causes; a recent survey concluded that on average UK Muslims gave four times more in 2023 than the British average. While a substantial amount of charitable support is necessarily directed overseas, many Muslims also donate extensively to secular organisations to support work in local communities, where need is proliferating. The Department for Work and Pensions published statistics on food bank use for 2022-2023, showing that a staggering 2.3 million people in the UK lived in a household which had used a food bank in the previous twelve months<sup>16</sup>. Homelessness rose by 14% in the same year, with Shelter calculating that at least 309,000 people had no home in December 2023, a figure including 279,400 living in temporary accommodation, many of whom were families<sup>17</sup>. We achieve multiple benefits by supporting charities that begin at home, allocating more donations to improve education, healthcare, poverty relief, and community projects that positively impact all citizens in our communities, towns and western countries. Philanthropy is not just about giving money. Countless Muslims also contribute their time and skills by volunteering in local communities, giving practical support to organisations such as hospices, charity shops, shelters for the homeless, food banks, and rehabilitation centres. This visible involvement helps to break down barriers and build trust with all communities; enabling the steady erosion of the anti-Muslim narrative that encouraged thuggery on UK streets in the summer of 2024.

As the level of need intensifies, with domestic bills beyond the reach of low earners, it is clear that the development of a sustainable Muslim charitable infrastructure is necessary to support all disadvantaged people in the West. We should work with existing charities and organisations to create joint initiatives that address social issues, such as poverty, homelessness, and mental health. We may also need to establish new charities where we identify that particular needs are unmet. Crucially, our charitable endeavours should be for the benefit of our entire communities, irrespective of faith or ethnicity.

By maintaining our focus on these two strategies – supporting education and giving charitably to shore up the social infrastructure - we actively support a more inclusive and cohesive society. We also need to educate non-Muslim children about the amazing work that has been done by Muslims to shape the world in which we live and counter the vicious misinformation that distorts too many views. These are in so many ways two sides of the same coin, inherently and inextricably connected.

Star Academies<sup>18</sup> is a working model of how these strands link and mutually impact. It is a rapidly expanding, high-achieving, not-for-profit multi-academy trust, operating both faith-based and non-faith schools. A values-based organisation, it works to improve the life chances of young people in areas of social and economic deprivation to help them succeed at the highest levels of education, employment and the professions. Its founder Muslim school,

<sup>15</sup> British Muslims are most generous group in the UK | Charity Today News

<sup>16</sup> Who is experiencing food insecurity in the UK? (parliament.uk)

<sup>17</sup> At least 309,000 people homeless in England today - Shelter England

<sup>18</sup> www.staracademies.org

Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School and Sixth Form College (TIGHS)<sup>19</sup> has just celebrated its fortieth anniversary and has sustained standards over many years that are unmatched elsewhere in the country. It has consistently maintained a position whereby pupils of all abilities achieve around two GCSE grades better in each subject than their peers with comparable starting points. With truly exceptional performance across all metrics, the school is in a stratosphere of its own. Star Academies also operates a number of other excellent Eden schools (Muslim secondary schools) and Olive schools (Muslim primary schools), which are positioned highly in the DfE performance tables and are evidence that, with optimal quality teaching and pastoral care, the link between social disadvantage and low achievement can be decisively broken. All Star's Olive and Eden faith designated schools have been graded 'outstanding' by inspectors<sup>20</sup> for their faith offer, rooted in the Faithful Stars Framework which includes prayer, reflective worship, growth in knowledge and leadership development based on the principles of Islam.

These schools are also joyous places that provide a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities and foster young people's leadership skills. Faith is a golden thread, as shown recently at Tauheedul Islam Boys' High School <sup>21</sup> where pupils developed an awe-inspiring 'Immersive Islam' project through which they explored the *Seerah* (biography) of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) using state of the art virtual and augmented reality technologies. They explored and presented various aspects of the Prophet's life and curated a spectacular exhibition that enabled visitors from all backgrounds to understand the First Revelation, the Hijra (Migration), the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Final Sermon, and the Treaty at Hudaibiyyah. The pupils skilfully connected the ancient teachings of our religion with state of the art technology, deepening their faith as they grappled with its language.

Olive and Eden schools make a significant contribution to system leadership in the state education sector. Four of them have been accredited as teaching school hubs<sup>22</sup>, enabling them to use their expertise

to develop and embed high-quality teacher training within the regions in which they are located. In response to a growing crisis of pupil absence, a trend bucked by these Muslim schools, an attendance hub<sup>23</sup> has been established at Eden Boys' School, Birmingham, acknowledging its top ranking in the national attendance tables despite being located in a disadvantaged community.

These Muslim schools continually maximise opportunities to support local communities through their extensive philanthropic work. Charitable fundraising (schools raised £500,000 last year) and the thousands of hours of pupil volunteering make a tangible difference within the neighbourhoods they serve. They provide resources (food parcels, hot meals, free school uniforms and so on) to address material poverty. Pupils engage in intergenerational projects, forging relationships with local care home residents to offset loneliness and engage in creative activities.

As well as gaining academic qualifications, many young people achieve diplomas that recognise the lengths they go to in living out the values of service, teamwork, ambition and respect that characterise a healthy society in which freedoms and responsibilities are properly upheld. They have run soup kitchens in their communities and brought joy and friendship to people with no families to support them. They provide an antidote to fears that Generation Z is self-centred and blind to the needs of others, or that Muslims more generally are only concerned for fellow Muslims. Star Academies began modestly within an entirely Muslim community, continues assiduously to embody faith in action and has reached beyond into wider neighbourhoods and networks to build bridges, promote understanding and enhance opportunities. It's work in progress.

Aunt Lydia's advice, if Attwood's powerful prose could be reshaped for the future following this model might be:

"Freedom to and freedom from. Faith and community give us freedom from. Now you have freedom to. Embrace it."

<sup>19</sup> Message from the Principal - Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School and Sixth Form College (TIGHS) | Part of Star Academies

<sup>20</sup> Section 48 Inspections - AMS UK (ams-uk.org)

<sup>21</sup> Tauheedul Islam Boys' High School puts innovation at the forefront in 'Immersive Islam' event

<sup>22</sup> List of teaching school hubs from September 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

<sup>23</sup> Attendance hubs - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

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Sir (Mufti) Hamid Patel is the Chief Executive of Star Academies, a leading UK Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) that runs a network of primary and secondary schools.

# Defining the Core Identity of a 21st-Century Islamic University

Osman Bakar, PhD

## Introduction

In the post-colonial Muslim world, especially since the 1980s following the historic First World Conference on Muslim Education in 1978 held in Mecca, universities and colleges carrying the label “Muslim” or “Islamic” in their names have rapidly increased in number. These institutions are either public or private and are either national or international in character. These universities and colleges may be described as new institutional creatures in the modern world of education, since they are experimenters on the hybridization of traditional Islamic and modern Western educational curricula. The rapid growth of this category of educational institutions is phenomenal. In one sense, this is a positive development that we can only welcome and be proud of. It shows that many Muslims are fully aware of the importance of higher education to the future of the ummah.<sup>1</sup> This awareness is all the more significant when viewed in the context of our time when the ummah is still a witness to rampant illiteracy and semi-literacy, a glaring social phenomenon that is contrary to the essential characteristics of Islam as a religion, a community, and a civilization of knowledge.

The rapid growth of these educational institutions also shows that many Muslims are sensitive to the ummah’s needs to preserve the traditional Islamic curriculum and at the same time to provide an adequate curriculum in modern knowledge. In other words, they are sensitive to the challenge of how to achieve a hybridization of the two curricula that would best serve the interests of their respective national Muslim communities and of the global Muslim ummah at large. Some Muslims refer to their form of hybridization as “integration.” Some others call it “Islamization.” No matter what term is used, the whole hybridization exercise is conveying the common message that what the ummah needs is not higher education of just any kind, but rather one that would help give shape and meaning to the identity of Muslim educational institutions. The search for this institutional identity is ongoing.

But in another sense, the springing up of all kinds of universities and colleges in the Muslim world, which is partly inspired by rapid changes in the

Western higher education landscape itself, raises problematic issues to which their founders and builders, educationists and scholars, and local educational authorities, need to pay heed. It appears that, as a result of the rapid physical expansion of Muslim higher education institutions, the stakeholders, especially curriculum providers and their scholarly critics, hardly have time for a reasonable pause for reflection to examine if they are creating the right kind of universities—notwithstanding their wearing of the “Muslim” or “Islamic” label, and producing the right kind of university graduates needed by the 21st-century ummah. Based on preliminary investigations it appears that we have simply been moving forward in the educational sector during the last several decades by “producing more of the same” in terms of “types” and “identities” of higher Islamic educational institutions and, by inference, as well as in terms of academic and professional qualifications of “Islamic studies” graduates.

## The Dilemma of the Modern Muslim University

The typical modern Muslim university is thus caught in a dilemma that is partly the product of its own making. On the one hand, it is burdened with the ummatic task of rediscovering its own heritage, learning the best and the most useful knowledge from the most advanced modern cultures, Eastern and Western, and integrating them into some coherent whole within the framework of its educational curricula. It is granted that the burden is not its fault; rather, it is part of the destiny of the modern Muslim ummah. However, the success of the modern Muslim university’s search for an identity that is in keeping with the Islamic intellectual tradition is closely identified with its success in the curricula-integration enterprise, which it can shape and influence. On the other hand, the integration work has not made much headway since it is deprived of the precious time needed for the more concerted effort and more ingenious approach to its accomplishment due to the university’s imbalanced physical growth and expansion. To be sure, there were a few exceptional cases, which relatively succeeded in projecting to the public their high-profile Islamization-Integration agenda during the first two decades or so of their existence. But even with these relatively successful ones, for various reasons the agenda in

<sup>1</sup> To promote inter-institutional cooperation on Islamic higher education in the Muslim world, we founded in 2010 a series of international conferences titled ‘International Conference on Islam and Higher Education (ICIHE)’. The First ICIHE was held on 8-9 November 2010 at the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS), Kuala Lumpur.

question has come to a halt and been put on the shelf. Furthermore, the literary output inspired and generated by the Islamization-Integration was far from impressive. Nonetheless, on the setback to the integration agenda that we now observe, the claim may be made that all modern Muslim universities have a share in its failure.

Elsewhere in my writings I describe the present dilemma of Muslim universities as the problem of an “expanding body” and a “shrinking spirit.”<sup>2</sup> What I mean by this is that under external pressure the university is expanding too fast, as alluded to earlier, so much so that it could hardly cater to the spiritual and intellectual needs of its campus community as understood by its founding fathers. It ought to be appreciated that a university’s spiritual and intellectual needs can only be fulfilled under a certain cultural environment. What is widely happening is that while the body of the university—its physical infrastructure, student population, and academic and administrative staff—is continuously expanding, its original spirit, which motivates its own birth, is shrinking as it is no longer adequately internalized not only by its students but, even more bothersome, by its academics. The implied failure in the university’s Islamization-Integration programme is the inability of its leadership at all levels to maintain an enduring dynamic and healthy balance between continuity and change, especially between its continuing commitments to the philosophy of its founders and its openness to development and change in the university educational curricula.

In light of the foregoing introductory remarks, this article argues for a revisit of the educational curricula integration enterprise in contemporary Muslim universities that appears to have lost its momentum. Given that this article is short, the revisit is limited to an overview of the main issues that are found to

be stalling progress in the integration enterprise. The main objective of the review is to arrive at a new epistemological framework, replacing the current widely used one, within which the Islamisation-Integration exercise could be enhanced to a more advanced level in both theory and practice in terms of comprehensiveness, sophistication, and problem-solving capacity. It is further argued in this article that the new epistemological framework in question would be none other than what we term *tawhidic epistemology*, which would serve as the defining element of an Islamic university.

### Outstanding Problems Common to Modern Muslim Universities

Modern Muslim universities and colleges are currently faced with many common issues and challenges, which understandably would call for inter-institutional cooperation and collaboration. The most important of these are issues of the quality of education that is purportedly being provided to the students in an Islamic academic and scholarly setting and thus in the name of Islam, the societal value of this education, and the very character and identity of the Muslim institution of higher education in question. As such, it is pertinent to ask what the role of Islam would be in each university or each college’s attempt to effectively address these issues. It is our contention that, in this respect, the fitting role of the religion of Islam would be epistemological in nature. According to the Qur’an, Islam is a religion of truth (*din al-haqq*)<sup>3</sup>, which Muslim philosophers understand as synonymous with religion of knowledge. Islam is thus rich in epistemological teachings. These teachings include such doctrines as the principle of the unity of knowledge, the unity and hierarchy of the sciences, knowledge as at once the foundation and the goal of

2 See Osman Bakar, “The role of Islam in higher education policies of Muslim countries,” Osman Bakar, Eric Winkel, and Airulamri Arnan, eds., *Contemporary Higher Education Needs in Muslim Countries: Defining the Role of Islam in 21st Century Higher Education* (Kuala Lumpur: IAIS Malaysia, 2011, 21-38).

3 Qur’an, 61:9.



Islamic learning culture, and the necessity of ethics of knowledge of which professional ethics is an important application.

Since the core problem of Muslim higher education is basically epistemological in nature, as is true generally of higher education in the global community, it is most appropriate to speak of the fitting role of Islamic epistemology. From the Islamic perspective, the most pertinent epistemological principle to the attempt to address the outstanding problems in Muslim universities is the epistemological idea contained in the first pillar of Islam. This pillar asserts the two testimonies of the Unity of God and the Muhammadan apostleship. Those scholars are right who say that the two testimonies are statements of knowledge. As such, they deserve to be treated as epistemological principles, indeed the two most fundamental ones. Traditionally, these twin principles serve as the most fundamental sources of all other epistemological ideas, both theoretical and applied. Inasmuch as the two principles and their derivatives constitute the core content of Islam's *tawhidic* teachings, we may refer to the resulting body of knowledge as *tawhidic* epistemology.

This *tawhidic* epistemology is presented here as instrumental to the success of the quest of the modern Muslim university to secure the best higher education curricula integration model possible. By the best curricula integration designable we mean first and foremost that it is coherent, sound, and of great practical utility. Such a model also means an integration scheme that possesses an ability to balance between a university's capacity for intelligent responses to perennial human needs and its capacity for pragmatic responses to changing human needs in conformity with the dictates of changing times and spaces. The changing human needs are usually addressed by the "secular" sciences or academic disciplines that are founded on some newly emerging epistemologies. Accordingly, the changing needs are seen as capable of posing an epistemological challenge to the university authority, particularly the department that is entrusted with occasional curricula reviews. But with the help of *tawhidic* epistemology, it is strongly believed that the challenge in question could be adequately addressed by the university. It is to be noted that the epistemological challenge would be an ongoing thing since the university's academic expansion would mean there will always be new academic disciplines added to the university's educational curricula that require an appropriate epistemological response.

### **The Quest for an Excellent Educational Curricula Integration: From Piecemeal to Tawhidic Epistemology**

Educational curriculum integration exercise is essentially an epistemological work. The quality of the integration produced would be greatly dependent on the quality of the epistemological framework within which the integration is performed. It is not difficult to see why we can make this important conclusion. There are four elements that need to be present in any work of knowledge integration: knowledge elements that need to be integrated; the mind that is doing the integration; integration principles and tools; and the conceptual framework into which the integrated elements are to be integrated. It is quite clear that there is a quality factor that is associated with each of the four elements in question. While all these elements are important, especially the mind of the human integrator, the focus in this article is on the quality of the epistemological framework for the integration at hand. This is the key issue confronting the academia in modern Muslim universities. A Muslim university needs to pay serious attention to this qualitative demand of curricula integration works.

Admittedly, since the beginning of the academic responses of Muslim responses to modern knowledge decades ago, some changes could be observed in the curriculum sector where attempts have been made to produce a semblance of curriculum integration of traditional and modern knowledge. However, from the traditional Islamic perspective of what counts as the true institutional identity of a university—as the symbol of *tawhidic* epistemology—these changes can only be described as cosmetic in nature. By and large, the curriculum integration in question is sought to be achieved by loosely incorporating into the "traditional" curriculum of Islamic studies parts of "modern secular knowledge" that is thought to be useful to the current job market. However, this sort of integration exercise appears to be arbitrary and superficial and without the proper kind of epistemological basis that the Islamic tradition of learning seeks to put in place and champion. The so-called curriculum integration is nothing more than a loose combination, epistemologically speaking, of selected traditional disciplines as well as selected modern courses that are dictated by two main considerations: to appear as still being faithful to the traditional curriculum and thus to appear as Islamic; and to appear as being sensitive to the needs of graduates as job seekers. Unfortunately, these mere considerations in the thoughts and practices of leaders of Muslim universities are nowadays





to be viewed as too ordinary and commonplace as to be taken seriously as achievers in integration works. What is needed is for us to help elevate them and even the better achievers to the rank of leading international universities that are championing the spirit of *tawhidic* epistemology and taking pride in it as the essence of the true institutional identity of Muslim universities.

In the path to excellence in curricula integration works, it is necessary for Muslim minds in the universities to be open, those of academics and students alike. Only with an authentic opening of their minds, which is basically epistemological in nature, would the Muslims be liberated from what the late Saudi Arabian international scholar and intellectual-activist AbdulHamid AbuSulayman (1936-2021) called “The Crisis in the Muslim Mind”<sup>4</sup> and what the American political philosopher, Allan Bloom (1930-1992) referred to as “The Closing of the American Mind”.<sup>5</sup> Both scholars were, in fact, speaking of the phenomenon of the closing of the modern mind but in two different cultural settings. Both attributed the closing to some epistemological reasons, to the narrowing or closing of the door of *ijtihad* or “free thinking” in the case of AbuSulayman, and to the deeper intellectual crisis resulting from a “dangerous narrowing of curiosity and exploration by the university elites”. Similarities and differences in their thoughts notwithstanding, I argue that the common opener of the “closed” human mind to which both referred, to various degrees of openness, would be *tawhidic* epistemology. As such, it is of utmost importance for every Muslim university to teach this academic discipline together with the science of Divine Unity (*ilm*

*al-tawhid*) of which the former is a branch. The nurturing of the *tawhidic* mind has been central to the traditional mission of Muslim universities since it is precisely this kind of mind that defines their institutional identity.

From the developmental point of view, it is understandable and permissible for a new modern Muslim university to commence its curricula integration enterprise with the elementary type of hybridization of traditional Islamic knowledge and modern secular knowledge that employs a piecemeal epistemological approach. An example of such an approach is by providing quotations from the Qur’an or prophetic hadiths in support of harmonizing modern with traditional knowledge wherever appropriate. However, as we progress towards more advanced and more sophisticated curricula integration works, we need knowledge intervention from *tawhidic* epistemology, which is viewed in the Islamic intellectual tradition as universal, most comprehensive, holistic, and inclusive.

### **Islamic Applied Epistemology: Empowering the Identity of a Muslim University**

If Islam is to play a key role in the ummah’s agenda of advancing the cause of higher education in the 21st century, then I would argue that we need to turn to Islam that is understood as a religion of knowledge and as an intellectual tradition. Based on our understanding of this dimension of Islam, we can describe its role in three main areas. First, there is the role of Islam’s institutional values; second, the role of Islamic epistemological teachings with specific reference to its applied epistemology in its capacity to empower

4 AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, trans. Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993), 1st edition.

5 Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (Simon & Schuster, 2012 Reissue Edition).

the identity of a Muslim university; and third, the role of Islamic ethics of knowledge.

In reference to the first role, we are thinking of Islam as a source of ideas for organizational theories and perspectives that could enlighten Muslims on the issue of the ideal size and the ideal character of a university. In this respect, we are reminded of Ibn Khaldun's theory of the "moderate size" of cultural organisms, particularly of cities. The practical implication of this theory is quite clear. A university cannot go on growing physically without limits. Moreover, the issue of the physical size of a university can have serious implications for the quality of its governance. With respect to the ideal character of a university, Islam is relevant to its quest by virtue of being a source of institutional values in relation to the theory and practice of leadership and followership and sense of social belonging.

In reference to the second role, some general aspects of the significance of Islamic epistemological teachings to the institutionalization of Muslim higher education have previously been discussed. What is now sought to be discussed are the more detailed aspects of Islam's applied epistemology in relation to the function of empowering the *tawhidic* identity of a Muslim university. There are seven such functions listed below:

1. Providing ideas for the philosophy and design of educational curricula.
2. Formulating the epistemologies of individual academic disciplines and pointing out the similarities and the differences between them.
3. Providing a *tawhidic* vision of a university's academic programme: this vision can be translated into the kind of academic programmes that would not only ensure a rationalized and efficient academic governance, but would also save costs.
4. Providing a balanced curriculum between *fard 'ayn* and *fard kifayah* knowledge.
5. Providing a balanced curriculum between perennial and ephemeral knowledge.
6. Serving as a basic source of intellectual-rational and scientific values such as truthfulness,

rationality, objectivity, and certainty, especially for the purpose of creating a healthy knowledge culture.

7. Serving as a source of research values for the creation of a healthy research culture.

In reference to the third role, we are emphasizing the following aspects of the ethical role and responsibility of a Muslim university, which is conceptually related to its identity:

1. Ensuring that the creation or production of new knowledge, its applications, and its dissemination in all its forms are in accordance with Islamic ethics.
2. Serving as a source of professional ethics: this is to ensure that graduates in every profession are imbued with the best standard of professional ethics.
3. Committing the university to observing this practical wisdom: "It is the ethical knowledge itself largely shunned in contemporary higher education curricula on the excuse of needing more time to promote graduates' marketability that would best guarantee their marketability."

### Conclusion

The nature of Islam as a religion of knowledge *par excellence* has left a profound impact on the field of education, including higher education, that extended beyond the Muslim world. Islam predated the West by centuries in creating a robust higher education and knowledge culture. This culture, which was an outstanding aspect of classical Islamic civilization, mirrored the identity of the religion of Islam itself, which is *tawhidic* in the sense of being founded on the principle of absolute monotheism (*al-tawhid*). The traditional Muslim university reflected this truth in its institutional identity, particularly in its educational curricula. For contemporary Muslim universities in the 21st century, the main challenge is how with the guidance from traditional Islamic epistemology they can create a curricula integration model that synthesises traditional Islamic and modern secular knowledge and yet display a *tawhidic* character.

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# Bangladesh's Intellectual Renaissance: A Call to Action

Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari

## Introduction

Bangladesh has a rich intellectual tradition, with a history spanning hundreds of years. From the grandeur of the Bengal Sultanate to the region's resistance against colonial domination, Bengal has been a beacon of cultural and intellectual vitality. Yet, this intellectual wealth has not consistently led to tangible benefits for the people, nor has it always been directed by Bangladeshis themselves.

