

PERSONS OF THE YEAR



The Muslim 500

THE WORLD'S 500 MOST INFLUENTIAL MUSLIMS

2027



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Muslim 500

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2027

The Muslim 500: The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims, 2027

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The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre

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Al-A'raf 7, 156

And prescribe for us in this world good and in the Hereafter. We have turned to You'. He says: 'My chastisement - I smite with it whom I will, and My mercy embraces all things, and so I shall prescribe it for those who are God-fearing and pay the alms, and those who believe in Our signs;

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INTRODUCTION



Ghafir 40, 7

Those who bear the Throne and those around it glorify with praise of their Lord, and they believe in Him, and they ask forgiveness for those who believe: 'Our Lord, You embrace all things in [Your] mercy and knowledge. So forgive those who repent and follow Your way and shield them from the chastisement of Hell-fire.

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Welcome to the eighteenth 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 2.2 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
- Influencers and Sports
- 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 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 updating our previous two special features: *The Abomination of the Desolation of Gaza* (2025 edition) and *West Bank Pogroms* (2026 edition).

Then we have our regular House of Islam essay which gives an overview of Islam and its branches. Updated Top 50 and 450 lists (including Honourable Mentions) then follow.

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 Corner section covers some books that have been published recently and others which may be of interest.

The 'Major Events' section provides a timeline of the major events that have taken place over the past year. Appendices I and II provide us with 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, Tik Tok, X and YouTube Muslim users, 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. 81, the Marrakesh Declaration on p. 156, Altafsir.com on p. 164, The Muslim Council of Elders on p. 183, UN World Interfaith Harmony Week on p. 184, A Common Word on p. 232, Free Islamic Calligraphy on p. 234).

Our website [www.TheMuslim500.com] is a popular destination. We welcome your feedback and will take nominations for the 2028 edition through it.



Al-'A`raf 7, 156

My mercy embraces all things

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Dr Hussam Abu Safiya

Paediatrician and Director of Kamal Adwan Hospital, Northern Gaza



On 27 December 2024, a paediatrician in a white coat walked out of a burning hospital in northern Gaza, across rubble, towards two Israeli armoured vehicles. The photograph became one of the defining images of the Gaza genocide. Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya, has not been free since. He is *The Muslim 500*'s Man of the Year for 2027: a doctor who refused to abandon his patients, buried his son and returned to the wards, and has now spent more than six hundred days in Israeli custody without charge or trial.

The last hospital in the north

Kamal Adwan, in Beit Lahiya, was by late 2024 the last major functioning medical facility in the North Gaza governorate. Israeli forces had already raided it in December 2023 and again in October 2024, detaining staff and patients on each occasion. Abu Safiya, a paediatrician by training, was its director and its most prominent voice. Through the war he documented attacks on medical facilities, described the shortages of fuel, oxygen and medicines, and appealed to the international community to protect what remained of Gaza's health system. Amnesty International has described him as one of the most prominent voices of Gaza's decimated healthcare sector.

The siege and the refusal

On 5 October 2024 Israel imposed a blockade on northern Gaza. For the next 84 days the Kamal Adwan Hospital was surrounded, cut off, and repeatedly struck. Abu Safiya was ordered to evacuate it completely, and refused. His reasoning was simple: the building held critically ill children, newborns and many wounded people, and a large number of them could not be moved. In late October, his son Ibrahim was killed by an Israeli drone at the gate of the hospital. Abu Safiya, still in his medical coat, led the funeral prayer in the hospital courtyard, and said he believed his son had been killed to punish him for staying. On 23 November, shrapnel from a drone strike wounded him as he left the operating theatre. Colleagues later described him hobbling through the wards on a crutch, steadying a depleted team. He did not leave.

Arrest and disappearance

On 27 December 2024 Israeli troops stormed Kamal Adwan Hospital, ordered patients and staff out, and set the building alight. Abu Safiya was the last to leave, walking towards the armoured vehicles to discuss the evacuation of those still inside. He was detained, along with other medical staff and patients. The Israeli military initially denied holding him, and the World Health Organization (WHO) reported losing contact with him after the raid. Gaza's health ministry said he had been beaten. A month later Israel alleged, without publicly providing evidence, that he had been involved in "terrorist activities" and held a rank in Hamas.

Held without charge

Abu Safiya has since been detained under Israel's Unlawful Combatants Law, which permits detention without charge on the basis of evidence the authorities treat as confidential. On 28 April 2026 a district court extended his detention. On 16 June 2026 the Supreme Court rejected his appeal, allowing detention to continue until at least October. Since 3 June he has been held in solitary confinement, beyond the 15 consecutive days Amnesty International says is

permitted. His son Elias says he has been kept in the Nafha desert prison, barred from meeting his lawyer for more than 50 days, and subjected to beatings. UN experts have called for his immediate release after reports of "severe torture", and Amnesty International reports that he is denied adequate healthcare. By late August 2026 he had completed 600 days in custody.