As we navigate the 21st century, Bangladesh faces profound challenges—political instability, educational shortcomings, and a worrying brain drain. Despite significant economic growth, these challenges threaten the nation's progress. However, in July 2024 we saw a new generation demonstrating that change is possible, igniting hope for the future; this culminated in the ouster of the country's most entrenched dictator. But this spectacular success and potential can only be realised through a comprehensive renaissance—a cultural, political, economic, technological and intellectual revival that draws on the nation's rich

drain in the country.

Governance is weak, and civil society is fragmented. Politics is often more about personal or party gain than national interest. A small, secular elite dominates the intellectual and cultural spheres, often at odds with the broader population. Corruption has become normalised, and moral decay pervades public life.

Despite these challenges, the private sector has driven recent economic growth, outpacing many neighbours. However, long-term sustainability is uncertain, hindered by fragile politics and poor infrastructure. The gap between rich and poor widens, with corruption and the black economy becoming more entrenched.

## The Need for an Intellectual Renaissance

Bangladesh requires nothing less than a knowledge-driven revival, one that reflects its centuries-old traditions, cultural norms, and religious heritage. This revival must be inclusive, engaging the majority of the population in a collective effort to rebuild the nation's intellectual capital.



history while addressing its current needs.

## The Current Reality

While countries like China and India have risen from the ashes of colonial onslaught, Bangladesh has struggled to find its footing. The education system remains mired in outdated colonial legacies, with little emphasis on critical thinking or life skills. Universities, plagued by political interference, fail to produce the intellectual capital needed for progress. Millions of young Bangladeshis, unemployed and disillusioned, seek opportunities abroad, further exacerbating brain

Successful Bangladeshis exist in various sectors but are often unrecognised or unsupported due to a lack of social cohesion. The concept of *Asabiyya*—social solidarity and group consciousness—must be revived to foster unity and purpose. Rooted in moral values and spiritual guidance, this solidarity can propel the nation forward, preventing the rise of destructive nationalism.

Bangladeshis have a proud history of family values, generosity, and simplicity. Yet, long-standing intellectual stagnation and socio-political malaise have fostered undesirable traits, such as short-term thinking

and envy. These negative tendencies can be transformed into strengths in a constructive environment.

### **Decolonising the Mind**

Europe's Renaissance unshackled minds from centuries of stagnation, leading to unprecedented material success. But without moral restraint, it also led to some of the worst atrocities in history. Bangladesh must learn from these lessons and pursue its own revival—one grounded in moral and spiritual values.

To do this, Bangladeshis need to adopt a proactive approach, reforming the education system as well as engaging in systematic research and collective action. The focus should be on serving the entire society, not just select groups. By sowing the seeds of nation-building across various sectors, Bangladesh can achieve a sustainable and inclusive renaissance.

### **Sowing the Seeds of Change**

A nation's dignity and influence start with its intellectual capital and national character. Knowledge is the primary measure of superiority among individuals and nations. Just as the Mongols eventually adopted the superior knowledge of the Muslim world they once destroyed, Bangladesh must recognise the power of intellectual leadership.

The journey begins at home, with parents and teachers nurturing the next generation to be knowledgeable, confident, and empathetic citizens. Investment in children's education, both at school and in the community, is crucial. Engaging with civil society to enhance social and life skills will build stronger individuals and a more cohesive society.

Changemakers must prioritise excellence in all endeavours, whether in education, research, or the arts. The pursuit of excellence (*ihsan* in Arabic) should become a national ethos, driving Bangladeshis to aim high and strive for perfection.

### **The Role of the Diaspora**

Diaspora Bangladeshis, whether in Asia or the West, have a crucial role to play in this revival. Those in the West, in particular, have excelled in education, various professions, and business, and can be invaluable assets to Bangladesh's future.

However, the younger generation often feels disconnected from their roots. By creating better opportunities and fostering a sense of belonging, Bangladesh can tap into this diaspora potential, ensuring that their skills and experience contribute to the

nation's revival.

### **Action Planning for a National Revival**

Challenging times call for resolute leadership. A national revival is a long-term strategic project that requires sustained effort from patriotic Bangladeshis across the globe. Courageous and innovative individuals must come forward to lead this charge, overcoming the many challenges that lie ahead.

This revival will start with small, incremental successes. By highlighting role models, building networks, and celebrating achievements, changemakers can create momentum. A culture of excellence must be nurtured, with a focus on innovation and continuous improvement.

Bangladesh needs a positive vision for its future, one that builds on its rich history while emphasising the importance of intellectual capital in driving economic growth, innovation, and societal well-being. Ethical politics, accountable governance, and a high-skills economy are essential components of this vision.

### **Conclusion**

The twin dangers of global warming and political toxicity threaten the very fabric of our world. For Bangladesh to reclaim its pre-colonial glory and secure a better future, it must think globally, plan strategically, and act locally. Creative changemakers must work with exceptional ingenuity and resilience, leveraging Bangladesh's unique identity to build a prosperous and self-reliant nation.

At the grassroots level, parents, teachers, scholars, and social leaders must take up the task of raising confident, patriotic, and well-rounded future generations. Improved education will lead to better reading habits, critical thinking, and communication skills, fostering a sense of unity and purpose among all Bangladeshis.

Just as other nations have unshackled themselves from colonial chains, Bangladesh has the potential to stand on its own through an intellectual, cultural, and moral renaissance. The time to act is now, and with the right leadership and collective will, Bangladesh can become a nation of givers, not just takers, embodying the spirit of the timeless Hadith: "The upper hand is better than the lower hand. The upper hand is the one that gives, and the lower hand is the one that takes."

# In a Time of Global Pain the World's Open Wounds – and the Remedy

Sheikh Faid Muhammad Said

*“O people! Spread peace, share what you have and pray even as others sleep! Then will ye enter Paradise!”* So said the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, – on him be peace and salutations, – upon his entry into the desert oasis of Yathrib, which would become known to the world as Madinah. At once law and social guideline, this precious pearl was narrated as a Hadith by Abdullah ibn Salam, whose identity is as significant as his testimony, for ibn Salam was then no less than the leading Rabbi among Yathrib's large Jewish community and one of the most learned men in the Arabian peninsula. In the full text of the Hadith, Abdullah ibn Salam recounts: *“The people had gone out to greet God's Messenger upon his arrival [in Madinah]. The general cry in that hour was, ‘The Messenger of Allah has arrived!’, so I joined the crowd to get a good look at him. When I gazed upon his face, I knew that this was not the visage of the untruthful ones. In his very first general proclamation, he said, ‘O people! Spread peace, share your sustenance, and pray even as others sleep! Then will ye enter Paradise!’”* (Hadith narrated by Abdullah ibn Salam in Tirmidhi, 2485). While Abdullah ibn Salam could discern truth in the Prophet's physiognomy alone, fourteen centuries on, the Prophet's ﷺ words resonate louder than ever. They compel us to face up to Truth and to embrace it, to face down falsehood and to reject it. For, what we are confronted by today, is a world in the throes of agony, of pain on a

globe-spanning scale.

All of us daily bear witness to murderous destruction in global conflicts, stark inequality and economic hardship, natural disasters, and all directly or indirectly, caused by a callous indifference to human suffering, by the failures of leadership and arrogance of power. This is ultimately down to the ancient mischief that is human greed. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the human race, collectively, has discarded its moral compass even as those in positions of responsibility show no inclination to empathy for the sake of humanity. How else to interpret the callous blind eye turned to the killing of innocent Palestinians? The fact that the overwhelming majority of the victims are comprised of women and children as described by independent bodies ranging from United Nations agencies to international relief organisations and human rights groups. Turning a blind eye to these human crises has little to offer in the way of just solutions and a sincere desire for peace, for all those engaged in the associated disciplines of international law, human rights law, of universal humanitarianism, are decisively confronted by a reckoning with their conscience.

We have spoken before about the great challenges faced by mankind and how these challenges contain the potential to threaten the very future of the human race. It is worth revisiting – and reminding ourselves – that repetition was the stock in trade of God's emissaries, as was the continual heedlessness that attended their proclamations. But the scorn of the heedless deterred neither God's prophets nor those who follow in their wake with wisdom, sincerity and compassion. Indeed, wisdom, sincerity and compassion – so sorely absent in our contemporary world – are essential to tackling the many problems that confront humanity: deep inequality and disenfranchisement, social and cultural fracture, sectarian strife, realpolitik – and concomitant humanitarian crises – and the long shadow of irreversible ecological damage. Some of these problems are historically deep-rooted while others recur in cycles, having the appearance of the moment only because of humanity's peculiar problem of forgetfulness and failure to learn the lessons of history. What is almost always absent is the collective sense of responsibility and genuine cooperation. This is especially tragic considering the fact of an inter-connected world in which humanity is now squeezed into one



*Al-Anbiya 21, 107*

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global village, a reality that demands we think globally. This means foregoing parochialism, and looking beyond national or regional self-interest and, instead, to connect with all the constituent parts of the global village. We have oft mentioned that to think globally is a fundamental characteristic of Islam, its supreme expression is, *“And We sent you not except as a mercy unto all the worlds.”* (Qur’an, *Al-Anbiya*, 21:107). In the spirit of spreading mercy unto all the worlds, to think globally necessarily means to reach out, to connect, to feel and to care and share. Hence, *“Now, We have not sent thee otherwise than to mankind at large, to be a herald of glad tidings and a warner...”* (Qur’an, *Saba*, 34:28). And we are bound to mention that, for their part, Muslim societies *“...Believe in God and His Apostle...and follow him, so that you might find guidance.”* (Qur’an, *Al-Araf*, 7:158). Suffice to say belief alone is not enough without the animating spirit of action, but what we have here also is an illustration of the virtuous circle. If we do believe in God and His Apostle and desire to follow him, then should we find that we are guided aright, which condition would, in turn, produce scrutiny of our motives and impulses, – the virtuous circle. Thereby did Joseph in Egypt, even after his exoneration before the king’s law, engage in self-reflection, *“And yet, I am not trying to absolve myself: for, verily, man’s inner self does incite to evil, and saved are only they upon whom my Sustainer bestows His grace. Behold, my Sustainer is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace!”* (Qur’an, *Yusuf*, 12:53). Joseph, of course, sought not revenge but to spread mercy. This brings us back to the Prophet’s ﷺ first, great announcement upon his arrival in Yathrib, and the testimony thereof by Abdullah ibn Salam (who was famously denounced by his Jewish contemporaries when it was discovered that their erstwhile own leading Rabbi had adopted Islam). Aspects of rabbinical study had taught Ibn Salam to anticipate the coming of a divine emissary in the Arabian desert, although he had fully expected such a figure to come forth from his community. If the Divine Messenger’s physiognomy had impressed ibn Salam, that first encounter amidst the multitude in the open air was enough to convince him of the divine nature of the Message, *“Spread peace, share what you have, and pray even as others do sleep!”* For ibn Salam had fully grasped what the Prophet meant by *“spread peace”* the promotion of a culture of peace. As one of Yathrib’s notable figures, ibn Salam was acutely conscious of the bitter inter- and intra-clan rivalries that existed among both Jewish and Arab clan groupings in the oasis town. And here was one, universally praised,

whose very features marked him out as truthful, exhorting the people to support peace, to foster peace, to nurture and to cultivate peace. And ibn Salam had intuitively understood what the Prophet ﷺ meant by *“share your sustenance”*, accessible to all, which of course represents the very pillars of social justice and equality. In the face of intertwined economic crises, erosion of essential public services and ‘safety nets’, the social condition of much of the world’s population is desperate hunger, hopeless destitution and agonising death, while unimaginable wealth is concentrated in the hands of the few, be they multinational corporations or individuals. What, then, might ibn Salam have comprehended by the Prophet’s ﷺ exhortation to *“pray even as others do sleep!”*? The erudite rabbi, whose life in Yathrib revolved around daily Torah study, teaching in the synagogue and managing his date orchard, once more discerned the deeper, layered, meanings behind the call to pray whilst others sleep: to train one’s self to forego worldly comfort for communion with the divine is only obvious as a primary interpretation; beyond that, the Prophet ﷺ desired that those who would follow him do so with sincerity, to be attentive and keep vigil over their own inner- and outer-states in that they are mindful of their actions; and this enlightened state would keep them alert to creeping dangers that threaten the peace. They would stand in stark contrast to those that *“sleep”*, the heedless, inattentive ones, who ‘see no evil, hear no evil’ in their comatose existence, – that is to say, the blind worshipper. This world, this global village of six billion inhabitants, groans in pain, yet mankind does possess the remedy to bring about relief: to enjoy life in peace, we must learn to spread peace, to enjoy the peace of sound sleep, we must share resources to sustain all. We must strive with sincerity, with vigilant hearts so that we avoid the fate of those who see no evil and hear no evil in their sleepwalk to doom. For those of us who believe in God and His Apostle, we are certain to be guided if we commit to follow him – on him salutations! The Prophet ﷺ has shown how we might navigate the world: *“They that abide by God’s injunctions and ordinances are like those who drew lots to secure their berths on a ship. Some found their seats on the upper deck and some on the lower deck. When those on the lower deck required water, they clambered onto the upper deck and this produced much consternation to the passengers on top. When the passengers on the lower deck sensed that they were perceived as bothersome to their top-deck neighbours, they said, ‘Let us drill a hole in our part of the ship [to attain water] so that we do not trouble those*

above!’ When those who had secured passage on the top deck came to know, they naturally intervened; had they allowed those on the lower deck to carry out their ill-advised scheme, all aboard would have perished. By preventing them, all were saved.” (Hadith narrated by An-Nu‘man ibn Bashir in Sahih Al-Bukhari; 2493).

If we acknowledge that the problems confronting humanity stem from injustice, the very antithesis of mercy and compassion, then just dealing must

underscore our notions of what is humane, while compassionate interaction is what distinguishes the human from the brute creation. Thus God commands: “O you who believe, be upright before God, witnesses in equity. Let not hatred of a people cause you not to be just; be just, that is nearer to God-fearing. And fear God; surely God is aware of what you do.” (Qur’an, *Al-Ma‘eda*, 5:8).

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## Gaza: The Graveyard of Liberal Values

**Faisal Kutty**

Earlier this year, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell called Gaza “a graveyard for tens of thousands of people and also a graveyard for many of the most important principles of humanitarian law.”

The reality may be even worse. I fear it may become the graveyard of liberalism itself.

Three decades ago, liberalism was the lead chariot in the procession of the liberal democratic project. New democracies were emerging in Europe; the Soviet Union had crumbled, and Russia was in transition; the Berlin Wall had fallen; and South Africa’s apartheid regime was collapsing. Even China exhibited signs of change.

Liberal democracy appeared invincible, both in practice and in theory. There appeared to be no real competition as it stood out as a triumphant and principled form of governance.

Ask any well-versed political theory student, and they will recite that liberalism is a political and philosophical ideology centred on the principles of individual liberty, equality, and limited government.

They will point out that it emphasizes the protection of individual rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, as well as the rule of law and democratic governance.

While advocating for a market-based economy with private property rights, free trade, and minimal government regulation, liberalism also promotes social welfare programs to alleviate disadvantages and ensure equal opportunities for all citizens.

Additionally, liberalism supports the idea of pluralism, tolerance, and diversity, aiming to create societies where individuals can pursue their own interests



and live according to their own beliefs without undue interference from the state.

The essence of liberalism lies in its commitment to the rule of law and human rights.

Sounds amazing, so what’s the problem, you may be asking?

### **Liberalism shaken to its core**

Those observing the “plausible genocide” without a propaganda lens over the last year have had front-row seats to a systematic erosion of liberal values and ideals. Gaza has exposed Western hypocrisy and double standards, and it has shaken liberalism to its core.

Both domestic and international commitment to the rule of law, human rights, and a rules-based order are being undermined by, arguably, the most powerful lobby in the world. Pro-Israel lobbies have hijacked most Western liberal democracies

The whole world is now privy to the shameless pimping of Western politicians previously documented in Congressman Paul Findley’s 1985 book *They Dare to Speak Out* and reinforced by the 2007 book *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, by political scientists John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt.



As an anonymous commentator wrote: “People think Gaza is occupied, but in reality, Gaza is free but the whole world is occupied.”

Liberal elites and leaders who joined millions in support of free speech and proclaimed “Je suis Charlie” in solidarity with the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo after terrorists killed 12 people at its Paris offices in 2015 to try to shut it down are now calling for suppression of free speech.

By a vote of 377-44-1, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution that the “slogan, ‘from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free’ is antisemitic and its use must be condemned.” Of course, the statement is not threatening or condemnable if you substitute “Palestine” with “Israel,” as you see being done by many Israeli supporters and in the Likud manifesto.

The University of Southern California, in an unprecedented move, canceled Muslim valedictorian, Asna Tabassum’s address. Tabassum, who minored in genocide studies, was prevented from delivering her address because of alleged threats from pro-Israeli groups. They cited unspecified “security concerns”.

I thought the idea was never to give in to clearly “terrorist” demands.

To make matters worse, due to the fallout, in another unprecedented move, the university subsequently canceled all other speakers and honorary doctorate presentations during convocation. Where are the “Je suis Asna” calls from liberal elites and institutions?

Hundreds of students and faculty at Columbia, Yale, and New York University were arrested for peacefully (in the words of the police chief) protesting against the killings in Gaza by Israel. Another 200 mostly Jewish protesters were arrested in front of Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer’s Brooklyn residence, where they gathered for the seder, a ritual that marks the second night of the Passover holiday celebrated as a festival of freedom by Jews worldwide. No free speech mobilization by liberal elites was

anywhere to be seen.

Those who championed freedom of expression are now banning the keffiyeh, the traditional Palestinian headdress, because it is making some people uncomfortable. A few months ago, the Ontario legislature banned the headdress, forcing a scheduled meeting between legislators and pro-Palestinian protesters to be held outside the legislative buildings because the activists had donned their keffiyehs.

Israeli military dog tags, Israeli flags, and other political symbols, of course, are not political in the same way.

### Illiberal goals

The situation is no different in many European countries.

Who thought that liberalism was so fragile and malleable by those who seek to subvert it for their own illiberal goals, namely promoting ethnic cleansing by the ethno-nationalist and racist state of Israel?

In the wake of the mass killings of the Second World War and the Holocaust, the new liberal world order enacted human rights treaties and enacted humanitarian laws to make sure that such massacres and abuses were “never again” repeated.

Rising out of the horrors of the Second World War, we saw the establishment of the United Nations and the drafting of the International Bill of Human Rights that would obligate “every state to recognize the equal right of every individual on its territory to life, liberty and property, religious freedom and the use of his own language”.

The bill included the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

We also saw the enactment of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which sought to improve the legal protection of non-combatants, medical personnel, medical facilities and equipment, and wounded and sick civilians.



Despite these advances claimed by liberals, today we are witnessing war crimes, crimes against humanity and “plausible genocide”, according to the International Court of Justice, being live-streamed to our devices.

If liberalism cannot offer a moral and ethical form of governance, then what good is it? What are the grandiose declarations, pronouncements, and treaties good for?

### Moral high ground

In the midst of such an unprecedented attack on a corralled civilian population by a Western colonial implant and ally, if liberalism shows no will, ability, or desire to protect civilian life, regional security, a nation's own national interests, and global order, then its mission-defining claims of principle and competence collapse.

Liberal intellectuals have long claimed the moral high ground by championing justice, whether it be in favor or against Western interests. Why is the Israeli situation different? When blind loyalty becomes the sole or primary consideration, then what makes liberalism different from tribalism?

When global security and safety can be sacrificed

at the altar of friendship and similarity, what becomes of the West's claim to authority as a political and military custodian of a rules-based international order?

Might and dominance can be mistaken for right, but let's not forget that dissenting minorities, the oppressed and colonized, may conclude that their only choice is to resist by any means necessary, and revolution is always a higher likelihood.

Even domestically, history has proven that societies that combine responsiveness to their people's will with robust protections for individuals and minority groups are in the best position to strike a flexible and sustainable balance among these competing forces.

We can only hope and pray (sorry, are we still allowed to do that?) that this is some glitch or malfunction, and liberal elites and intellectuals will wake up from their slumber and remind liberal politicians that the very *raison d'être* of the liberal democratic project is under threat of collapse.

It is almost too late, but how liberal elites respond to the Gaza challenge and salvage whatever shreds of credibility remain will dictate the legacy of liberalism.

Liberals must stand up for their principles or forever hang their heads in shame.

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## A Comment on the Paris Olympics Opening Ceremony

**Paul Williams**

The opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games in July featured a controversial remake of the Last Supper; an event which according to the New Testament featured Jesus upon whom be peace, eating a final meal with his 12 disciples. It is famously depicted in a painting by Leonardo da Vinci.

The Olympic ceremony caused noteworthy controversy worldwide, especially amongst Muslims and some Christians, who viewed the disrespectful performance featuring drag queens, a nearly naked man and a child, as mocking Jesus, upon whom be peace.

The artistic director of the ceremony, Thomas Jolly, argued that the performance was a re-enactment of the painting *Le Festin des Dieux* by Jan van Bijlert, which depicts various Greek gods at a banquet



on Mount Olympus. He claimed he had not been

inspired by The Last Supper painting of Jesus with his disciples. However, an Olympic spokesman later admitted to the reference. The organisers then apologised, claiming that the performance was meant to ‘celebrate diversity’ not to mock Christianity, an objective many felt the event singularly failed to achieve.

Barbara Butch, a lesbian who donned a silver halo crown headdress and low-cut dress while portraying the figure of Jesus, upon whom be peace, in the Last Supper sketch, claimed the opening ceremony was intended to bring people together.

According to her Instagram profile, Butch is “a Love activist, Dj and producer based in Paris. My aim is to unite people, gather humans & share love through music for all of Us to dance & make our hearts beat (in unison)! Music sounds better with all of Us!”

Butch posted a screenshot image of her performance in the Last Supper parody above an image of Da Vinci’s original painting to her Instagram account with the comment, “Oh yes! Oh yes! The new gay testament!”

The French Bishops Conference released a statement saying that while the ceremony “offered the world a marvellous display of beauty and joy, rich in emotion and universally acclaimed”, it also “unfortunately included scenes of mockery and derision of Christianity, which we deeply regret”.

Elon Musk, the Tesla, X and Space X owner, also criticised the parody which he described as being

“extremely offensive to Christians”.

Many Muslims say Christianity has become completely toothless by permitting the mocking of Jesus, upon whom be peace, in the name of ‘tolerance’ and ‘free speech’. Whilst at the same time Muslims are regularly criticised by Christians and secularists for refusing to make ‘jokes’ about their faith (and Christianity). This is now a common requirement imposed on Muslims for their successful ‘integration’ in the west.

The Qur’an says mocking the religious beliefs of others is prohibited. Allah Most High says:

*O believers! Do not insult what they invoke besides Allah, or they will insult Allah spitefully out of ignorance. This is how We have made each people’s deeds appealing to them. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them of what they used to do.* (Qur’an 6:108)

Dr Shabbir Akhtar was a philosopher at Oxford University and a dear friend who sadly passed away earlier this year. He argued that Islam is unique in its decision and capacity to confront, rather than accommodate, the challenges of secular belief. He contended that Islam should not be classed with the modern Judeo-Christian tradition since that tradition has effectively capitulated to secularism and is now a disguised form of liberal humanism. Akhtar’s magnum opus *The Qur’an and the Secular Mind: A philosophy of Islam* is a tour de force and required reading for all who look to the revival of Islam in the modern world.

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## Mirror of Reality

### Usman Isa Modibbo

*As for those who believe in Allah and His messengers, it is they who are truly the people of truth. And the martyrs, with their Lord, will have their reward and their light. But as for those who disbelieve and reject Our signs, it is they who will be the residents of the Hellfire.*

(Qur’an, Al-Hadid, 57:19)

The 20th century was known as the century of physics, primarily due to the development of quantum physics in the early 1920s. Quantum physics investigates the natural world at scales of less than nanometres i.e. 10<sup>-9</sup>m. It is a bizarre world of particles that exist for the most infinitesimal moments in

time, traverse space without leaving their original position, and interact instantaneously without any time duration! The advances in computing and the cellular communications technological ‘quantum’ leaps that owe their development to breakthroughs in this era to the discovery of laws operating at a level unseen to human vision.

The nuclear and hydrogen bombs are also the result of quantum physics. The destructive power of the smallest of things what Allah SWT has described as ‘*miskala zaratin*,’ ‘an atom’s weight’ was shown to be able to end our civilization; and the meaning and implication of the sacred metaphor was horrifically realised in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

which murdered over 226,000 people. Martin Luther King lamented “guided missiles and misguided men.”

The dualistic nature of light as both particle and wave was revealed via double slit experiments. During these experiments particles of light fired through slits collapse into wave patterns on proceeding walls, showing light to exist as both a wave and a particle. This was later proven to be true of all atomic matter. Things are not as they seem.

The Hajj, a pillar of Islam, has as its commencing rituals the *Tawaf*, seven obligatory circuits of the Kaaba followed by the *Sa’ay*, and seven obligatory brisk marches between the hills of Safa and Marwa to commemorate Hajar’s (AS) desperate search for water for the infant Ishmael (AS). *Tawaf* is cyclic in motion and the *Sa’ay* linear. Einsteinian relativity—another 20th century advancement in humanity’s understanding of the universe—proved time and space to be unified dimensions; the space-time of our ‘dunya’ or physical existence. Added to space’s three dimensions of length, height and breath was the

nullified at the quantum level of reality. An infinite line is a circle and a circle is a composition of infinitesimal lines. The Kaaba—the primal centre of the universe is the only space where the rows of prayer become circles. As pilgrims in prayer we collapse into waves of submission and as pilgrims between Safa and Marwa we collapse into particles arranged in rows. The hidden dual nature of light as wave and particle is metaphysically manifested.

*On that Day you will see believing men and women with their light shining ahead of them and on their right. They will be told, “Today you have good news of Gardens, under which rivers flow, for you to stay in forever. This is truly the ultimate triumph.”*

(Qur’an, Al-Hadid:, 57:12)

The *Sa’ay* is also the believer’s preparation to cross the Sirat, the bridge over Hell. Classical tafsirs have interpreted the terror of this eschatological moment as when we will most need of the ecstasy of Allah’s Light.

At Hajj we are reminded of the Day of Judgement



fourth dimension of time of which the Kaaba’s sacred geometry as space and the simultaneity of the cyclical and linear motions of the pilgrims as time are meta-physical unifications.

*Tawaf* and *Sa’ay* must be completed in counts of the sacred number seven, the number of wavelengths of light (radio, microwaves, infrared, visible light, ultraviolet, X-rays, gamma rays), and the number of colours of visible light (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet) which collectively weave the ecstasy of white light and separately forge the rainbow which in the Bible represents the Mercy of God<sup>1</sup>.

The Hajj is a pilgrimage to the House of God and symbolic of the Day of Judgement. During *Tawaf* the laws of the sharia which mandate the separation of sexes is nullified as the laws of classical physics are

and at its climax—the standing at Arafat—of the Day of the covenant when we acknowledged our Lord.

*Allah asked, “Am I not your Lord?” They replied, “Yes, You are! We testify...”*

(Qur’an, Al-Araf, 7:172)

Hajj is symbolic of the beginning and end of the human drama. A theophany of the Eastern cyclical time of Dharmic religions and the Western linear time of the Abrahamic faiths; for the Light of Allah is neither ‘of the East nor of the West.’

*Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west...*

(Qur’an, Al-Nur, 24:35)

<sup>1</sup> The rainbow that I have put in the sky will be my sign to you and to every living creature on earth. It will remind you that I will keep this promise forever. When I send clouds over the earth, and a rainbow appears in the sky, I will remember my promise to you and to all other living creatures. Genesis 9:12-17

# Bradford Literature Festival – Culture as Social Intervention

Syima Aslam

Bradford Literature Festival (BLF), established in January 2014, was founded with a clear and ambitious mission: to transform lives through the power of arts, culture, and literature. Over the past decade, BLF has rapidly evolved into one of the largest literature festivals in the UK and Europe's most eclectic and diverse cultural showcase. Not only does it stand as the foremost platform for Muslim arts and culture in the UK, but it has also become a cultural disruptor, leading the way in inclusion, diversity, and social engagement.

At the core of BLF is a deep belief in the transformative power of the arts—viewing culture as a fundamental right, not a privilege. The festival's commitment to social inclusion, accessibility, and representation is embodied in its Ethical Ticketing Policy, which ensures free access to those who need it most. Education is another pillar of BLF's vision. The festival's year-round programmes are designed to inspire a love of words, nurture literacy, and demonstrate how education can change lives, foster economic engagement, and serve as a foundation for positive change.

Harnessing the voices of a multitude of diverse communities, BLF has created a global cultural platform that unites artists and institutions across boundaries. The festival fosters an environment of inclusivity and mutual respect, encouraging cultural dialogue that promotes global understanding and celebrates shared human experiences. As the largest Muslim platform in the UK, BLF amplifies the narratives of Muslim writers, artists, and thinkers, offering a space to explore and appreciate Muslim arts, culture, history, and heritage. This platform not only serves to deepen the understanding of Muslim contributions to global culture but also builds bridges between communities, fostering unity through shared storytelling.

June 2024 marked BLF's 10th anniversary, a significant milestone in the organisation's history. Since its inception, BLF has evolved from a modest 24 events with 968 attendees in 2014 to 699 events with an audience of 155,934 in 2024. Over the past 10 years, BLF has engaged an audience of more than 705,000 people from 34 countries, including 269,000 children and young people. Nearly half of the audience (49%) comes from ethnically diverse backgrounds, and the festival has showcased 3,544 artists representing

heritage from 72 countries.

The 10 year anniversary of the festival offers a moment to pause, reflect on achievements, and consider the lessons learned over the past decade, as BLF continues to chart a bold path forward.

Bradford, the beating heart of Yorkshire, has a rich history shaped by waves of immigration. In the 19th century, Irish migrants arrived, fleeing the Potato Famine, and seeking work in the booming textile industry. Around the same time, Jewish Germans were drawn to the city's wool trade, becoming influential merchants and business owners. Their contributions can still be seen in Bradford's beautiful Victorian architecture, which reflects both German and Sephardic influences.

Post-World War II, Eastern European migrants, including Ukrainians, settled in Bradford, which now boasts the UK's largest Ukrainian population outside London. In the mid-20th century, South Asians, alongside the Windrush generation, came to work in the textile mills, further enriching the city's cultural tapestry.

These communities have shaped Bradford's cultural identity making it one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the UK, with over 180 languages spoken. The 2021 census recorded a 43% ethnically diverse population and the second largest Muslim population in the UK. This immense cultural diversity has also been marked by periods of division and tension, most notably during the race riots of 1995 and 2001. These incidents, driven by deep-seated racial tensions, economic inequality, and strained relations between minority communities and authorities, left lasting scars. The 1995 riots arose from local grievances, while the 2001 unrest, aggravated by far-right provocations, led to widespread violence and highlighted issues of segregation and racial inequality on a national stage.

In 1989, Bradford drew international attention when demonstrators publicly burned Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* outside the city hall. This act became one of the most symbolic moments of the UK protests, highlighting the deep tensions between free speech and religious sensitivities. The event placed Bradford at the heart of a heated national debate over the novel's controversial content and its impact on Muslim communities. From that moment on Bradford became the barometer of UK Muslim sentiment, the place journalists came to take the pulse of the Muslim community on both national and international events.

BLF was conceived against the backdrop of a city grappling with these challenges, including annual demonstrations by the English Defence League. The festival emerged out of necessity, functioning as a social intervention while taking the form of a literature festival. Its cultural strategy and design were driven by two key areas: cohesion and education. True re-

From the outset, BLF was designed to bring people together; to take control of, and reshape the, narratives surrounding the city and its diverse population. Committed to uniting all communities, rather than focusing on any single one, it was founded as a space to build bridges and foster cohesion, offering a neutral platform for nuanced dialogue. This unique per-

## TOP 10 BEST-SELLING EVENTS



1. **The Hamziyya of Imam al-Busiri** | Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, Ian Abdal Latif Whiteman, The Fes Singers
2. **Sufiyana Kalaam** | Orchestral Qawwali Project
3. **Places of Revelation** | Professor Abdullah Alkadi, Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, Feraidoon Mojadedi
4. **Our Lady Fatima al-Zahra** | Shaykh Yahya Rhodus
5. **Great Books from Great Traditions** | Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, Dr AishaSubhani, Dr Asad Tarsin
6. **Miriam Margolyes in Conversation** with Peg Alexander
7. **Treatises of Imam al-Ghazali** | Shaykh Yahya Rhodus
8. **Husam Zomlot in Conversation** with Secunder Kermani
9. **An Evening of Comedy** | Shaparak Khorsandi, Aurie Styla, Scott Bennett, Tez Ilyas, Priya Hall
10. **Emperor of Rome: Mary Beard in Conversation** with Remona Aly



generation and transformation of a place require a focus on both the physical environment and its people. The most important and transformative regeneration is that of the communities who inhabit and shape the place. In cities like Bradford, arts and culture are not luxuries for a privileged few, but essential components of dialogue between communities and a key rung of social mobility.

pective and strong sense of identity made the festival nationally and internationally relevant as curating a programme that is relevant to, and reflective of, the concerns and sensibilities of the communities of Bradford is to create a programme that is the face of modern Britain.

BLF's unashamedly ambitious approach threw away the rulebook, reimagined the cultural landscape,

and successfully engaged with audiences and communities who are traditionally seen as hard to reach and are habitually underserved. BLF understands the difference between 'hard to reach' and 'easy to ignore' and people are at the heart of everything the festival has achieved, with all deliverables measured against one core conviction - literature and education have the power to transform individual lives, as well as society as a whole.

BLF has become renowned for its disruptive, inclusive programmes, which marry the popular with the intellectual, and the historic with the innovative. The festival is grounded in partnerships with prestigious institutions like the British Library and the Bodleian, but also works with local community centres and care homes. What sets BLF apart is its ability to work with organisations of the highest cultural merit while translating that engagement into meaningful interaction at the grassroots level. It has become a festival both internationally recognised and hyper locally rooted, uniting people across social divides.

At its heart, BLF understands that politics is shaped by narratives—by the stories we tell and the slogans we use. Stories, whether told through words, images, or performances, are how we make meaning as humans. They shape our perceptions of ourselves and others, influencing the political and social structures that govern us. Throughout history, stories have justified both conquest and liberation. Today, the rise of digital media and short-form storytelling has created new opportunities for cultural engagement and narrative shifting. Stories shared on platforms like TikTok are reaching audiences on an unprecedented scale, creating cultural movements that challenge the status quo and offer new ways of seeing the world.

In troubled times, culture offers a pathway to grace, understanding, and compassion—values that are desperately needed today. The arts, whether in the form of literature, architecture, or calligraphy, have long been a way for Muslims to express faith,

identity, and community. Today, the work of Muslim creatives—artists, writers, journalists, and producers—continues to enrich the cultural fabric of the UK and the world. It is crucial that young Muslims see themselves reflected in cultural spaces and on screens, as representation fosters pride, identity, and belonging. BLF plays a pivotal role in creating such spaces, celebrating the voices of Muslim artists while promoting broader cultural dialogue.

BLF's focus on education and literacy is central to its mission. Through its Children and Young People Programme, the festival inspires a love of reading and helps students understand their heritage, identity, and place in history. By doing so, BLF shapes students into open-minded global citizens, fostering a greater understanding of their role in the world.

BLF is at the forefront of using stories to create meaningful, sustained change, by fostering resilience, promoting mental well-being, and bridging divides in an age of polarisation. BLF challenges misconceptions that migration is a recent phenomenon, shining a light on the deep historical roots of the migrants communities and diverse histories that have shaped modern Britain. The festival has created a space where artists and audiences from diverse backgrounds feel safe and welcome, coming together each year in a shared commitment to dialogue, mutual respect, and global understanding. The festival's success has been key to Bradford's winning bid to become the UK City of Culture 2025, further cementing its impact.

As we navigate an era marked by division and uncertainty, culture remains one of the most powerful tools we have for bridging divides. Effective cultural strategies take time, but they are vital for creating sustained, meaningful change. By engaging with culture, we can shift narratives and foster unity. BLF stands as a testament to the power of culture, not just to entertain, but to unite, heal, and help us imagine a better world.

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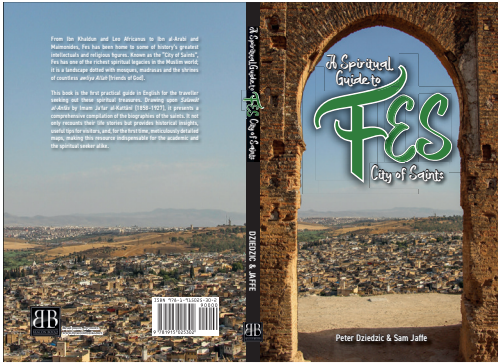
Syima Aslam is the CEO and Artistic Director of the Bradford Literature Festival; a 10-day literary and cultural celebration hailed as 'one of the most innovative and inspirational festivals in the UK'

# BOOK CORNER

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## *A Spiritual Guide to Fes, Peter Dziedzic & Sam Jaffe*

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From Ibn Khaldun and Leo Africanus to Ibn al-Arabi and Maimonides, Fes has been home to some of history's greatest intellectuals and religious figures. Known as the "City of Saints", Fes has one of the richest spiritual legacies in the Muslim world; it is a landscape dotted with mosques, madrasas and the shrines of countless *awliya* Allah (friends of God).

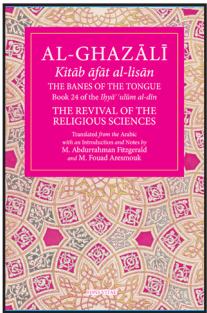
This book is a practical guide in English for the traveller seeking out these spiritual treasures. Drawing upon *Salwat al-Anfās* by Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Kattānī (1858-1927), it presents a comprehensive compilation of the biographies of the saints. It not

only recounts their life stories but provides historical insights, useful tips for visitors and detailed maps, making this resource indispensable for the academic and the spiritual seeker alike.

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## *Al-Ghazali: The Banes of the Tongue (Book 24 of The Revival of the Religious Sciences)*

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While the misuse of the gift of speech is not something new (as this work, composed nearly 950 years ago, amply shows), it is, perhaps, more critical now than ever before. In this age of internet-based communication, we can project anything that comes to mind, both positive and negative, in just a nanosecond. Yet the results of that split-second decision can continue almost indefinitely, causing both harm and regret. Thus, the *Banes of the Tongue* is highly relevant for our times.

In the *Banes of the Tongue* (*Kitāb āfāt al-lisān*), book 24 of Imām al-Ghazālī's 40-volume magnum opus, *the Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Ihyā Uulūm al-dīn*), al-Ghazālī divides up the banes, or defects, of the tongue from the least to the most offensive, into twenty chapters. These include seemingly mundane acts, such as speaking about what

is not our concern, superfluous chatter, pretentious speech, to more serious defects, such as using obscene words, cursing, ridiculing others, making false promises, lying, gossip, and backbiting (even with gestures and looks).

Al-Ghazālī carefully defines each defect and analyzes both its psychological and spiritual dimensions. He offers examples of how these banes manifest themselves in behavior, highlighting their effects on others, while outlining the consequences for the soul. Finally, he offers practical suggestions for eliminating these banes, and stresses the devastating nature of their consequences, both in this life and in the next.

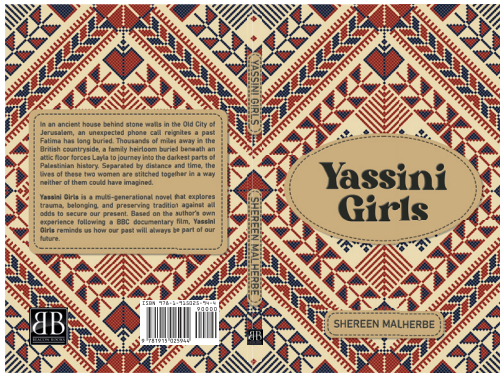
Published by Fons Vitae books



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## Yassini Girls, Shereen Malherbe

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In an ancient house behind stone walls in the Old City of Jerusalem, an unexpected phone call reignites a past Fatima has long buried. Thousands of miles away in the British countryside, a family heirloom buried beneath an attic floor forces Layla to journey into the darkest parts of Palestinian history. Separated by distance and time, the lives of these two women are stitched together in a way neither of them could have imagined.

*Yassini Girls* is a multi-generational novel that explores trauma, belonging, and preserving tradition against all odds to secure our present. Based on the author's own experiences following a BBC documentary film, *Yassini Girls* reminds us how our past will always be part of our future.

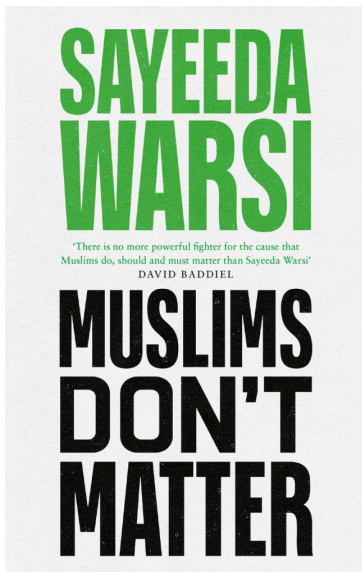
### About the author:

Shereen Malherbe is a British Palestinian author. She is recognized for her work with various media organisations, where she advocates for authentic Palestinian voices and the preservation of Palestinian heritage. She is the author of four novels and a children's series, and her short story, *The Cypress Tree*, has been published in *World Literature Today*. She has also been nominated for *The Palestine Book Awards*.

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## Muslims Don't Matter, Sayeeda Warsi

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Three grandfathers killed on the streets of England in three separate incidents by three different men. Each targeted simply for being Muslim – each attack a consequence of the insidious rise in Islamophobia in Britain.

From the far-right violence that broke out in the summer of 2024 to the hatred directed at Muslims in public life during the Gaza conflict, anti-Muslim racism is dangerously out-of-control. Fed by a network of media outlets, think tanks, commentators, and even the entertainment industry, Islamophobia not only passes the dinner table test but is also Britain's bigotry blind spot. For too many, Muslims Don't Matter.

In this incisive polemic, Britain's first Muslim Cabinet minister, Conservative peer, campaigner and podcaster Sayeeda Warsi uses her dual experience at the centre of British power and in the heart of our Muslim communities to unapologetically challenge the corrosive consensus. As Muslims terrified by the riots seriously consider whether Britain should still be their home, Warsi urges us to change course, to unite and dismantle this toxic bigotry.

Described by Oscar and Emmy awarded actor Riz Ahmed as a book that "Burns with righteous anger" and by historian and writer David Olusoga as "A vitally important book from a vitally important voice"

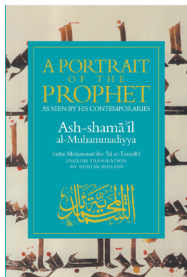
Warsi fellow podcaster and comedian David Baddiel argues that "There is no more powerful fighter for the cause that Muslims do, should and must matter than Sayeeda Warsi"

*Muslims Don't Matter* is a definitive read to understand our times.

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## *A 21st century Master Calligrapher, Mohamed Zakariya*

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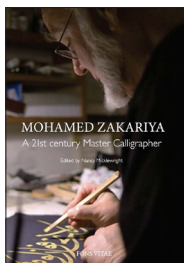


Lavishly illustrated, this collection of essays and images is the first to present a comprehensive overview of the life and work of Mohamed Zakariya, the most important American Islamic calligrapher, told through the words and eyes of the artist himself, scholars, students, and colleagues from the international world of Islamic calligraphy. The book examines links between the world of Ottoman calligraphy and today's practitioners, Mohamed Zakariya's place in a global lineage of calligraphers, and his role in shaping the next generation of artists. **We are transported into the traditional world of grinding pigments, making and marbling paper and cutting reed pens!**

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### *A Portrait of the Prophet As Seen by His Contemporaries, Muhtar Holland*

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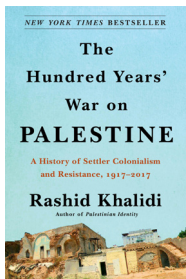


The Kitāb al-Shamā'il of at-Tirmidhī (d. 297/892) has provided scholars, spiritual seekers, and more generally all those who love the Prophet with a living portrait of the man described in the Qur'ān as exemplifying the *most noble character* (Qur'ān 68:4). The Shamā'il is a collection of 297 hadith presented under 55 chapter headings specifically dealing with the personal life of the Prophet Muhammad as seen by his contemporaries. *"The subject matter [dealt with in this science] is the distinguishing exalted spiritual states and the noble comportment of the Prophet; his clothing and his sustenance, his sleep and his waking states, and other related topics, it is the science of the "beautiful qualities" (Shamā'il)."*

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### *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine, Rashid Khalidi*

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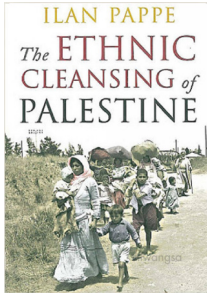


*The Hundred Years' War on Palestine* by Rashid Khalidi details the century-long war against Palestinian existence and rights by the Zionist movement. Khalidi starts with the 1917 Balfour Declaration, where Britain lay the foundation for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. The ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians through key moments like the 1948 Nakba, the 1967 Six-Day War, and the 1990s peace processes are examined through the lens of colonialism and resistance. Khalidi critiques the role of Western powers, especially the U.S., in perpetuating Palestinian dispossession, while highlighting Palestinian resistance and survival.

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## The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, Ilan Pappé

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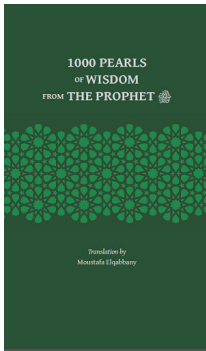


*The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* by Ilan Pappé shows that the establishment of Israel involved a systematic and deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian population. Drawing on newly declassified Israeli documents, Pappé asserts that Zionist leaders, including David Ben-Gurion, implemented *Plan Dalet*, which aimed to expel hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes to create a Jewish-majority state. The book describes how villages were destroyed, civilians were massacred, and many were forced into exile. Pappé establishes that this process constituted ethnic cleansing under international law and laid the foundation for the enduring Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His work challenges traditional Israeli narratives, offering a critical perspective on the founding of Israel and the Nakba ("catastrophe") experienced by Palestinians.

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## 1000 Pearls of Wisdom from the Prophet ﷺ

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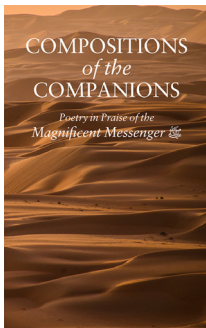
A collection of 1000 hadiths, more than 900 of which are unique, consisting of two to five words each, including Arabic, transliteration & translation. The status of speech is commensurate with the status of its speaker. Aside from the Qur'an, there is simply no better source of wisdom, law, spirituality, and impeccable Arabic than the words of the Best of Creation ﷺ.

Published by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre - <https://rissc.jo/>  
Translated by Moustafa Elqabbany.

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## Compositions of the Companions

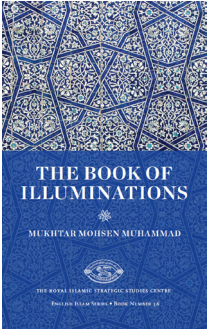
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This is a translated collection of verse that: (1) was composed by Companions, (2) in praise of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and (3) recited before him ﷺ. Historical & biographical works, as well as collections of early poetry, do not have the same authenticity standards as Hadith. One of the best collections of Revelation-era poetry, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās's *Minah al-Midah*, was used as a primary reference in the preparation of this volume.

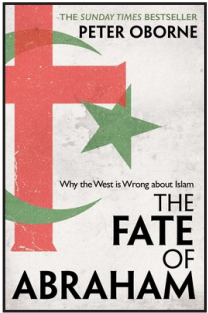
Published by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre - <https://rissc.jo/>  
Translated by Moustafa Elqabbany.

## The Book of Illuminations, Dr Mukhtar Mohsen Muhammad



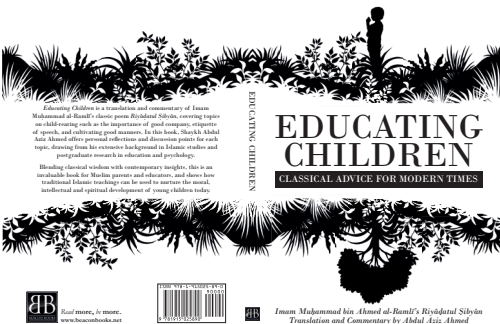
Historically, there has been a longstanding tension among conscientious Muslims, with those of scholarly persuasion on one side, and those who focused on devotion and religious experience on the other. This has been intensified by scientific materialism and modern education. In this book, Dr Mukhtar Mohsen Muhammad closes the gap of understanding by explaining the more mystical, and mystifying, aspects of Sufism, spiritual illuminations, from the perspective of Sunni orthodoxy and Sufi sheikhs. Published by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre - <https://rissc.jo/>  
Translated by Moustafa Elqabbany.

## The Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong about Islam, Peter Osborne



In *The Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong About Islam*, journalist Peter Osborne challenges Western misconceptions about Islam and Muslim communities, tracing the roots of Islamophobia in modern politics, media, and security practices. He argues that Muslims have been unfairly demonized post-9/11, while exploring how governments have used counter-terrorism measures to marginalize Muslim populations. Through research and narratives, Osborne exposes the political and social agendas fueling anti-Islam sentiment, and calls for a more informed, empathetic understanding of Islam in the West. The book encourages readers to critically rethink prevailing narratives around Islam.

## Educating Children, Abdul Aziz Ahmed



*Educating Children* is a translation and commentary of Imam Muhammad al-Ramli's classic poem *Riyābatul Tibyān*, covering topics on child-rearing such as the importance of good company, etiquette of speech, and cultivating good manners. In this book, Shaykh Abdul Aziz Ahmed offers personal reflections and discussion points for each topic, drawing from his extensive background in Islamic studies and postgraduate research in education and psychology. Blending classical wisdom with contemporary insights, this is an invaluable book for Muslim parents and educators, and shows how traditional Islamic teachings can be used to nurture the moral, intellectual and spiritual development of young children today.

# MAJOR EVENTS

# Major Events

2023

## OCTOBER 2023

- 2 At least 29 soldiers are killed during an ambush by extremists in the Tahoua Region, Niger, involving suicide car bombs and bombings. Several attackers are killed in a counter-offensive.  
Türkiye launches airstrikes against around 20 PKK targets in northern Iraq in response to the PKK's bombing of Ankara, killing an unknown number of militants.  
Al-Ittihad refuses to play a match with Sepahan due to the placement of busts of Qasem Soleimani at the side of the football pitch.
- 4 In association football, FIFA chooses Spain, Portugal, and Morocco as the host countries for the 2030 FIFA World Cup, making it the first FIFA World Cup tournament to be hosted in North Africa. The opening ceremony will take place in Montevideo, Uruguay, to mark the 100th anniversary of the competition.
- 5 At least 112 troops and civilians are killed and 120 others are injured in a drone attack on a Syrian military graduation ceremony in Homs, Syria.  
Türkiye launches a series of airstrikes targeting the Syrian Democratic Forces in northeastern Syria, killing at least two people and injuring three others.  
Four Palestinians are killed in separate incidents in the occupied West Bank, three by Israeli soldiers, and one by an Israeli settler.
- 6 Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her support of feminism and human rights.  
A 19-year-old Palestinian man is shot and killed by Israeli settlers attacking the city of Huwara, Palestine.
- 7 At least 2,445 people are killed and 9,240 others are injured when two magnitude 6.3 earthquakes strike Herat Province, Afghanistan.
- 8 An Egyptian policeman kills two Israeli tourists and an Egyptian tour guide and injures a third Israeli in Alexandria, Egypt. The gunman is later arrested.
- 12 Syria says that Israel has launched airstrikes on the international airports of Damascus and Aleppo, taking both out of service. Air defences are activated in response to the attacks and no casualties are reported.
- 13 Seven people are killed and 15 are injured after a suicide bombing at a mosque in Puli Khumri, Baghlan Province, Afghanistan.
- 19 At least 7 Palestinians are murdered in Nur Shams refugee camp after Israeli soldiers besiege the camp and bulldoze buildings.
- 26 The Rapid Support Forces capture Nyala and the rest of South Darfur, marking a strategic victory for the RSF.
- 30 Saudi Arabia declares a "state of high alert" after four Saudi troops are killed in an attack by Houthi militants in Jazan Province near the border with Yemen.

## NOVEMBER 2023

- 3 Five people are killed and 20 others are injured by a motorcycle bomb at a bus stop in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, detonated as a police bus carrying officers passed by.
- 5 At least 20 people are killed by shells that hit a marketplace in Khartoum.
- 8 At least 2,000 people are killed and 3,000 more are injured when the Rapid Support Forces massacre civilians in the Ardamata neighborhood of Geneina, West Darfur, following the Sudanese Army's withdrawal from the town.
- 14 A 15 hour raid of Tulkarm by the IOF, results in tear-gassing a hospital, uses a drone to bomb a house, prevents ambulances from reaching the injured, leaves roads and shops destroyed and 7 Palestinians murdered.
- 19 Multiple raids carried out by IOF across occupied West Bank, murdering a disabled Palestinian in Jenin and a Palestinian in Bethlehem.

- 28 The Court of Justice of the European Union rules that employees can be banned from wearing "signs of religious belief", such as Islamic hijabs, in all European Union member states.

## DECEMBER 2023

- 1 The Turkish Air Force launches airstrikes on Kurdistan Workers' Party positions in northern Iraq, reportedly destroying 16 of their targets and killing a number of separatist militants.
- 1 Eleven Dawla Islamiyah and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters militants are killed during a raid by the Philippine Army in Datu Hoffer Ampatuan, Maguindanao del Sur.
- 10-12 Egyptian Presidential elections are held from December 10-12, 2023. Incumbent President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is re-elected, securing 89.65% of the vote.
- 18 The International Organization for Migration says at least 250,000 people have fled Gezira State, Sudan since the start of hostilities in the region.
- 18 The Royal Jordanian Air Force carries out airstrikes in southern Syria against drug gangs linked to the Syrian government.
- 22 Mali recalls its ambassador in Algeria after accusing it of interference in its internal affairs by meeting rebel leaders, deepening diplomatic tensions over efforts to end the separatist and Islamist insurgencies in northern Mali.
- 29 6 Palestinians murdered by Israeli drone attack and raid in the refugee camp of Nur Shams, resulting in further destruction.
- 31 Taliban defense minister Mullah Yaqoob says that security forces have killed or arrested several militants from Tajikistan and Pakistan who are accused of multiple attacks in Afghanistan.

## 2024

### JANUARY 2024

- 1 Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates formally join the BRICS group as new members.
- 1 Bangladeshi economist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus and three people that worked at his company Grameen Telecom are sentenced to six months in prison for violating Bangladesh's labor laws.
- 3 Eighty nine people are killed and 284 others are injured in a double bombing in Kerman, Iran, during a ceremony marking the fourth anniversary of the assassination of Qasem Soleimani.
- 7 A fire in the Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh destroys hundreds of shelters and facilities and displaces nearly 7,000 Rohingya refugees.
- 7 Palestinians, all cousins, are murdered by an Israeli drone strike in Jenin.
- 17 IOF attacks Tulkarm refugee camp with drone strikes in raids on the city, killing 9 Palestinians.

### FEBRUARY 2024

- 7 Two bombings outside electoral offices in Balochistan, Pakistan, ahead of the general election, kill at least 30 people and injure dozens more. The Islamic State claims responsibility for both attacks.
- 8 National elections are held in Pakistan following significant political unrest, including the removal of former Prime Minister Imran Khan through a no-confidence motion and his subsequent arrest. The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and the Pakistan People's Party formed a coalition government after the elections, with Shehbaz Sharif re-elected as Prime Minister
- 10 Four Emirati soldiers and a Bahraini military officer are killed, while ten other people are injured, when a soldier opens fire at a military base in Mogadishu, Somalia, before being killed in the ensuing shootout. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility.
- 14 Presidential elections are held in Indonesia with defence minister and former general Prabowo Subianto contesting the elections against the former governor of Jakarta, Anies Baswedan and the former governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo; incumbent president Joko Widodo is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term in office.

A raid is carried out by IOF in Beit Ummar, wounding several Palestinians.

- 21 IOF carries out an overnight raid in Jenin, killing 3 Palestinians and detaining 14, whom the IOF refers to as 'suspects'.

## MARCH 2024

- 8 Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan says that the upcoming local elections in Türkiye will be his last election as president as he will not run in the upcoming 2028 presidential election.
- 19 Armenia begins a process of border demarcation with Azerbaijan in the Tavush Province, amid Azerbaijani demands that Armenia withdraw its forces from the disputed villages of Bağanis Ayrum, Aşağı Əskipara, Xeyrimli, and Qızılhacılı. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan says that failure to compromise could result in war "by the end of the week".
- 21 A suicide bomber kills 21 people and injures 50+ at a New Kabul Bank in Kandahar, Afghanistan. ISIS-K claims responsibility.
- 22 At least 23 Nigerian soldiers are killed, 17 are injured, and 34 others are missing after an ambush in Teguey [de], Tillabéri Region, Niger, by unknown jihadists. The Nigerian junta states that 30 jihadists were also killed.
- 24 Presidential elections held in Senegal with 44-year-old Bassirou Diomaye Faye defeating outgoing President Macky Sall – who had been in power for 12 years.

## APRIL 2024

- 1 Israel conducts an airstrike on the Iranian Consulate in Damascus. Sixteen people are killed, including Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a high-ranking commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Seven other IRGC officers were also killed. Iran retaliates with missile and drone strikes on Israel on April 13th. Six days later, Israel launches a series of airstrikes targeting an air defense facility in Iran.
- 6 Around 2,500 houses are flooded and at least four people are killed after the Orsk dam in Orenburg, Russia, bursts due to maintenance errors following heavy rainfall. Around 47,000 people in Russia and Kazakhstan are evacuated. Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev calls it one of the "worst natural disasters in the past 80 years"
- 8 Khartoum reports 384 cases of dengue fever which are attributed to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Sudan.
- 13 Iran retaliates for Israeli April 1st air strike with missile and drone strikes on Israel. Most are intercepted.
- 17 The United Arab Emirates records its heaviest rainfall in 75 years, with significant flooding reported in Dubai. At least 20 people are killed by flooding in Oman and Ras Al Khaimah.
- 18 14 Palestinians are killed by Israel in an assault lasting over 2 days in the Nur Shams refugee camp.

## MAY 2024

- 10 Over 200 people are killed by floods in Baghlan Province, Afghanistan.
- 11 The death toll from the ongoing flooding in northern Afghanistan increases to 300, with more than 1,000 houses destroyed.
- 19 Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian are killed when a Bell 212 helicopter crashes in Varzaqan, East Azerbaijan province, Iran.
- 19 Seven villages on the island of Halmahera, Indonesia, are forced to evacuate after the Mount Ibu volcano erupts.
- 26 The Houthis, with assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross, free more than 100 detainees in Sana'a, Yemen, in a "unilateral humanitarian initiative" to pardon prisoners and return them to their families.
- 30 IOF ignites a horrific fire in the main vegetable market in Ramallah, destroying Palestinian shops.
- US, UK militaries launch 13 attacks on Yemen killing 2 people, wounding 10 others and destroying 8 drones.

## JUNE 2024

- 1 The Sudanese Armed Forces bomb a hospital in Kutum, Sudan, injuring dozens of people.



- 6 Protests in Bangladesh, initially focused on restructuring discriminatory traditional and quota-based systems for government job recruitment, expand against what many perceive as an authoritarian government when hundreds of protestors and civilians, most of whom are students, are killed.
- 9 India's Narendra Modi is sworn in for a third term as Prime Minister.
- 14 Kyrgyzstan arrests 15 alleged Islamic State – Khorasan Province supporters in Bishkek.
- 18 More than 577 pilgrims from Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, and Indonesia are confirmed to have died of heat-related illnesses during the Hajj in Saudi Arabia.
- 27 An Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report states that over 755,000 people in Sudan face the most severe IPC level of extreme hunger as well as the worst levels of acute food insecurity ever recorded in the country.

## JULY 2024

- 2 Israeli air strikes murders 4 Palestinians in Nur Shams main square.
- 3 At least sixteen people are killed and more than 300,000 others are displaced by floods and landslides in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, India.
- 7 Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan states his intention to invite Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for talks in Türkiye with the intention of restoring relations between the two countries.
- 13 At least eight people are killed and 21 others are injured in a shootout between security forces and inmates at a prison in Mogadishu, Somalia, in an attempted prison break. The prisoners who attempt to escape are allegedly al-Shabaab members.
- 26 Olympics begin in Paris, with controversial opening ceremony.
- 30 Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist parliamentarian, wins the presidential election in Iran against five conservative and hardline candidates, following President Ebrahim Raisi's death in a helicopter crash.

## AUGUST 2024

- 1 The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification announces a famine in Darfur, Sudan, as reported by the Global Famine Review Committee.  
 During nationwide protests in Nigeria, which escalate into violence over a cost-of-living crisis blamed on President Bola Tinubu's recent reforms, fourteen protesters are killed, four are injured, and at least 31 people, including a journalist, are arrested.  
 Political leader of Hamas Ismail Haniyeh is assassinated by the Israeli military in Iran, and a senior Hezbollah commander is killed in Lebanon.
- 2 In Sunderland, England, rioting erupts as hundreds of far-right demonstrators try to march on a mosque and confront riot police in the city center. The unrest leads to a police station being set on fire by the rioters.
- 2 Türkiye restricts access to Instagram following comments from Turkish communications director Fahrettin Altun, who criticized Meta Platforms for removing Instagram posts that offered condolences or expressed sorrow over the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh.
- 3 Far-right demonstrators target mosques and Muslims in various UK cities causing public damage and clashing with police.
- 3 Algerian female boxer Imane Khelif reaches Olympic semi-finals despite controversy over her gender.
- 3 The United States embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, urges its citizens to leave the country amid increasing tensions in the Middle East.
- 4 Over 150 individuals are arrested after violent far-right riots targeting mosques and migrant facilities across the United Kingdom.
- 4 In violent confrontations between anti-government protesters and police across Bangladesh, at least 91 people are killed as demonstrators demand the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.
- 5 The Houthis claim an attack on the Liberia-flagged container ship MV Groton in the Gulf of Aden.
- 5 Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigns and flees the country after deadly student-led protests. She is flown to India on a military helicopter as protestors storm her official residence. This follows the killing of almost 300 people during weeks-long protests.

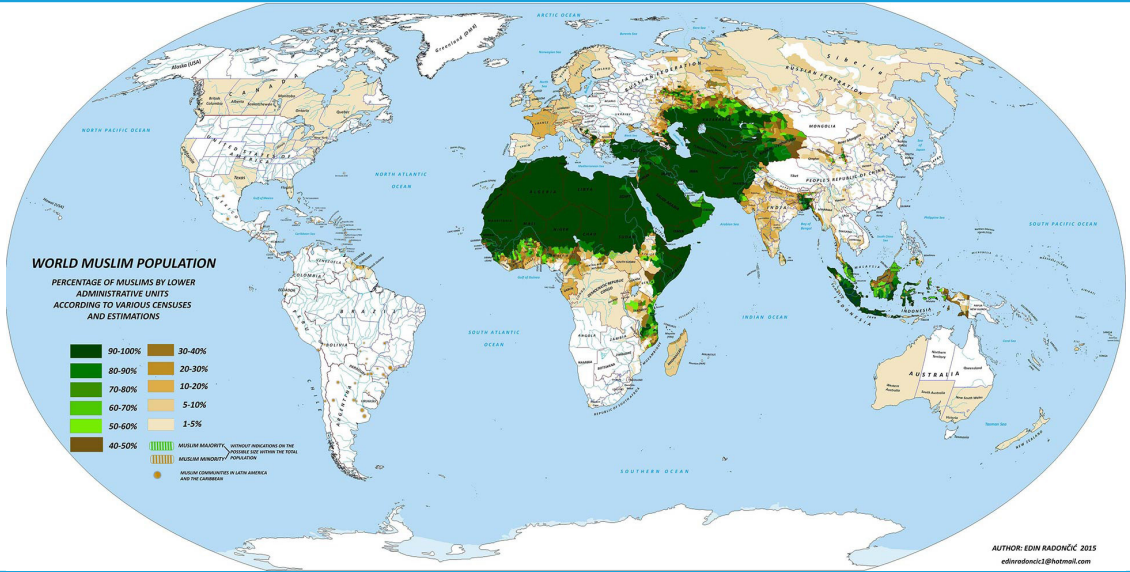
- 6 3 Palestinians are murdered by the IOF, during a house raid in Nablus.
- 18 A report by the UN's Integrated Food Security Phase Classification in Yemen says the most critical cases of famine and malnutrition are emergnig along the war-torn country's Red Sea coast. Malnutrition rates are significantly worsened due to the spread of diseases, a lack of drinking water and a shortage of nutritious foods.
- 26 IOF launches a raid on a town north of Ramallah.
- 28 Israel launches the largest attack on the West Bank in decades, focused on Tulkarem, Jenin and Tubas, killing at least 10 Palestinians.
- 31 Mosque in Jenin destroyed and converted into army barracks.

## SEPTEMBER 2024

- 1 UK government announces suspension of 30 out of 350 arms export licenses to Israel.
- 2 Türkiye signs decades-long liquid gas deal with British Shell.  
Artist Macklemore cancels show in Dubai over the UAE's ties to the war in Sudan.
- 3 Israeli settlers, backed by the military, close the historic Ibrahimi Mosque to Palestinians in Hebron in the Occupied West Bank.  
Reports of Sudan facing "a starvation crisis of historic proportions" amid civil war. The Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council and Mercy Corps state that the international community is failing to address the issue.
- 4 Israeli-American Zionist woman is arrested for attempting to drown a 3 year old Palestinian-American girl in Texas.  
Columbia University arrests Gaza protestors outside its gates.  
Netanyahu unveils a plan for Israel's total occupation of Palestine, without West Bank on the map, and violates the 40 year old peace treaty with Egypt showing the Philadelphia Corridor as a military zone.  
1 civilian is murdered and 5 others are wounded in Southern Lebanon after Israeli strikes.  
Sisi visits Türkiye for the first time in 12 years.  
Spain's Prime Minister announces the first Spain-Palestine summit, adding that they will continue to put pressure on Netanyahu at the ICC.
- 10 The UK, US, France and Germany impose fresh sanctions on Iran after Iran supplies Russia with ballistic missiles for use in Ukraine
- 11 The United Nations Security Council adopts a draft resolution to extend the sanctions on Sudan until September 2025. Targeted sanctions include asset freezes, travel bans and an arms embargo. The Sudanese representative says that there is "irrefutable evidence" that the war is due to the UAE's support for military groups that are committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur, which the UAE denies and says are "baseless allegations"
- 13 Israeli special forces raid a "Hezbollah missile production facility" in Syria. Air strikes are used to neutralise Syria's defences and prevent reinforcements from reaching the site. 18 people are killed and more injured in the raid near Masyaf.
- 14 Fighting breaks out in Sudan's el-Fasher, North Darfur following an attack by the Rapid Support Forces.
- 15 A missile fired at central Israel from Yemen hits an unpopulated area, causing no injuries. The Houthis issue a statement saying that the attack caused "2 million Zionists to run to shelters for the first time in the enemy's history".
- 17 In one of the largest terrorist attacks in recent history, Israel had planted explosives inside pagers and walkie-talkies in Lebanon and detonated at the same time killing scores of people, including children, and injuring nearly 3,000, with many of the injured suffering life-altering injuries (losing eyes, fingers etc)
- 27 Israel assassinates Hezbollah's leader, Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, by dropping 85 tonnes of Bunker-Buster bombs on the Southern Dahiyeh area of Beirut where Nasrallah was meeting with Hizbollah members.
- 29 Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon leave over a thousand dead and displace a million people.
- 30 Israel invades Lebanon.

APPENDIX I  
Population Statistics

# World Muslim Population



Country/Region	Population	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Afghanistan	42,647,492	99.7	42,519,550
Albania	2,791,765	50.7	1,415,425
Algeria	46,814,308	99	46,346,165
American Samoa	46,765	0.1	47
Andorra	81,938	2.6	2,130
Angola	37,885,849	0.3	113,658
Anguilla	14,598	0.6	88
Antigua and Barbuda	93,772	0.3	281
Argentina	45,696,159	0.9	411,265
Armenia	2,973,840	0.03	892
Aruba	108,066	0.4	432
Australia	26,713,205	3.2	854,823
Austria	9,120,813	8.3	757,027
Azerbaijan	10,336,577	97.3	10,057,489
Bahamas	401,283	0.1	401
Bahrain	1,607,049	73.7	1,184,395
Bangladesh	173,562,364	91	157,941,751
Barbados	282,467	1.5	4,237

Country/Region	Population	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Belarus	9,056,696	0.5	45,283
Belgium	11,570,762	7.6	879,378
Belize	417,072	0.2	834
Benin	14,462,724	27.7	4,006,175
Bermuda	64,069	1	641
Bhutan	791,524	0.2	1,583
Bolivia	12,413,315	0.1	12,413
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,164,253	50.7	1,604,276
Botswana	2,521,139	0.4	10,085
Brazil	211,998,573	0.05	105,999
British Virgin Islands	39,471	1.2	474
Brunei	462,721	82.1	379,894
Bulgaria	6,757,689	13.4	905,530
Burkina Faso	23,548,781	63.8	15,024,122
Burundi	14,047,786	10	1,404,779
Cambodia	17,638,801	2	352,776
Cameroon	29,123,744	30	8,737,123
Canada	39,742,430	4.9	1,947,379
Cape Verde	524,877	2	10,498
Cayman Islands	74,457	0.2	149
Central African Republic	5,330,690	15	799,604
Chad	20,299,123	58	11,773,491
Chile	19,764,771	0.1	19,765
China	1,419,321,278	0.5	7,096,606
Colombia	52,886,363	0.2	105,773
Comoros	866,628	98.3	851,895
Congo	6,332,961	2	126,659
Cook Islands	13,729	0.1	14
Costa Rica	5,129,910	0.1	5,130
Croatia	3,875,325	1.5	58,130
Cuba	10,979,783	0.1	10,980
Cyprus	1,100,000	25.3	278,300
Czech Republic	10,735,859	0.2	21,472
Denmark	5,977,412	5.4	322,780
Djibouti	1,168,722	97	1,133,660
Dominica	66,205	0.2	132
Dominican Republic	11,427,557	0.1	11,428
DR Congo	109,276,265	10	10,927,627
Ecuador	18,135,478	0.1	18,135
Egypt	116,538,258	90	104,884,432
El Salvador	6,338,193	0.28	17,747

Country/Region	Population	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Equatorial Guinea	1,892,516	10	189,252
Eritrea	3,535,603	44	1,555,665
Estonia	1,360,546	0.1	1,361
Eswatini	1,242,822	2	24,856
Ethiopia	132,059,767	31.3	41,334,707
Falkland Islands	3,470	0.1	3
Faroe Islands	55,400	0.1	55
Fiji	928,784	6.3	58,513
Finland	5,617,310	1.8	101,112
France	66,548,530	10	6,654,853
French Guiana	308,522	0.9	2,777
French Polynesia	281,807	0.1	282
Gabon	2,538,952	10	253,895
Gambia	2,759,988	96.4	2,660,628
Georgia	3,807,670	10.7	407,421
Germany	84,552,242	5.5	4,650,373
Ghana	34,427,414	19.9	6,851,055
Gibraltar	39,329	4	1,573
Greece	10,047,817	2.5	251,195
Greenland	55,840	0.1	56
Grenada	117,207	0.3	352
Guadeloupe	375,106	0.4	1,500
Guam	167,777	0.1	168
Guatemala	18,406,359	0.1	18,406
Guinea	14,754,785	89.1	13,146,513
Guinea-Bissau	2,201,352	46.1	1,014,823
Guyana	831,087	7.3	60,669
Haiti	11,772,557	0.1	11,773
Honduras	10,825,703	0.3	32,477
Hong Kong	7,414,909	4.1	304,011
Hungary	10,156,239	0.6	60,937
Iceland	393,396	0.2	787
India	1,450,935,791	14.6	211,836,625
Indonesia	283,487,931	87	246,634,500
Iran	91,567,738	99.4	91,018,332
Iraq	46,042,015	98	45,121,175
Ireland	5,255,017	1.4	73,570
Isle of Man	84,160	0.2	168
Israel	9,387,021	18	1,689,664
Italy	59,342,867	4.8	2,848,458
Ivory Coast	31,934,230	42.9	13,699,785

Country/Region	Population	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Jamaica	2,839,175	0.2	5,678
Japan	123,753,041	0.1	123,753
Jordan	11,552,876	97.2	11,229,395
Kazakhstan	20,592,571	70.2	14,455,985
Kenya	56,432,944	11.2	6,320,490
Kiribati	134,518	0.1	135
Kosovo	1,977,093	93	1,838,696
Kuwait	4,934,507	74.6	3,681,142
Kyrgyzstan	7,186,009	90	6,467,408
Laos	7,769,819	0.1	7,770
Latvia	1,871,871	0.2	3,744
Lebanon	5,805,962	67.8	3,936,442
Lesotho	2,337,423	0.1	2,337
Liberia	5,612,817	20	1,122,563
Libya	7,381,023	97	7,159,592
Liechtenstein	39,870	5.4	2,153
Lithuania	2,859,110	0.1	2,859
Luxembourg	673,036	2.3	15,480
Macau	720,262	0.1	720
Madagascar	31,964,956	10	3,196,496
Malawi	21,655,286	20	4,331,057
Malaysia	35,557,673	63.5	22,579,122
Maldives	527,799	100	527,799
Mali	24,478,595	95	23,254,665
Malta	539,607	2.6	14,030
Marshall Islands	375,48	0.1	38
Martinique	343,195	0.2	686
Mauritania	5,169,395	99.9	5,164,226
Mauritius	1,271,169	17.3	219,912
Mayotte	326,505	97	316,710
Mexico	130,861,007	0.01	13,086
Micronesia	526,923	0.1	527
Moldova	3,034,961	0.4	12,140
Monaco	38,631	0.8	309
Mongolia	3,475,540	5	173,777
Montenegro	638,479	19.1	121,949
Montserrat	4,389	0.1	4
Morocco	38,081,173	99	37,700,361
Mozambique	34,631,766	18.9	6,545,404
Myanmar	54,500,091	4.3	2,343,504
Namibia	3,030,131	0.4	12,121

Country/Region	Population	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Nauru	11,947	0.1	12
Nepal	29,651,054	4.2	1,245,344
Netherlands	18,228,742	5	911,437
New Caledonia	292,639	2.8	8,194
New Zealand	5,213,944	0.9	46,925
Nicaragua	6,916,140	0.1	6,916
Niger	27,032,412	98.3	26,572,861
Nigeria	232,679,478	49	114,012,944
Niue	1,819	0.1	2
North Korea	26,498,823	0.1	26,499
North Macedonia	1,823,009	33.3	607,062
Northern Mariana Islands	44,278	0.7	310
Norway	5,576,660	3.2	178,453
Oman	5,281,538	86	4,542,123
Pakistan	251,269,164	96.5	242,474,743
Palau	17,695	3.8	672
Palestine	5,495,443	97.5	5,358,057
Panama	4,515,577	0.7	31,609
Papua New Guinea	10,576,502	0.1	10,577
Paraguay	6,929,153	0.1	6,929
Peru	34,217,848	0.1	34,218
Philippines	115,843,670	11	12,742,804
Poland	38,539,201	0.02	7,708
Portugal	10,425,292	0.4	41,701
Puerto Rico	3,242,204	0.1	3,242
Qatar	3,048,423	77.5	2,362,528
Réunion	878,591	4.2	36,901
Romania	19,015,088	1	190,151
Russia	144,820,423	12	17,378,451
Rwanda	14,256,567	4.8	684,315
Saint Helena	5,237	0.1	5
Saint Kitts & Nevis	46,843	0.3	141
Saint Lucia	179,744	0.1	180
Saint Pierre & Miquelon	5,628	0.2	11
Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	100,616	1.7	1,710
Samoa	218,019	0.1	218
San Marino	33,642	0.1	34
São Tomé and Príncipe	235,536	3	7,066
Saudi Arabia	33,962,757	96.2	32,672,172
Senegal	18,501,984	97.2	17,983,928
Serbia	6,736,216	2.1	141,461



Country/Region	Population	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Seychelles	130,418	2.1	2,739
Sierra Leone	8,642,022	78.6	6,792,629
Singapore	5,832,387	15.6	909,852
Slovakia	5,506,760	0.2	11,014
Slovenia	2,118,697	3.6	76,273
Solomon Islands	819,198	0.1	819
Somalia	19,009,151	99.8	18,971,133
South Africa	64,007,187	1.9	1,216,137
South Korea	51,717,590	0.1	51,718
South Sudan	11,943,408	20	2,388,682
Spain	47,910,526	2.6	1,245,674
Sri Lanka	23,103,565	9.7	2,241,046
Sudan	50,448,963	96	48,431,004
Suriname	634,431	14.3	90,724
Sweden	10,612,086	7.1	753,458
Switzerland	8,921,981	5.2	463,943
Syria	24,672,760	87	21,465,301
Taiwan	23,213,962	0.3	69,642
Tajikistan	10,590,927	97.9	10,368,518
Tanzania	67,438,106	35.2	23,738,213
Thailand	71,668,011	5.4	3,870,073
Timor-Leste	1,400,638	0.2	2,801
Togo	9,515,236	20	1,903,047
Tokelau	2,506	< 0.1	< 3
Tonga	104,175	< 0.1	< 104
Trinidad and Tobago	1,356,633	5.8	78,685
Tunisia	12,277,109	97.8	12,007,013
Türkiye	87,473,805	98	85,724,329
Turkmenistan	7,494,498	93.7	7,022,345
Turks and Caicos Islands	46,431	< 0.1	< 46
Tuvalu	9,646	0.1	10
U.S. Virgin Islands	84,905	0.1	85
Uganda	50,015,092	14	7,002,113
Ukraine	37,860,221	1.2	454,323
United Arab Emirates	11,027,129	72.2	7,961,587
United Kingdom	69,138,192	5.8	4,010,015
United States	345,426,571	1.1	3,799,692
Uruguay	3,386,588	< 0.1	< 3387
Uzbekistan	36,361,859	88.7	32,252,969
Vanuatu	327,777	< 0.1	< 328
Vatican City	764	0	0

Country/Region	Population	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Venezuela	28,405,543	0.4	113,622
Vietnam	100,987,686	0.1	100,988
Wallis & Futuna	11,277	< 0.1	< 11
Western Sahara	590,506	99.4	586,963
Yemen	40,583,164	97.2	39,446,835
Zambia	21,314,956	1	213,150
Zimbabwe	16,634,373	0.7	116,441
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,160,998,988</b>	<b>25.94%</b>	<b>2,117,268,016</b>

Muslim population statistics taken from Wikipedia. org. World populations taken from www. worldometers. info.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ

مَنْ بَدَّلَ دِينَهُ بَدَّلَ اللَّهُ دِينَهُ لِيَكُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمِنْ لِيٍّ عَلَىٰ مُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ  
 عَلَيْهِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ مِنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنْ نَسَلِكٍ يُقَالُ بَدَّلَ اللَّهُ  
 لِيٍّ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَمَنْ جَمَعَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتِ اللَّهِ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَيَتَّبِعُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ  
 السَّكِينَةَ وَعِشْتُهُمْ رُحْمًا يُغْتَمَبُ الْوَجْهُ عَلَيْهِمْ كَيَوْمَ تَكُونُ السَّكِينَةُ

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, that the Prophet ﷺ said:

Whoever removes a worldly grief from a believer, Allah will remove from him one of the griefs of the Day of Resurrection. And whoever alleviates the need of a needy person, Allah will alleviate his needs in this world and the Hereafter. Whoever shields [or hides the misdeeds of] a Muslim, Allah will shield him in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah will aid His slave so long as he aids his brother. And whoever follows a path to seek knowledge therein, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. No people gather together in one of the Houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, except that sakenah (tranquility) descends upon them, and mercy envelops them, and the angels surround them, and Allah mentions them amongst those who are with Him. And whoever is slowed down by his actions, will not be hastened forward by his lineage.

Related by Muslim

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APPENDIX II  
Social Media Statistics

## Top Social Media Statistics of *The Muslim 500*

This is a list showing the most popular social media sites (Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube) run by Muslims.  
(Rounded values in millions)

Rank	Name	Age	Country	Occupations
1	Khaby Lame	24	Italy	Media
2	Salman Khan	59	India	Actor
3	Shahrukh Khan	58	India	Actor
4	Paul Pogba	31	France	Sports
5	Mohamed Salah	32	Egypt	Footballer
6	Mesut Özil	35	Germany	Footballer
7	Mustafa Hosny	46	Egypt	Preacher
8	AKON	50	USA	Musician
9	DJ Khaled	48	USA	Musician
10	Gigi Hadid	29	USA	Model
11	Tamer Hosny	47	Egypt	Musician
12	Huda Kattan	41	USA	Beauty blogger
13	Shaquille O' Neal	52	USA	Sports
14	Bella Hadid	27	United States	Model
15	Amr Diab	62	Egypt	Musician
16	A.R. Rahman	57	India	Musician
17	Ahmad Al Shugairi	51	Saudi Arabia	Show Host
18	Sheikh Mishary bin Rashid Alafasy	49	Kuwait	Qur'an Reciter
19	Ice Cube	54	USA	Rapper
20	Amr Khaled	57	Egypt	Preacher
21	Imran Khan	72	Pakistan	Politician
22	Khabib Nurmagomedov	36	Russia	Sports
23	Zinedine Zidane	52	France	Sports
24	Maher Zain	43	Sweden	Musician
25	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	70	Türkiye	Politician
26	Muhammad Alarefe	54	Saudi Arabia	Scholar
27	Aidh Al-Qarni	65	Saudi Arabia	Scholar
28	HM Queen Rania Al-Abdullah	54	Jordan	Royalty
29	Hannah Elzahed	30	Egypt	Actress
30	Ahmed Abou Hashima	49	Egypt	Businessman
31	Ahmed Helmy	55	Egypt	Actor
32	Haifa Wehbe	52	Lebanon	Musician
33	Ahlam Alshamsi	56	UAE	Musician
34	Atif Aslam	41	Pakistan	Musician
35	Mufti Menk	49	Zimbabwe	Preacher
36	Yasmin Sabri	36	Egypt	Artist

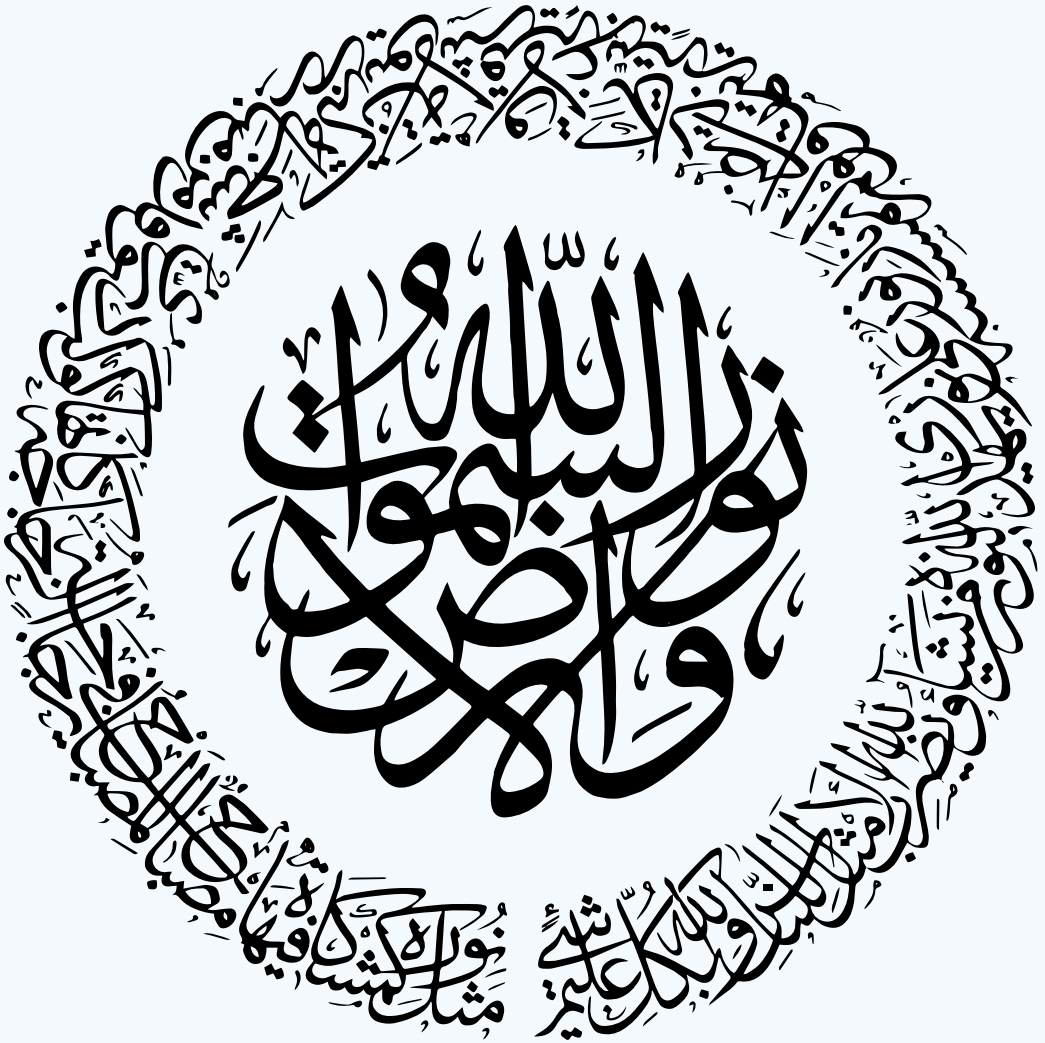
Facebook	X	Instagram	TikTok	YouTube	Total
3m	0m	81m	163m	11m	258m
51m	46m	69m	0m	3m	169m
43m	44m	47m	0m	0m	135m
24m	10m	62m	3m	0m	99m
16m	19m	63m	0m	0m	98m
38m	26m	28m	0m	0m	93m
37m	14m	23m	6m	7m	87m
53m	6m	9m	2m	14m	84m
21m	6m	39m	5m	14m	84m
5m	0m	77m	1m	0m	84m
24m	4m	40m	5m	9m	81m
8m	6m	54m	10m	0m	78m
9m	16m	35m	13m	0m	74m
1m	0m	61m	9m	0m	71m
22m	12m	30m	0m	6m	70m
24m	24m	8m	0m	4m	60m
21m	18m	17m	0m	3m	60m
23m	15m	9m	0m	10m	58m
17m	6m	31m	0m	4m	57m
32m	11m	7m	0m	2m	52m
15m	21m	10m	0m	2m	48m
6m	2m	37m	0m	1m	46m
0m	0m	44m	0m	0m	44m
29m	2m	7m	0m	6m	44m
10m	22m	12m	0m	0m	43m
22m	19m	0m	0m	0m	41m
16m	20m	4m	0m	0m	40m
18m	10m	10m	0m	0m	39m
8m	2m	21m	8m	0m	39m
6m	0m	30m	2m	0m	38m
18m	10m	0m	7m	1m	36m
14m	7m	13m	0m	2m	36m
10m	9m	15m	0m	2m	36m
22m	1m	8m	0m	3m	35m
6m	11m	10m	0m	6m	32m
1m	6m	22m	0m	0m	29m

# Top Social Media Statistics of the General Public

This is a list showing the most popular social media sites (Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube).  
(Rounded values in millions)

	Name	Age	Country	Occupations
1	Cristiano Ronaldo	40	Portugal	Footballer
2	Selena Gomez	32	USA	Musician
3	Lionel Messi (Leo Messi)	37	Argentina	Footballer
4	Dwayne Johnson (The Rock)	52	USA	Wrestler
5	Kylie Jenner	27	USA	Media
6	Justin Bieber	30	Canada	Musician
7	Taylor Swift	35	USA	Musician
8	Kim Kardashian	44	USA	Reality Star
9	Ariana Grande	31	USA	Actress
10	Neymar	32	Brazil	Footballer
11	Katy Perry	41	USA	Musician
12	Beyonce	43	USA	Musician
13	Virat Kohli	36	India	Cricketer
14	Rihanna	35	Barbados	Musician
15	Jennifer Lopez	55	USA	Musician
16	Nicki Minaj	42	USA	Musician
17	Khloé Kardashian	40	USA	Media
18	Kendall Jenner	28	USA	Model and Media
19	Miley Cyrus	32	USA	Musician
20	Shakira	47	Colombia	Musician
21	Kevin Hart	45	USA	Comedian
22	Cardi B	31	USA	Musician
23	Will Smith	56	USA	Actor
24	Demi Lovato	32	USA	Actress - Musician
25	Narendra Modi	74	India	Politician
26	LeBron James	39	USA	Sports
27	Drake	37	Canada	Musician
28	Chris Brown	35	USA	Musician
29	Billie Eilish	22	USA	Musician
30	Barack Obama	63	USA	Politician
31	Vin Diesel	56	USA	Actor
32	Lady Gaga	38	USA	Musician
33	Snoop Dogg	52	USA	Musician
34	Justin Timberlake	43	USA	Musician
35	Priyanka Chopra	42	India	Actress
36	Ronaldinho Gaucho	44	Brazil	Footballer

Facebook	X	Instagram	TikTok	YouTube	TOTAL
170m	113m	640m	0m	63m	985m
88m	66m	424m	58m	35m	671m
116m	0m	504m	0m	4m	624m
64m	17m	396m	75m	7m	558m
32m	40m	397m	56m	12m	537m
91m	110m	294m	28m	74m	597m
80m	95m	284m	33m	60m	552m
35m	75m	361m	10m	2m	483m
42m	0m	377m	35m	55m	509m
91m	64m	225m	33m	5m	417m
71m	106m	206m	8m	45m	436m
56m	15m	316m	6m	27m	421m
51m	65m	271m	0m	0m	387m
104m	108m	151m	15m	44m	422m
61m	44m	251m	18m	17m	391m
48m	28m	292m	6m	27m	401m
24m	30m	307m	7m	1m	369m
21m	32m	292m	6m	0m	351m
48m	46m	215m	19m	19m	347m
123m	53m	90m	39m	47m	352m
35m	37m	179m	35m	0m	285m
33m	35m	166m	27m	20m	280m
115m	0m	70m	75m	10m	270m
33m	52m	155m	6m	18m	264m
49m	102m	91m	0m	26m	268m
27m	53m	160m	0m	0m	240m
52m	39m	145m	4m	30m	270m
50m	31m	145m	9m	27m	263m
32m	8m	120m	67m	53m	279m
55m	132m	36m	0m	1m	224m
105m	0m	103m	3m	0m	211m
56m	83m	57m	10m	25m	231m
45m	21m	89m	28m	10m	193m
41m	61m	73m	4m	11m	188m
55m	27m	92m	0m	0m	174m
56m	22m	77m	20m	0m	174m



Al-Nur 24, 35

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His Light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star kindled from a Blessed Tree, an olive neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow forth [of itself], though no fire touched it. Light upon light. God guides to His Light whom He will. And God strikes similitudes for men; and God is Knower of all things.



# GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS

**Ahl Al-Bayt (or Aal Al-Bayt):** Literally, “The People of the House”; refers to the family of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

**Ahl Al-Sunnah wa Al-Jama’ah:** Literally, “The People of the Prophetic Practice and Community”; refers to Sunni Muslims as a community.

**Al-Fatihah:** Literally, “The Opening” or “The Beginning”. This is the title of the first chapter of the Qur’an that is recited as a fundamental part of Muslims’ daily prayers.

**Aqidah:** Creed. This refers to theological and doctrinal beliefs of Muslims.

**Ash’ari:** Theological school of Sunni orthodoxy named after the followers of the 9th-century scholar Abu Al-Hasan Al-Ash’ari (874–936 CE).

**Awqaf:** Plural of *waqf* (see below).

**Adhan/Azaan:** The call to prayer.

**Bid’ah:** Literally, “innovation”; this refers to the act of introducing superfluous, or non-prescribed traditions into Islamic practice. It is used in common speech as a denunciation toward those not acting in accordance with the prescriptions of Islam.

**Caliph:** From the Arabic word *khalifah* (“successor”), the head of the entire community of Muslims, either current or in the past. Is also used by certain sects and Sufi *tariqahs* to refer to their own leader or his successor.

**Chador:** A loose cloth traditionally worn by Muslim women usually covering the body from head to foot.

**Da’i/Da’ee:** Islamic missionary.

**Dawah:** Islamic missionary work; literally “inviting” to Islam” or to acts of Islamic virtue.

**Emir (or Amir):** A title accorded to a leader, prince, or commander-in-chief.

**Fatwah:** A religious ruling issued by a mufti (a top legal scholar) regarding particulars of an issue in Islamic law based on circumstances surrounding the question, such as its time, place, people, and

other details. Unlike the ruling of a judge (*qadi*), it is not normally binding.

**Fiqh:** Islamic jurisprudence. A branch of the shariah that deals with rulings related to human actions, as opposed to faith or spirituality.

**Fiqh Al-Aqaliyyat:** Islamic rulings for Muslims living as minorities in predominantly non-Muslim lands.

**Ghazal:** Love poetry used for describing the beauty of the loved one as well as the emotions the poet has towards the beloved.

**Hadith:** Literally, “saying”. These are a collection of sayings—or direct observations—of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. There are numerous *ahadeeth* (plural of “hadith”), and the practice of verifying them is a particular Islamic scholarly practice that has been carried out since the life of the Prophet ﷺ.

**Hafiz (or Hafizah) Al-Qur’an:** A person who has committed the entire Qur’an to memory and can recite the Qur’an at will. This is important in Islam because the Qur’an was originally revealed as an oral text and, until today, the authenticity of Qur’anic transmission is based primarily on oral, then written, transmission.

**Hajj:** The pilgrimage to Makkah, one of the five pillars of Islam. It is a once-in-a-lifetime obligation upon every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it. The pilgrimage occurs from the 8th-12th days of Dhu Al-Hijjah, the 12th month of the Islamic calendar.

**Halal:** Permissible. A term referring to actions or objects that are permissible according to Islamic law. Commonly refers to food items that are permissible for Muslims to eat.

**Haram:** In the context of a sacred precinct, like Makkah, Medinah, or Al-Aqsa, this term means “inviolable”. In most contexts, this term means “forbidden”, and relates to actions that are impermissible according to Islamic law.

**Hijab:** Normally refers to the headscarf worn by Muslim women but refers to both the head cover and attire worn by Muslim women to preserve their

modesty. It is obligatory by the consensus of all classical Islamic schools of thought. In some contexts, it can mean segregation, as in between genders.

**Hijaz:** The region along the west coast of the Arabian Peninsula that separates Najd in the east from Tuhamah in the west.

**Ibadi:** The Ibadi school has origins in and is linked to the Kharijites, but the modern-day community is distinct from the 7th-century Islamic sect. It was founded after the death of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and is currently practiced by the majority of Oman's Muslim population. It is also found across parts of Africa.

**Ihsan:** Virtue through constant regard to, and awareness of, God.

**Ijaza:** Certification given to a student for acquiring knowledge of a particular discipline under the authorization of a higher authority, usually by face-to-face interactions, thereby enabling the student to transmit the knowledge gained from the teacher. This is performed under the supervision of a certified sheikh whose chain of narrations often leads to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

**Ijtihad:** Independent reasoning, or individual interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

**Imam:** (1) In both Sunni and Shia Islam an imam is the leader of congregational prayers who may also deliver the sermon of the Friday (Jumu'ah) prayers; more generally, a person of authority within the community. (2) In Shia Islam this exclusively refers to a series of people, descended from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who by lineage are considered divinely guided spiritual leaders.

**Imamate:** The position or institution, in Shia Islam, that comprises a series of divinely guided imams.

**Iman:** Faith in God.

**Islam:** Submission to God's will.

**Isnad:** The chain of narrators of the Hadith; it is the list of authorities who have transmitted the sayings, actions or approbations of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ via one of his Companions or a later authority (*tabi'i*). The reliability of the *isnad* is the

main criteria in the validity of Hadith. Modern practices of scientific citation and historical method owe a great deal to the rigour of the *isnad* tradition of early Muslims.

**Jihad:** Literally, "struggle". An exertion of effort in any field (not just in war) in order to achieve good or prevent evil, done so for the sake of God's pleasure. The highest level of jihad is to overcome one's ego and lower self. It is considered a religious duty upon every Muslim.

**Kaaba:** The large cubic structure in the Grand Mosque in Makkah, adorned in gold-embroidered black fabric, referred to by Muslims as the "House of God". This structure marks the direction in which Muslims pray and is central to the Hajj pilgrimage.

**Khat:** Script. Refers to Arabic calligraphy, which is the artistic practice of handwriting Arabic phrases, often in the form of verses of the Qur'an or Islamic supplications..

**Khateeb:** Refers to the person who delivers the sermon (khutbah) during certain occasions such as the Friday or Eid prayers. He is usually the imam or leader of the prayer.

**Khalifah:** See "caliph".

**Khanqah:** A building designed specifically for gatherings of a Sufi brotherhood, or *tariqah*, and is a place for spiritual retreat and character reformation. It is also synonymous with the regional terms *ribat*, *tekke*, and *zawiyah*.

**Khawarij:** A group of Muslims in early Islamic history who went against the larger community and became outsiders. A term used to describe political deviants.

**Khums:** Literally, "one-fifth" in Arabic; a religious tax of one-fifth of one's income owed by followers of *Usuli* Twelver Shia to a very senior cleric and poor Muslims.

**Madhhab:** A traditional school of Islamic legal methodology (e. g. Hanbali, Maliki, Shafii, Hanafi, Ja'fari).

**Madrasah:** The Arabic word for "school". Can refer

to a religious school.

**Majlis al-Shurah:** Consultative religio-legislative body.

**Marja’/Marja’iyyah:** The highest position of authority in the *Usuli* school of Twelver Shia *fiqh* whose authority lies after the Qur’an, prophets, and imams. Also referred to as *marja’ taqlid* (literally, “one who is worthy of being imitated”); they have the authority to make legal decisions within the confines of Islamic law for laymen and less-qualified clerics.

**Masjid:** Arabic for “mosque”.

**Maturidi:** Theological school of Sunni orthodoxy named after the followers of the 9th-century scholar Muhammad Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi (853-944 CE).

**Melayu Islam Beraja:** The concept of Malay Islamic monarchy.

**Morchidat:** Literally, “(female) guides”. Refers to the Moroccan cadre of trained female preachers.

**Mufti:** A Muslim legal expert who is empowered to give rulings on religious matters.

**Mujahid:** Someone engaged in acts of jihad.

**Muqri:** Someone qualified to teach others correct recitation of the Qur’an.

**Murid:** Disciple of a Sufi guide or order.

**Mursyidul Am:** Malaysian term for religious guide.

**Mushaf:** A printing of the Qur’an, referring to the physical bound volume of the Holy Book.

**Mutabarrik:** Supporter or affiliate of a Sufi guide or order, someone less serious in treading the spiritual path than a *murid*.

**Mu’tazili:** An almost obsolete school of Sunni Islam, popular in the 8th century, that advocates the belief that the Qur’an is created—as opposed to the Orthodox Sunni view that it is eternal and uncreated.

**Nasheed:** Islamic song. Islamic vocal music, sung individually or by a group and sometimes accompanied by the *daf*, a shallow drum similar to the tambourine. The words sung may refer to religion, history, current issues, or anything related to Islam.

**Pancasila:** Indonesian concept of five basic, national principles: belief in the Oneness of God, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy, and social justice.

**PBUH:** An acronym for “peace be upon him”.

**Pesantren:** The term for Islamic schools in Indonesia.

**Qiblah:** The direction in which Muslims offer their five daily prayers; the direction of the Kaaba in Makkah.

**Ramadan:** Holy month of fasting, 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

**Salafi:** A movement of Sunni Muslims that places great emphasis on the literal interpretation of the Qur’an and Hadith, with scepticism towards the role of the human intellect.

**Salawat:** Prayers of peace upon the Prophet ﷺ which have many distinct formulas, often consisting of the basic *Allahumma salli ala sayyidina Muhammad wa ala Aalibi wa sallim* (O God, send your prayers and blessings upon Muhammad and his family).

**Shahadatayn:** The two testimonies of faith: “There is no deity but God. Muhammad is the Messenger of God.” Stating these two sentences is sufficient to become a Muslim.

**Shariah:** Literally, “the way to the source”, this refers to Islamic law. Islamic law is not, as is widely perceived, a standard set of written rules, but is rather an unwritten text that is interpreted by legal scholars in specific instances, drawing on the Qur’an and other reliable religious sources relevant to the tradition followed.

**Sheikh:** (1) A position of authority granted to people who are respected in society. (2) A religious or tribal official.

**Shia:** The second largest denomination of Muslims

referred to as *shiatu 'Ali* or “party of Ali”, the fourth caliph of Islam and first imam in Shia Islam.

Ramadan.

**Zawiya:** See khanqah, above.

**Sunnah:** Literally “the trodden path”, this refers to the ways and practices of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Reference to these practices can be found in the Qur’an and in the Hadith.

**Sunni:** The largest denomination of Muslims referred to as *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* or “The People of the Prophetic Tradition and Community”—with emphasis on emulating the life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

**Tafsir:** Interpretation of the Qur’an, either by commentary or exegesis.

**Taqlid:** The practice of following rulings without questioning religious authority. This is a core tenet of the Shia *Usuli* school of Islamic law.

**Tariqah:** any particular brotherhood of Sufism (spiritual travel) that leads to a path to the Divine. It consists of a group of seekers following their guide (spiritual leader), and through spiritual deeds and guidance one reaches the ultimate truth of knowing God.

**Ummah:** The collective Muslim community.

**Umrah:** The “lesser pilgrimage” to Makkah. It can be performed any time of the year and has fewer rites than the Hajj.

**Usul Al-Din:** The basic foundations of the Islamic religion, represent creed, behaviour, and intellectual conduct and all are based on the rudiments of the Islamic faith.

**Velayat-e-Faqih:** A position of both spiritual and temporal powers in the Republic of Iran. Literally, “Guardianship of the Jurist”, referring to the fact that while the Mahdi (awaited one) is in occultation, the jurists should have guardianship over the earth.

**Waqf:** A religious endowment or charitable trust.

**Zakat:** Mandatory distribution of excess wealth to the poor, and one of the five pillars of Islam. It typically consists of distributing 2.5% (one fortieth) of one’s excess wealth every year, as well as mandatory charity during Eid Al-Fitr, following

عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ قَالَ

بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ جُلُوسٌ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ إِذْ طَلَعَ عَلَيْنَا رَجُلٌ شَدِيدُ بَيَاضِ الثِّيَابِ

شَدِيدُ سَوَادِ الشَّعْرِ لَرِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ الثَّرَائِفُ وَلَا يَعْرِفُنَا أَحَدٌ حَتَّى جَلَسَ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَأَسْتَنْدَأَ

بَكْتَيْنِي إِلَى كَتَبَتِي وَوَضَعَ كَفَيْهِ عَلَى فَخِيزٍ مَوْقَايَاً مَجْرًا خَبْرِي عَنِ الْإِسْلَامِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

الْإِسْلَامُ رَتْشُهُ الْإِسْلَامُ الْإِسْلَامُ وَالنَّبِيُّ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَتَقِيمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَتُؤْتِي الزَّكَاةَ وَتُصُومُ رَضِيكَ

وَتُحِجُّ الْبَيْتَ إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا فَإِنْ صَدَقْتِ فَعَجَبْنَا لِرُسِيَّتِكَ وَوَصِيَّتِكَ قَالَ

فَأَخْبَرَنِي عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ قَالَ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْقَدَرِ خَيْرُهُ وَشَرُّهُ قَالَ

وَصِدْقًا وَأَخْبَرَنِي عَنِ الْإِحْسَانِ قَالَ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ كُنْتَ لَا تَرَاهُ فَانْفِرْ فِي خَيْرِ نِيَّةٍ عَنِ السَّيِّئَةِ

قَالَ أَمَا الْمَسْئُورُ عَلَيْهَا بِالْعِلْمِ مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ قَالَ خَيْرٌ نِيَّةٍ أَمَا الْهَقَاقُ الْأَنْدَالُ الْأَمْرُ رَبِّهَا وَأَنْ تَرَى الْحِمْلَ الْجَارَةَ

الْعَالَةَ تَرَعَاءُ الشَّيْءِ يَتَطَاوَرُ فِي الْبَيْتَانِ إِذَا تَطَلَّقَ فَلْيَدِقْ قَلْبًا قَائِلًا عَجْبَرُ ذَرِيٍّ هُمُ السَّيِّئَاتُ

قُلْتُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ عِلْمًا قَالَ إِنَّهُ نَجْرٌ لِي أَتَاكُمْ رِعَالٌ كَمَا ذَرِيَّتُكُمْ لَهَا

On the authority of Omar, ؓ who said :

One day while we were sitting with the messenger of Allah ﷺ there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black; no signs of journeying were to be seen on him and none of us knew him. He walked up and sat down by the prophet ﷺ. Resting his knees against his and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said: "O Muhammed, tell me about Islam". The messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Islam is to testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammed is the messenger of Allah, to perform the prayers, to pay the zakat, to fast in Ramadhan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so." He said: "You have spoken rightly", and we were amazed at him asking him and saying that he had spoken rightly. He said: "Then tell me about eman." He said: "It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both the good and the evil thereof." He said: "You have spoken rightly". He said: " Then tell me about ehsan." He said: " It is to worship Allah as though you are seeing Him, and while you see Him not yet truly He sees you". He said: " Then tell me about the Hour". He said: " The one questioned about it knows no better than the questioner." He said: " Then tell me about its signs." He said: " That the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress and that you will see the barefooted, naked, destitute herdsman competing in constructing lofty buildings." Then he took himself off and I stayed for a time. Then he said: "O Omar, do you know who the questioner was?" I said: "Allah and His messenger know best." He said: "He was Jibreel (Gabriel), who came to you to teach you your religion."

Narrated by Muslim

# THE INDICES

# INDEX BY NAME

## A

Abbas, HE President Mahmoud *143, 163*  
Abdalla, Asma Mohamed *164*  
Abdel Haleem, Professor Muhammad *157*  
Abdelkafy, Sheikh Dr Omar *178*  
Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem *228*  
Abdulkodirzoda, Mufti Saidmukarram *175*  
HRH Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah *163*  
HM Queen Rania Al-Abdullah *5, 185*  
Abdulmajid, Iman *213*  
Abdur-Razak, Shaykh Faisal Hamid *176*  
Abdurrahman, Professor Taha *152*  
Aboulela, Leila *212*  
Aboutaleb, Ahmed *168*  
Aboutrika, Mohamed *226*  
HRE Amirul Mu'minin Sheikh As-Sultan Muhammadu Sa'adu Abubakar III *108*  
Abu Rashta, Ata *161*  
Abu Sarah, Aziz *188*  
Abu-Ghazaleh, Talal *200*  
Abu-Sittah, Dr Ghassan (new) *7, 196*  
AbuSulayman, Muna *185*  
Abuelaish, Dr Izzeldin *188*  
Achyar, Miftachul *174*  
Adam, Fawzia Yusuf Haji *165*  
Aden, Halima *218*  
Al-Afasy, Sheikh Mishary bin Rashid *220*  
Affa, Dr Nadhira Nuraini *206*  
Ahmad, Abdrahman Olanrewaju *172*  
Ahmad, Dr Saiyad Nizamuddin (new) *160*  
Ahmad, Sheikh Abubakr *173*  
Ahmed, Professor Akbar *142, 156*  
Ahmed, Riz *216*  
Al-Ajmi, Sheikh Ahmad Ali *220*  
Akhundzada, HE Mullah Haibatullah *137*  
Al-Akiti, Dato Dr Muhammad Afifi *155*  
AlSuwaidan, Sheikh Dr Tareq *222*  
Alabbar, Mohamed Ben Ali *202*  
Alattas, Syed Hassan bin Muhammad bin Salim *181*  
Ali, Zeeshan *196*  
Alidoosti, Taraneh *211*  
Aliyev, HE President Ilham *130*  
Aljunied, Professor Khairudin *156*  
Alsuleiman, Imam Shady *176*  
Altwayjri, Dr Abdulaziz Othman *171*  
Al-Ameri, Khalid *191*  
Amin, Maruf *174*

Amoli, HE Grand Ayatollah Abdullah Jawadi *142, 151*  
Al-Amoudi, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Ali *201*  
Ansari, Anousheh *200*  
Anwar, Zainah *194*  
Al-Arifi, Dr Muhammad *145, 178*  
Ashafa, Imam Muhammad *192*  
Aslam, Syima *217*  
Al-Assad, HE President Bashar *164*  
Assaf, Mohammed *226*  
Assaf, Roger *211*  
Al-Aswany, Alaa *210*  
Al-Attas, Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib *138*  
Atta-Ur-Rahman, Professor *207*  
Aung, Khalifa U Thein Win *181*  
Awad, Nihad *198*  
Awang, Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi bin *180*  
Al-Awni, Dr Hatim *153*  
Ayyad, Grand Mufti Nazir Mohamed (new) *171*  
Azaiza, Motaz (new) *222*  
Al-Azhari, Sheikh Usama Al-Sayyid *128*  
Aziz, Asif *204*  
Azmi, Hazrat Allama Maulana Qamaruzzaman *180*  
Azmi, Shabana *214*

## B

Babikir, Sheikh Ahmed *182*  
Badawi, Samar *189*  
Badie, Dr Mohammed *171*  
Badreya, Sayed *210*  
Al-Bahar, Shaikha *200*  
Bakar, Professor Osman *155*  
El-Banna, Dr Hany *187*  
Bano, Bilkis *193*  
Baradar, Abdul Ghani *165*  
Barakat, Maha *191*  
Barghouti, Mustafa (new) *163*  
Al-Barghouti, Dr Tamim *211*  
Barzani, Masoud *161*  
Bauchi, Sheikh Dahiru Usman *179*  
Bayero, Aminu Ado *172*  
Bayyah, HE Sheikh Abdullah bin *110*  
El-Baz, Farouk *205*  
Bechari, Dr Mohamed *144, 175*  
Belkaid, Sheikh Abdellatif *178*  
Benganna, Khadija *222*  
Bensouda, Fatou *191*



Benzema, Karim 227  
Bewley, Aisha 160  
Beydoun, Khaled A 198  
Bhikha, Zain 213  
Bin Laden, Bakr 201  
Bisri, Kyai Haji Achmad Mustofa 155  
Bouhia, Dr Hynd 200  
Bukai, Sheikh Mohamad 177  
Bukhari, Khanum Tayyaba 181  
Al-Bukhari, Sayyid Ibraheemul Khaleel 173  
Al-Bukhary, Syed Mokhtar 187

## C

Carson, André 169  
Çelebi, Master Hasan 216  
Cerić, Sheikh Dr Mustafa 156  
Chabulika, Sheikh Dinala 192  
Chappelle, David Khari Webber 219  
Cherif, Mustapha 151  
Chowdhury, Sheikh Tawfique 197

## D

Dabashi, Professor Hamid 151  
Dahlan, Professor Dr Winai 207  
Dajani, Professor Rana 205  
Damad, Ayatollah Dr Seyyed Mostafa Mohaghegh 151  
Dangote, Alhaji Aliko 203  
Davutoğlu, Ahmet 168  
Dayib, Faduma 192  
Dayrit, Flordeliza 197  
Derian, Grand Mufti Abdul Latif (new) 152  
Diakité, Sheikh Aïma Ousmane (new) 172  
Diriyeh, Ahmad 229  
Dudić, Grand Mufti Mevlud 176  
Duzyatan, Engin Altan 216

## E

Ebadi, Shirin 188  
Ebtekar, Dr Masoumeh 161  
Elgamal, Dr Taher 209  
Ellison, Keith 169  
Elmi, Asha Haji 192  
Erdogan, HE President Recep Tayyip 92  
El-Erian, Mohamed 204  
Al-Esa, Majed 212  
Esack, Farid 154

## F

Faizal, Mohamed 187  
Faming, Hassan Yang 173  
Al-Faqih, Judge Kholoud 188  
Farah, Mohamed 227  
Al-Fares, Ola 222  
Farhadi, Asghar 211  
Farooq, Dr Mohammad Umar 166  
Al-Fawzan, Sheikh Salih Bin Fawzan 153  
Fayadh, HE Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ishaq 142, 152  
Faye, HE President Bassirou Diomaye (new) 165

## G

Gaynutdin, Mufti Sheikh Ravil 157  
Gelenbe, Dr Erol 208  
Al-Ghamdi, Sheikh Saad ibn Said 220  
Ghamidi, Javed Ahmad 181  
Ghilan, Dr Mohamed 208  
Al-Ghunaim, Maha 200  
Gomaa, HE Sheikh Dr Ali 118  
Guiderdoni, Dr Bruno Abd al Haqq 207  
Gülen, Muhammed Fethullah 182  
Al Gurg, Raja 202  
Gurnah, Abdulrazak 213  
Gutoc-Tomawis, Samira 167  
Gymnastiar, Abdullah Aa Gym 180

## H

Hadid, Bella; and Hadid, Gigi (new) 228  
Hadzhi, Mufti Mustafa Alish 175  
Hafiz, HE Sheikh Al-Habib Umar bin 80  
Haftar, Khalifa 163  
Hallar, Muhammad Yusuf 176  
Hamahoullah, Mohamed Ould Cheikh (new) 179  
Hamidun, Hafiz 215  
Hammadeh, Sheikh Jihad 184  
Haniyeh, HE Ismail 238  
Hanson, Sheikh Hamza Yusuf 124  
Haqqani, Sheikh Mehmet Adil 182  
Hasan, Dr Hashima 206  
Hasan, Mehdi 224  
Hasballah, Muzammil 221  
Hashmi, Dr Farhat 156  
Hassan, HE Samia Suluhu 132  
Al-Hassani, Dr Salim 208  
Hatamleh, Dr Omar (new) 209  
Al-Hathloul, Loujain 145, 189  
Hayward, Professor Joel 158  
Hellyer, Dr Hisham 158  
Henry, Aisha Gray 219

Hijab, Mohammed (new) 196  
Hoja, Gulchehra 223  
Hosein, Sheikh Imran 184  
Hosny, Sheikh Mustafa 129  
Hossain, Dr Hameeda 193  
Hosseini, Khaled 213  
Al-Hourthi, Sheikh Abdul-Malik 128  
Al-Hroub, Hanan 189  
Husain, Mishal 224  
Husic, Ed 169  
Hussain, Nadiya 227  
Al-Hussaini, HE Ibrahim Saleh 136  
Al-Hussayni, HH Shah Karim 133  
HM King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein 76  
Hussein, Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad 171

## I

Ibrahim, Dr Mohamed “Mo” 202  
Ibrahim, HE Prime Minister Anwar 106  
Ibrahim, Sheikh Mustapha 191  
Al-Ibrahim, Waleed bin Ibrahim 223  
Idris, Hajji Omar 153  
İmamoğlu, Dr Ataç 208  
Indrawati, Sri Mulyani 203  
Iqbal, Salman 224  
Islam, Yusuf 217  
Ismail, Al-Hajj Siddiq 215  
Ismail, Dr Edna Adan 192  
Ismail, Jezima 195  
Ismail, Sufyan 187  
Al-Issa, Dr Mohammad ben Abdel Karim 172  
Issa, Mohsin and Issa, Zuber 204  
Izzuddin, Dr Mustafa 195

## J

Al-Jaber, Fatima 202  
Jabeur, Ons 226  
Jackson, Dr Sherman 160  
Al-Jafarawi, Saleh (new) 189  
Jah, Ambassador Professor Omar 154  
Jameel, Maulana Tariq 131  
Al-Jasser, Dr Muhammad Sulaiman (new) 185  
Al-Jifri, Sheikh Habib Ali Zain Al-Abideen 120  
Joya, Malalai 193  
Al-Julani, Abu Muhammad 229

## K

Kabbani, Sheikh Muhammad Hisham 183  
Kadeer, Rebiya 166

Kadyrov, HE President Ramzan 168  
Al-Kahlout, Hudayfa (Abu Obaida) (new) 164  
Kalin, Dr Ibrahim 122  
Kamali, Professor Mohammad Hashim 156  
Kandhalvi, Maulana Saad 173  
Kane, Zeinaba 192  
Karam, Dr Azza 188  
Karaman, Professor Dr Hayrettin 157  
Karman, Tawakkol 191  
Katsina, Sheikh Yakubu Musa 179  
Kattan, Huda 230  
Kavazović, Husein 175  
Keita, Salif 212  
Keller, Sheikh Nuh 144, 178  
Khademhosseini, Professor Ali 205  
Al-Khairi, Sheikh Abdul-Nacer 178  
Al Khairy, Cheikh Ould (new) 179  
Khaled, Dr Amr 138  
Khalifa, Sheikh Mohammed 172  
Al-Khalili, Sheikh Ahmad 152  
Khamenei, HE Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Ali 84  
Khan, Aamir 214  
Khan, Dr Mehmood 209  
Khan, Dr Saniyasnain 194  
Khan, HE Imran 143, 167  
Khan, Qaisra (new) 217  
Khan, Sadiq 143, 169  
Khan, Salman 198  
Khan, Shahid 204  
Khanfar, Wadah 222  
Khasawneh, Sheikh Abdul Karim 152  
Khelif, Imane (new) 226  
Al-Khoei, Sayyed Jawad 185  
Khoudary, Hind (new) 223  
Köhler, Ayyub Axel 175  
Kubaisi, Sheikh Dr Ahmed 178  
Kudaibergen, Dimash 215  
El-Kurd, Mohammed, El-Kurd, Muna 223  
Al-Kurdi, Raad Muhammad Abd al-Rahman Salih 220  
Kutty, Faisal 198

## L

Lalami, Laila 211  
Lame, Khaby 227

## M

Madani, Maulana Mahmood 104  
Madani, Maulana Syed Arshad 180  
Al-Madkhali, Sheikh Rabece ibn Haadi ‘Umayr 153

Mahmutéčajić, Professor Dr Rusmir 157  
 Majidi, Majid 211  
 HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum 164  
 Al-Malik, Dr Salim M 172  
 Mamdani, Professor Mahmood 154  
 Mangera, Dr Mufti Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf 158  
 Mansour, Ahmed 222  
 Mané, Sadio 147, 226  
 Maqari, Sheikh Professor Ibrahim Ahmad 179  
 Al-Maqdisi, Abu Muhammad 229  
 Marsoof, Justice Dr Saleem 196  
 Mashal, Khaled 164  
 Masoud, Moez 178  
 Mattar, Dr Maryam 191  
 Mattson, Dr Ingrid 142, 158  
 Mazari, Muniba 194  
 Mbacké, Serigne Mountakha 173  
 Menk, Mufti Ismail Musa 179  
 Metso, Mufti Djemali 181  
 Mindaoudou, Dodo Aichatou 192  
 Mir, Hamid (new) 224  
 Mirziyoyev, HE President Shavkat 168  
 HH Sheikh Moza Bint Nasser Al-Missned 185  
 Misuari, Nur 167  
 Mogahed, Dalia 198  
 Mohamad, Goenawan 224  
 Mohamad, HE Mahathir 166  
 Mohammed II, Warithudeen 176  
 HM King Mohammed VI 96  
 Mohseni, Saad 223  
 Mohyeldin, Ayman 225  
 Moosa, Professor Ebrahim 154  
 Mosteghanemi, Ahlam 210  
 El Mouhandiz, Rajae 216  
 MrGlani, Sheikh Dr Mahmoud 181  
 Al-Mueaqly, Sheikh Maher bin Hamad 220  
 Al-Muffah, Ghanim 189  
 Muftić, Elmedina 196  
 Mumpuni, Tri 206  
 Munir, General Syed Asim 167

## N

Al-Nabulsi, Dr Mohammed Rateb 153  
 Naçi, Elvis 181  
 Nadia, Asma 214  
 Nadim, Nadia 227  
 Nadwi, Dr Bahauddeen Muhammed Jamaluddeen 155  
 Naeem ur Rehman, Hafiz (new) 174

El-Naggar, Dr Zaghoul 205  
 HH President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan 90  
 Naik, Zakir Abdul Karim 145, 180  
 Al-Najafi, Grand Ayatollah Bashir 152  
 Nakshawani, Ammar 182  
 Al-Namankany, Dr Abeer 206  
 Namira, Hamza 210  
 Naqvi, Ayatollah Syed Sajid Ali 174  
 Nashir, Dr KH Haedar 174  
 Nasibullahoglu, Sheikh Cafer 176  
 Nasr, Professor Seyyed Hossein 132  
 Nasrallah, HE Seyyed Hassan 240  
 Nayed, Dr Aref Ali 142, 152  
 Nazeri, Shahram 211  
 Al-Ninowy, Sheikh Dr Muhammad bin Yahya 183  
 Nomani, Mufti Abul Qasim 144, 173  
 Noor Deen, Haji (Mi Guang Jiang) 214  
 Noorie, Maulana Shakir Ali 173  
 Al-Nufais, Sheikh Ahmed (new) 220  
 Nurhaliza, Dato' Siti binti Tarudin 215  
 Nurmagedov, Khabib 147, 227  
 Nusseibeh, Professor Sari 153  
 N'Dour, Youssou 212

## O

Obaid, Thoraya Ahmed 189  
 Obaid-Chinoy, Sharmeen 215  
 Olayan, Lubna 202  
 Oloyede, Professor Ishaq Olarewaju 172  
 Omar, Ilhan 169  
 Osmani-Sadriu, President Vjosa 168  
 Al-Ouda, Sheikh Salman 98  
 Owaisi, MP Janab Asaduddin 174  
 Owda, Bisan (new) 146, 223  
 Oz, Dr Mehmet 225

## P

Pallavicini, Imam Yahya Sergio Yahe 175  
 Pamuk, Orhan 216  
 Pandor, Naledi (new) 192  
 Parawansa, Khofifah Indar 166  
 Parveen, Abida 215  
 Parvez, Khurram 194  
 Pashazade, Sheikh ul-Islam Haji Allahshukur Hummat 155  
 Patel, Sir Mufti Hamid (new) 197  
 Pezeshkian, HE President Masoud (new) 161  
 Philips, Dr Abu Ameenah Bilal 182

Pirzada, Shaykh Muhammad Imdad Hussain 182  
Premji, Azim 186

## Q

Qadhi, Dr Yasir 160  
Qadiri, Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas Attar 137  
Qadri, Muhammad Owais Raza 216  
Al-Qadri, Sheikh Dr Tahir 156  
Al-Qaradaghi, Professor Ali Muhiddin 152  
Al-Qarni, Dr Aaidh 178  
Qasimov, Alim 214  
Qasmi, Maulana Badruddin Ajmal 186  
Al-Qassimi, Sheikh Lubna 165  
HH Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qassimi 186  
Qureshi, Khawar 197

## R

Rabbani, Sheikh Faraz 183  
Rahman, Allah Rakha 214  
Rahman, Maulana Nazur 135  
Raisolsadati (Raisi), Sayyid Ebrahim 239  
Ramadan, Dr Tariq 157  
Ramzan, Dr Mubeena 194  
Randeree, Shabir 204  
Rashad, Professor Ali Akbar 171  
Rasheed, Zainul Abidin 168  
Rasul, Santanina Tillah 195  
Rasul-Bernardo, Amina 195  
Rizvi, Professor Dr Adibul Hasan 187  
Rizwe, Mufti Mohammed Ibrahim Mohammed 175  
Rosa, Dr Helvy Tiana 214  
Al-Rostamani, Hana 203  
Al-Ruwaini, Nashwa 223

## S

Al-Sabah, HE Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber (new) 163  
HH Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah 239  
Sabancı, Güler 203  
Sabri, Sheikh Dr Ekrima Sa'id 171  
Sabur, M Abdus 196  
Sadik, Randa (new) 200  
Al-Sadr, Ayatollah Al-Faqih Seyyed Hussein Ismail 152  
Sadr, Sheikh Muqtada 135  
Al-Sadr, Rabab 185  
Saeed, Dr Mohamed Shaheem Ali 174

Al-Saffar, Sheikh Hassan Musa 153  
Şahin, Dr Uğur 208  
Said, Sheikh Faid Mohammed 153  
Saied, HE President Kais 164  
Saif, Dr Umar 207  
Saifuddin, Syedna Mufaddal 180  
Salah, Mohamed 134  
Salah, Sheikh Raed 161  
Samar, Dr Sima 193  
Sancar, Dr Aziz 208  
Sanders, Peter 217  
Sanusi, Alhaji Dr Sanusi Lamido 173  
Sanusi, HE Dr Sanusi Lamido 144  
Sardar, Ziauddin 158  
Sarsour, Linda 198  
HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud 100  
HM King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud 86  
Sayeed, Aryana 213  
Şentürk, Dr Recep (new) 157  
Shah, Naseem 169  
Shah, Ryhaan 219  
Shakil-ur-Rahman, Mir 224  
Shakir, Imam Zaid 183  
Al-Shanqiti, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hasan bin Al-Diddu 154  
Sharif, Mian Muhammad Shehbaz 167  
Sharif, Nawaz 167  
Sharubutu, Sheikh Dr Osmanu Nuhu 179  
Al-Shatri, Sheikh Abu Bakr 220  
Al-Sheikh, Sheikh Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Aal 129  
Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Ali Cisse 126  
Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi 134  
Shihab, Quraish 180  
Shirazi, Grand Ayatollah Nasir Makarim 151  
Shokrollahi, Professor M Amin 205  
Al-Shugairi, Ahmad 178  
Shukor, Dr Sheikh Muszaphar 206  
Al-Shuraim, Sheikh Saud ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad 220  
Siddiqi, Irfan 207  
Siddique, Professor Teepu 209  
Siddiqui, Mohammadi 194  
Sindi, Dr Hayat 206  
Sinwar, Yahya 139  
Siradj, Professor KH Said Aqil 194  
El-Sisi, HE President Abdel Fattah Saeed 116  
Al-Sistani, HE Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein 94  
Sobhani, Grand Ayatollah Jafar 151  
Sobhi, Islam 220  
Sooliman, Dr Imtiaz Ismail 186

Soufi, Nawal 188  
Souleymane, Mahamadou 212  
Staquf, Yahya Cholil 114  
Subianto, HE President Prabowo 112  
Al-Sudais, Sheikh Abdul-Rahman 146, 220  
Al-Sudani, Mohammed Shayya 161  
Al-Suhaimi, Sarah 202  
Sukarnoputri, Megawati 166  
Suleiman, Imam Omar 183  
Sulis 215  
Sultana, Razia 193  
Suquillo, Professor Juan 177  
Sway, Professor Mustafa Abu 139

## T

Taha, HE Sheikh Uthman 133  
Taha, Houssein Ibrahim (new) 186  
Tamimi, Ahd 145, 189  
HRH Sultan Haitham bin Tariq 163  
Al-Tawfiq, Ahmad 171  
Al-Tayyeb, HE Sheikh Dr Ahmad Muhammad 102  
Ternava, Sheikh Naim 175  
Al-Thani, Dr Abdulla bin Ali 189  
HH Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani 82  
HH Sheikh Al-Mayassa Al-Thani 212  
HH Sheikh Aisha bint Faleh bin Nasser Al-Thani 189  
Thohir, Erick 203  
Tinubu, HE President Chief Bola Ahmed 165  
Tlaib, Rashida 170  
Tohti, Ilham 193  
Tokayev, HE President Kassym-Jomart 166  
Topbaş, Osman Nuri 182  
Tyson, Mike (Malik Abdul Aziz) 228

## U

Ul-Hassan, Maulana Zuhair 174  
Ulfah, Hajjah Maria 221  
Ulukaya, Hamdi 203  
Usmani, HE Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi 88

## W

HM Sultan Hajji Hassanah Bolkiyah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah 203  
Wahhaj, Imam Siraj 183  
Waked, Amr 210  
El-Wakil, Abdel-Wahed 210  
Wan Ismail, Datuk Seri Wan Azizah 167  
Warsi, Baroness Sayeeda 169

Wharansby, Dawud 218  
Widodo, HE Joko 143, 166  
Williams, Paul 197  
Williams, Sonny 228  
Wilson, Willow 219  
Winter, Dr Timothy (Sheikh Abdal-Hakim Murad) 136

## Y

Yacob, HE Halimah 195  
Yahya, Al-Habib Muhammad Luthfi bin 130  
Yalçin, Rabia 216  
Al-Yaqoubi, Sheikh Muhammad 131  
Yaquby, Nizam 151  
Ying, Professor Jackie Y 209  
Younis, Dr Haifaa (new) 184  
Yousafzai, Malala 146, 195  
Youssef, Bassem (new) 225  
Youssef, Ramy 219  
Yunus, HE Muhammad 140  
Yusof, Vivvy 226  
Yusuf, Sami 146, 217

## Z

Zain, Maher 216  
Zakaria, Fareed 225  
Zakariya, Mohamed 219  
Zakzaky, Sheikh Ibraheem 154  
Al-Zayani, Afnan 200  
Zidane, Zinedine 227  
Al-Zindani, Sheikh Abdul Majeed 239

# INDEX BY COUNTRY

## AFGHANISTAN

Akhundzada, HE Mullah Haibatullah *137*  
Baradar, Abdul Ghani *165*  
Hosseini, Khaled *213*  
Joya, Malalai *193*  
Mohseni, Saad *223*  
Samar, Dr Sima *193*  
Sayeed, Aryana *213*

## ALBANIA

Naçi, Elvis *181*

## ALGERIA

Al-Khairi, Sheikh Abdul-Nacer *178*  
Belkaid, Sheikh Abdellatif *178*  
Benganna, Khadija *222*  
Cherif, Mustapha *151*  
Khelif, Imane (new) *226*  
Mosteghanemi, Ahlam *210*

## ARGENTINA

Hallar, Muhammad Yusuf *176*

## AUSTRALIA

Alsuleiman, Imam Shady *176*  
Chowdhury, Sheikh Tawfiq *197*  
Husic, Ed *169*

## AZERBAIJAN

Aliyev, HE President Ilham *130*  
Pashazade, Sheikh ul-Islam Haji Allahshukur  
Hummat *155*  
Qasimov, Alim *214*

## BAHRAIN

Al-Zayani, Afnan *200*  
Yaquby, Nizam *151*

## BANGLADESH

Hossain, Dr Hameeda *193*  
Sultana, Razia *193*

Yunus, HE Muhammad *140*

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Cerić, Sheikh Dr Mustafa *156*  
Kavazović, Husein *175*  
Mahmutćehajić, Professor Dr Rusmir *157*  
Muftić, Elmedina *196*

## BRAZIL

Bukai, Sheikh Mohamad *177*  
Hammadeh, Sheikh Jihad *184*

## BRUNEI

HM Sultan Hajji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin  
Waddaulah *203*

## BULGARIA

Hadzhi, Mufti Mustafa Alish *175*

## CANADA

Abdur-Razak, Shaykh Faisal Hamid *176*  
Dayrit, Flordeliza *197*  
Ghilan, Dr Mohamed *208*  
Kutty, Faisal *198*  
Mattson, Dr Ingrid *142, 158*  
Philips, Dr Abu Ameenah Bilal *182*  
Rabbani, Sheikh Faraz *183*  
Wharnsby, Dawud *218*

## CHAD

Taha, Hissein Brahim (new) *186*

## CHINA

Faming, Hassan Yang *173*  
Hoja, Gulchehra *223*  
Kadeer, Rebiya *165*  
Noor Deen, Haji (Mi Guang Jiang) *214*  
Tohti, Ilham *193*

## CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Diakitè, Sheikh Aïma Ousmane (new) *172*

## DENMARK

Nadim, Nadia 227

## ECUADOR

Suquillo, Professor Juan 177

## EGYPT

Abdelkafy, Sheikh Dr Omar 178

Aboutrika, Mohamed 226

Al-Aswany, Alaa 210

Al-Azhari, Sheikh Usama Al-Sayyid 128

Al-Tayyeb, HE Sheikh Dr Ahmad Muhammad 102

Ayyad, Grand Mufti Nazir Mohamed (new) 171

Badie, Dr Mohammed 171

Badreya, Sayed 210

El-Baz, Farouk 205

El-Naggar, Dr Zaghloul 205

El-Sisi, HE President Abdel Fattah Saeed 116

El-Wakil, Abdel-Wahed 210

Gomaa, HE Sheikh Dr Ali 118

Hosny, Sheikh Mustafa 129

Karam, Dr Azza 188

Khaled, Dr Amr 138

Mansour, Ahmed 222

Masoud, Moez 178

Namira, Hamza 210

Salah, Mohamed 134

Sobhi, Islam 220

Waked, Amr 210

## ERITREA

Said, Sheikh Faid Mohammed 153

## ETHIOPIA

Idris, Hajji Omar 153

## FRANCE

Al-Hussayni, HH Shah Karim 133

Bechari, Dr Mohamed 144, 175

Benzema, Karim 227

Guiderdoni, Dr Bruno Abd al Haqq 207

Zidane, Zinedine 227

## GAMBIA, THE

Bensouda, Fatou 191

Jah, Ambassador Professor Omar 154

## GERMANY

Köhler, Ayyub Axel 175

Şahin, Dr Uğur 208

## GHANA

Ibrahim, Sheikh Mustapha 191

Sharubutu, Sheikh Dr Osmanu Nuhu 179

## GREECE

Metso, Mufti Djemali 181

## GUYANA

Shah, Ryhaan 219

## INDIA

Ahmad, Sheikh Abubakr 173

Al-Bukhari, Sayyid Ibraheemul Khaleel 173

Azmi, Hazrat Allama Maulana Qamaruzzaman 180

Azmi, Shabana 214

Bano, Bilkis 193

Farooq, Dr Mohammad Umar 166

Hasan, Dr Hashima 206

Kandhalvi, Maulana Saad 173

Khan, Aamir 214

Khan, Dr Saniyasnain 194

Madani, Maulana Mahmood 104

Madani, Maulana Syed Arshad 180

Nadwi, Dr Bahauddeen Muhammed

Jamaluddeen 155

Naik, Zakir Abdul Karim 145, 180

Nomani, Mufti Abul Qasim 144, 173

Noorie, Maulana Shakir Ali 173

Owaisi, MP Janab Asaduddin 174

Parvez, Khurram 194

Premji, Azim 186

Qasmi, Maulana Badruddin Ajmal 186

Rahman, Allah Rakha 214

Ramzan, Dr Mubeena 194

Saifuddin, Syedna Mufaddal 180

Ul-Hassan, Maulana Zuhair 174

## INDONESIA

Achyar, Miftachul 174

Afifa, Dr Nadhira Nuraini 206

Amin, Maruf 174  
Bisri, Kyai Haji Achmad Mustofa 155  
Gymnastiar, Abdullah Aa Gym 180  
Hasballah, Muzammil 221  
Indrawati, Sri Mulyani 203  
Mohamad, Goenawan 224  
Mumpuni, Tri 206  
Nadia, Asma 214  
Nashir, Dr KH Haedar 174  
Parawansa, Khofifah Indar 166  
Rosa, Dr Helvy Tiana 214  
Shihab, Quraish 180  
Siradj, Professor KH Said Aqil 194  
Staquf, Yahya Cholil 114  
Subianto, HE President Prabowo 112  
Sukarnoputri, Megawati 166  
Sulis 215  
Thohir, Erick 203  
Ulfah, Hajjah Maria 221  
Widodo, HE Joko 143, 166  
Yahya, Al-Habib Muhammad Luthfi bin 130

## IRAN

Alidoosti, Taraneh 211  
Amoli, HE Grand Ayatollah Abdullah Jawadi 142, 151  
Ansari, Anousheh 200  
Dabashi, Professor Hamid 151  
Damad, Ayatollah Dr Seyyed Mostafa  
Mohaghegh 151  
Ebadi, Shirin 188  
Ebtekar, Dr Masoumeh 161  
Farhadi, Asghar 211  
Khademhosseini, Professor Ali 205  
Khamenei, HE Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Ali 84  
Majidi, Majid 211  
Nazeri, Shahram 211  
Pezeshkian, HE President Masoud (new) 161  
Raisolsadati (Raisi), Sayyid Ebrahim 239  
Rashad, Professor Ali Akbar 171  
Shirazi, Grand Ayatollah Nasir Makarim 151  
Shokrollahi, Professor M Amin 205  
Sobhani, Grand Ayatollah Jafar 151

## IRAQ

Al-Khoei, Sayyed Jawad 185  
Al-Kurdi, Raad Muhammad Abd al-Rahman Salih 220  
Al-Najafi, Grand Ayatollah Bashir 152  
Al-Qaradaghi, Professor Ali Muhiddin 152

Al-Sadr, Ayatollah Al-Faqih Seyyed Hussein Ismail 152  
Al-Sistani, HE Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein 94  
Al-Sudani, Mohammed Shayya 161  
Barzani, Masoud 161  
Fayadh, HE Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ishaq 142, 152  
Kubaisi, Sheikh Dr Ahmed 178  
Sadr, Sheikh Muqtada 135

## ISRAEL

Salah, Sheikh Raed 161

## ITALY

Lame, Khaby 227  
Pallavicini, Imam Yahya Sergio Yahe 175

## JORDAN

HRH Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah 163  
HM Queen Rania Al-Abdullah 5, 185  
Abu-Ghazaleh, Talal 200  
Abu Rashta, Ata 161  
Al-Fares, Ola 222  
Al-Maqdisi, Abu Muhammad 229  
Dajani, Professor Rana 205  
HM King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein 76  
Keller, Sheikh Nuh 144, 178  
Khasawneh, Sheikh Abdul Karim 152  
Sadik, Randa (new) 200

## KAZAKHSTAN

Kudaibergen, Dimash 215  
Tokayev, HE President Kassym-Jomart 166

## KENYA

Khalifa, Sheikh Mohammed 172

## KOSOVO

Osmani-Sadriu, President Vjosa 168  
Ternava, Sheikh Naim 175

## KUWAIT

Al-Afasy, Sheikh Mishary bin Rashid 220  
Al-Bahar, Shaikha 200



Al-Ghunaim, Maha 200  
Al-Nufais, Sheikh Ahmed (new) 220  
Al-Sabah, HE Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber  
(new) 163  
AlSuwaidan, Sheikh Dr Tareq 222  
HH Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber  
Al-Sabah 239

### LEBANON

Al-Sadr, Rabab 185  
Assaf, Roger 211  
Derian, Grand Mufti Abdul Latif (new) 152  
Nasrallah, HE Seyyed Hassan 240

### LIBYA

Haftar, Khalifa 163  
Nayed, Dr Aref Ali 142, 152

### MALAWI

Chabulika, Sheikh Dinala 192

### MALAYSIA

Al-Akiti, Dato Dr Muhammad Afifi 155  
Al-Attas, Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib 138  
Al-Bukhary, Syed Mokhtar 187  
Anwar, Zainah 194  
Awang, Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi bin 180  
Bakar, Professor Osman 155  
Hamidun, Hafiz 215  
Ibrahim, HE Prime Minister Anwar 106  
Kamali, Professor Mohammad Hashim 156  
Mohamad, HE Mahathir 166  
MrGlani, Sheikh Dr Mahmoud 181  
Nurhaliza, Dato' Siti binti Tarudin 215  
Shukor, Dr Sheikh Muszaphar 206  
Wan Ismail, Datuk Seri Wan Azizah 166  
Yusof, Vivy 226

### MALDIVES

Saeed, Dr Mohamed Shaheem Ali 174

### MALI

Hamahoullah, Mohamed Ould Cheikh (new) 179  
Keita, Salif 212

### MAURITANIA

Al Khairy, Cheikh Ould (new) 179  
Al-Shanqiti, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hasan bin  
Al-Diddu 154  
Bayyah, HE Sheikh Abdullah bin 110

### MOROCCO

Abdurrahman, Professor Taha 152  
Al-Tawfiq, Ahmad 171  
Bouhia, Dr Hynd 200  
HM King Mohammed VI 96  
Lalami, Laila 211  
Soufi, Nawal 188

### MYANMAR

Aung, Khalifa U Thein Win 181

### NEPAL

Siddiqui, Mohammadi 194

### NETHERLANDS

Aboutaleb, Ahmed 168  
El Mouhandiz, Rajae 216

### NEW ZEALAND

Hayward, Professor Joel 158  
Williams, Sonny 228

### NIGER

Mindaoudou, Dodo Aichatou 192  
Souleymane, Mahamadou 212

### NIGERIA

Ahmad, Abdrahman Olanrewaju 172  
Al-Hussaini, HE Ibrahim Saleh 136  
Ashafa, Imam Muhammad 192  
Bauchi, Sheikh Dahiru Usman 179  
Bayero, Aminu Ado 172  
Dangote, Alhaji Aliko 203  
HRE Amirul Mu'minin Sheikh As-Sultan Muham-  
madu Sa'adu Abubakar III 108  
Katsina, Sheikh Yakubu Musa 179  
Maqari, Sheikh Professor Ibrahim Ahmad 179  
Oloyede, Professor Ishaq Olarewaju 172

Sanusi, Alhaji Dr Sanusi Lamido *173*  
Sanusi, HE Dr Sanusi Lamido *144*  
Tinubu, HE President Chief Bola Ahmed *165*  
Zakzaky, Sheikh Ibraheem *154*

## OMAN

Al-Khalili, Sheikh Ahmad *152*  
HRH Sultan Haitham bin Tariq *163*

## PAKISTAN

Ahmed, Professor Akbar *142, 156*  
Al-Qadri, Sheikh Dr Tahir *166*  
Atta-Ur-Rahman, Professor *207*  
Bukhari, Khanum Tayyaba *181*  
Ghamidi, Javed Ahmad *181*  
Hashmi, Dr Farhat *156*  
Iqbal, Salman *224*  
Ismail, Al-Hajj Siddiq *215*  
Jameel, Maulana Tariq *131*  
Khan, HE Imran *143, 166*  
Mazari, Muniba *194*  
Mir, Hamid (new) *224*  
Munir, General Syed Asim *167*  
Naecem ur Rehman, Hafiz (new) *174*  
Naqvi, Ayatollah Syed Sajid Ali *174*  
Obaid-Chinoy, Sharmeen *215*  
Parveen, Abida *215*  
Qadiri, Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas Attrar *137*  
Qadri, Muhammad Owais Raza *216*  
Rahman, Maulana Nazur *135*  
Rizvi, Professor Dr Adibul Hasan *187*  
Saif, Dr Umar *207*  
Shakil-ur-Rahman, Mir *224*  
Sharif, Mian Muhammad Shehbaz *167*  
Sharif, Nawaz *167*  
Siddiqi, Irfan *207*  
Usmani, HE Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi *88*  
Yousafzai, Malala *146, 195*

## PALESTINE

Abbas, HE President Mahmoud *143, 163*  
Abuelaish, Dr Izzeldin *188*  
Abu Sarah, Aziz *188*  
Al-Barghouti, Dr Tamim *211*  
Al-Faqih, Judge Kholoud *188*  
Al-Hroub, Hanan *189*  
Al-Jafarawi, Saleh (new) *189*  
Al-Kahlout, Hodayfa (Abu Obaida) (new) *163*  
Assaf, Mohammed *226*

Azaiza, Motaz (new) *222*  
Barghouti, Mustafa (new) *163*  
El-Kurd, Mohammed, El-Kurd, Muna *223*  
Haniyeh, HE Ismail *238*  
Hussein, Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad *171*  
Khanfar, Wadah *222*  
Khoudary, Hind (new) *223*  
Mashal, Khaled *164*  
Nusseibeh, Professor Sari *153*  
Owda, Bisan (new) *146, 223*  
Sabri, Sheikh Dr Ekrima Sa'ïd *171*  
Sinwar, Yahya *139*  
Sway, Professor Mustafa Abu *139*  
Tamimi, Ahed *145, 189*

## PHILIPPINES

Gutoc-Tomawis, Samira *167*  
Misuari, Nur *167*  
Rasul-Bernardo, Amina *195*  
Rasul, Santanina Tillah *195*

## QATAR

Al-Muftah, Ghanim *189*  
Al-Ruwaini, Nashwa *223*  
Al-Thani, Dr Abdulla bin Ali *189*  
HH Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani *82*  
HH Sheikh Moza Bint Nasser Al-Missned *185*  
HH Sheikh Aisha bint Faleh bin Nasser  
Al-Thani *189*  
HH Sheikh Al-Mayassa Al-Thani *212*

## RUSSIA

Gaynutdin, Mufti Sheikh Ravil *157*  
Kadyrov, HE President Ramzan *168*  
Nasibullahoglu, Sheikh Cafer *176*  
Nurmagedov, Khabib *147, 227*

## SAUDI ARABIA

AbuSulayman, Muna *185*  
Al-Ajmi, Sheikh Ahmad Ali *220*  
Al-Amoudi, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Ali *201*  
Al-Arifi, Dr Muhammad *145, 178*  
Al-Awni, Dr Hatim *153*  
Al-Esa, Majed *212*  
Al-Fawzan, Sheikh Salih Bin Fawzan *153*  
Al-Ghamdi, Sheikh Saad ibn Said *220*  
Al-Hathloul, Loujain *145, 189*  
Al-Ibrahim, Waleed bin Ibrahim *223*

Al-Issa, Dr Mohammad ben Abdel Karim *172*  
Al-Jasser, Dr Muhammad Sulaiman (new) *185*  
Al-Madkhali, Sheikh Rabee ibn Haadi ‘Umayr *153*  
Al-Malik, Dr Salim M *172*  
Al-Mueaqly, Sheikh Maher bin Hamad *220*  
Al-Namankany, Dr Abeer *206*  
Al-Ouda, Sheikh Salman *98*  
Al-Qarni, Dr Aaidh *178*  
Al-Saffar, Sheikh Hassan Musa *153*  
Al-Shatri, Sheikh Abu Bakr *220*  
Al-Sheikh, Sheikh Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah  
Aal *129*  
Al-Shugairi, Ahmad *178*  
Al-Shuraim, Sheikh Saud ibn Ibrahim ibn  
Muhammad *220*  
Al-Sudais, Sheikh Abdul-Rahman *146, 220*  
Al-Suhaimi, Sarah *202*  
Altwajiri, Dr Abdulaziz Othman *171*  
Badawi, Samar *189*  
Bin Laden, Bakr *201*  
HM King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud *86*  
HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin  
Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud *100*  
Obaid, Thoraya Ahmed *189*  
Olayan, Lubna *202*  
Sindi, Dr Hayat *206*

## SENEGAL

Cisse, Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Ali *126*  
Faye, HE President Bassirou Diomaye (new) *165*  
Kane, Zeinaba *192*  
Mané, Sadio *147, 226*  
Mbacké, Serigne Mountakha *173*  
N’Dour, Youssou *212*

## SERBIA

Dudić, Grand Mufti Mevlud *176*

## SINGAPORE

Alattas, Syed Hassan bin Muhammad bin Salim *181*  
Aljunied, Professor Khairudin *156*  
Faizal, Mohamed *187*  
Izzuddin, Dr Mustafa *195*  
Rasheed, Zainul Abidin *167*  
Yacob, HE Halimah *195*

## SOMALIA

Abdulmajid, Iman *213*  
Adam, Fawzia Yusuf Haji *165*

Dayib, Faduma *192*  
Diriye, Ahmad *229*  
Elmi, Asha Haji *192*  
Ismail, Dr Edna Adan *192*

## SOUTH AFRICA

Bhikha, Zain *213*  
Esack, Farid *154*  
Moosa, Professor Ebrahim *154*  
Pandor, Naledi (new) *192*  
Sooliman, Dr Imtiaz Ismail *186*

## SRI LANKA

Ismail, Jezima *195*  
Marsoof, Justice Dr Saleem *196*  
Rizwe, Mufti Mohammed Ibrahim Mohammed *175*

## SUDAN

Abdalla, Asma Mohamed *164*  
Aboulela, Leila *212*  
Ibrahim, Dr Mohamed “Mo” *202*

## SWEDEN

Zain, Maher *216*

## SWITZERLAND

Ramadan, Dr Tariq *157*

## SYRIA

Al-Assad, HE President Bashar *164*  
Al-Julani, Abu Muhammad *229*  
Al-Nabulsi, Dr Mohammed Rateb *153*  
Al-Yaqoubi, Sheikh Muhammad *131*  
Taha, HE Sheikh Uthman *133*

## TAJIKISTAN

Abdulkodirzoda, Mufti Saidmukarram *175*

## TANZANIA

Gurnah, Abdulrazak *213*  
Hassan, HE Samia Suluhu *132*

## THAILAND

Dahlan, Professor Dr Winai *207*

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Hosein, Sheikh Imran 184

## TUNISIA

Jabeur, Ons 226

Saïed, HE President Kais 164

Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi 134

## TÜRKIYE

Çelebi, Master Hasan 216

Davutoğlu, Ahmet 168

Duzyatan, Engin Altan 216

Erdoğan, HE President Recep Tayyip 92

Gelenbe, Dr Erol 208

Gülen, Muhammed Fethullah 182

Haqqani, Sheikh Mehmet Adil 182

İmamoğlu, Dr Ataç 208

Kalin, Dr Ibrahim 122

Karaman, Professor Dr Hayrettin 157

Pamuk, Orhan 216

Sabancı, Güler 203

Sancar, Dr Aziz 208

Şentürk, Dr Recep (new) 157

Topbaş, Osman Nuri 182

Ulukaya, Hamdi 203

Yalçın, Rabia 216

## UGANDA

Mamdani, Professor Mahmood 154

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Alabbar, Mohamed Ben Ali 202

Al-Ameri, Khalid 191

Al Gurg, Raja 202

Al-Jaber, Fatima 202

Al-Qassimi, Sheikhha Lubna 164

Al-Rostamani, Hana 203

Barakat, Maha 191

HH President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed

Al-Nahyan 90

HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid

Al-Maktoum 164

Mattar, Dr Maryam 191

HH Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed

Al-Qassimi 186

Abdel Haleem, Professor Muhammad 157

Abu-Sittah, Dr Ghassan (new) 7, 196

Ahmed, Riz 216

Al-Hassani, Dr Salim 208

Ali, Zeeshan 196

Aslam, Syima 217

Aziz, Asif 204

Babikir, Sheikh Ahmed 182

El-Banna, Dr Hany 187

Farah, Mohamed 227

Hasan, Mehdi 224

Hellyer, Dr Hisham 158

Hijab, Mohammed (new) 196

Husain, Mishal 224

Hussain, Nadiya 227

Islam, Yusuf 217

Ismail, Sufyan 187

Issa, Mohsin and Issa, Zuber 204

Khan, Qaisra (new) 217

Khan, Sadiq 143, 168

Mangera, Dr Mufti Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf 158

Nakshawani, Ammar 182

Patel, Sir Mufti Hamid 197

Pirzada, Shaykh Muhammad Imdad Hussain 182

Qureshi, Khawar 197

Randeree, Shabir 204

Sanders, Peter 217

Sardar, Ziauddin 158

Shah, Naseem 168

Warsi, Baroness Sayeeda 169

Williams, Paul 197

Winter, Dr Timothy (Sheikh Abdal Hakim

Murad) 136

Yusuf, Sami 146, 217

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem 228

Aden, Halima 218

Ahmad, Dr Saiyad Nizamuddin (new) 160

Al-Ninowy, Sheikh Dr Muhammad bin Yahya 183

Awad, Nihad 198

Bewley, Aisha 160

Beydoun, Khaled A 198

Carson, André 169

Chappelle, David Khari Webber 219

El-Erian, Mohamed 204

Elgamal, Dr Taher 209

Ellison, Keith 169

Hadid, Bella; and Hadid, Gigi (new) 228

Hanson, Sheikh Hamza Yusuf *124*  
Hatamleh, Dr Omar (new) *209*  
Henry, Aisha Gray *219*  
Jackson, Dr Sherman *160*  
Kabbani, Sheikh Muhammad Hisham *183*  
Kattan, Huda (new) *228*  
Khan, Dr Mehmood *209*  
Khan, Salman *198*  
Khan, Shahid *204*  
Mogahed, Dalia *198*  
Mohammed II, Warithudeen *176*  
Mohyeldin, Ayman *225*  
Nasr, Professor Seyyed Hossein *132*  
Omar, Ilhan *169*  
Oz, Dr Mehmet *225*  
Qadhi, Dr Yasir *160*  
Sarsour, Linda *198*  
Shakir, Imam Zaid *183*  
Siddique, Professor Teepu *209*  
Suleiman, Imam Omar *183*  
Tlaib, Rashida *169*  
Tyson, Mike (Malik Abdul Aziz) *228*  
Wahhaj, Imam Siraj *183*  
Wilson, Willow *219*  
Ying, Professor Jackie Y *209*  
Younis, Dr Haifaa (new) *184*  
Youssef, Bassem (new) *225*  
Youssef, Ramy *219*  
Zakaria, Fareed *225*  
Zakariya, Mohamed *219*

#### UZBEKISTAN

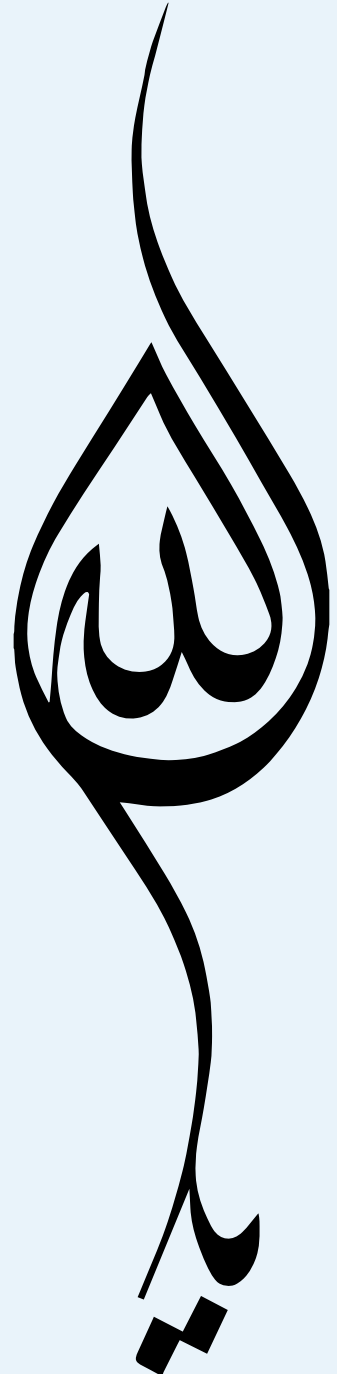
Mirziyoyev, HE President Shavkat *168*

#### YEMEN

Al-Houthi, Sheikh Abdul-Malik *128*  
Al-Jifri, Sheikh Habib Ali Zain Al-Abideen *114, 120*  
Al-Zindani, Sheikh Abdul Majeed *239*  
Hafiz, HE Sheikh Al-Habib Umar bin *80*  
Karman, Tawakkol *191*

#### ZIMBABWE

Menk, Mufti Ismail Musa *179*



Allah

The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre





the fact that the *de facto* situation is not in line with the *de jure* situation. The *de jure* situation is the situation that would obtain if the law were fully complied with. The *de facto* situation is the actual situation. The *de facto* situation is the *de jure* situation if and only if the law is fully complied with.

It is not clear, however, what the *de facto* situation is in the case of a law that is not fully complied with. The *de facto* situation is not the *de jure* situation, but what is it? The *de facto* situation is the actual situation, but what is the actual situation in the case of a law that is not fully complied with? The actual situation is the situation that actually obtains, but what is the situation that actually obtains in the case of a law that is not fully complied with?

The answer to these questions is that the *de facto* situation is the actual situation, but the actual situation is not the *de jure* situation. The actual situation is the situation that actually obtains, but the situation that actually obtains is not the *de jure* situation. The actual situation is the situation that actually obtains, but the situation that actually obtains is not the *de jure* situation.

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