The campaign for his freedom

His case has become the focal point of a worldwide campaign. Amnesty International has issued urgent appeals and launched public campaigns calling for his immediate and unconditional release, the WHO has supported calls for his release, and health workers from Dublin to New York have rallied under the banner #FreeDrHussamAbuSafiya. In Israel itself, a small public demonstration in Tel Aviv demanded his release—a rare act of dissent during the war. His family, led by his eldest son, have campaigned tirelessly from abroad. Physicians for Human Rights Israel is petitioning for the release of 14 Palestinian doctors from Gaza, including Dr Abu Safiya, all held without charge.

Israel's position

The Israeli military maintains that Kamal Adwan Hospital was used as a Hamas stronghold and that Abu Safiya held a rank in the organisation. Although the military has not made its evidence public, Israeli courts have upheld his detention on the basis of classified material that has not been disclosed publicly. His family, colleagues at the charity MedGlobal, and the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, which represented him, completely reject the allegations, saying he only performed medical and administrative duties.

A wider pattern

Abu Safiya is not an isolated case. Of Gaza's 37 hospitals, none is now fully functional, and more than 1,800 health facilities have been damaged or destroyed. Dozens of Gaza's doctors remain in Israeli custody; Physicians for Human Rights Israel is campaigning for 14 of them. Colleagues and family often cite the fate of Dr Adnan al-Bursh, an orthopaedic surgeon from Gaza who died in Israeli detention in 2024 after being held without charge, and fear a similar end for Abu Safiya. Israel says its detention practices comply with the law, but access for the Red Cross and independent monitors has been severely limited.

Why he is honoured

Abu Safiya embodies a principle older than any of the laws now tested by this war: that a physician's duty runs to the patient in front of him. His case also stands for the many other doctors and health workers who have paid a personal price in order to care for the sick and vulnerable. Amnesty describes Abu Safiya's detention as reflecting the systematic targeting of Palestinian health workers and the decimation of Gaza's healthcare system. A man with no army, no office and no freedom has done more than most governments to remind the world what courage and integrity look like.

Statistics

- Detained 27 December 2024; 600+ days held without charge
- Kamal Adwan Hospital raided December 2023, October 2024, December 2024
- Supreme Court upheld detention 16 June 2026, until at least October 2026



Fatemeh Zahra Sheikhabadi

Survivor of the Shajareh Tayyebeh School attack, Minab, Iran — honoured together with her classmates and teachers



On the morning of 28 February 2026, a schoolgirl named Fatemeh Zahra Sheikhabadi picked up her bag and walked to Shajareh Tayyebeh Elementary School in Minab, in southern Iran, expecting an ordinary day. She played with her friends in the yard, then her school was struck by missiles, twice, and the people she loved were killed around her. She survived. *The Muslim 500* names her Woman of the Year for 2027, and asks that the honour be understood as hers together with every child and teacher who did not come home that day: her classmates, her friends, the women who taught her, and the parents who had come to collect their children when the second missile fell. She is named because she survived and chose to speak, so that the honour may give voice to those who were silenced and bear witness to the innocent lives that were taken.

An ordinary morning

Minab is a coastal town in Hormozgan province, home to many families from Iran's Baluch minority. Shajareh Tayyebeh—the name means "Good Tree"—was a small coeducational primary school, a girls' floor above a boys' and pre-school section downstairs, the kind of building with murals on the walls and a blue gate children recognised from a distance. On 28 February Fatemeh Zahra was in the playground with her friends when the first missile hit. A second struck shortly after, as teachers were gathering frightened children into the prayer hall for safety and parents were arriving at the gate to take their children home.

What she has said

Fatemeh Zahra later travelled to Geneva to address the UN Human Rights Council in person. She described herself as a child who, like any other, wanted to go to school, learn, and play with her friends. She said she saw her friends and her teachers lose their lives in front of her, and that she witnessed things no child should ever see. She asked the representatives of the world's governments to hear the voices of the children of Minab. Her statement, on the Right to Education, was met with thirty seconds of silence in the chamber. Another survivor, the teacher Amaineh Nademi, has described the same moments: the blast that threw her and her pupils across the room, blood pouring from the injured, the building collapsing around them. "What was the crime that the students committed?" she asked afterwards.

The friends she lost

Among the dead was seven-year-old Makan Nasiri, a first-grader; nothing of him was recoverable from the rubble beyond a sweater and a shoe, and his grave in Minab's cemetery holds no remains. His teacher, Mandana Salari, was killed in the same strike, alongside her own daughter, a pupil in the same school. Nasim Neyestani, who taught second grade, had already sent 14 of her pupils home with their parents before the missile struck her classroom; her mother now visits her grave daily. A boy named Muhammad Taha should have turned ten that evening; his family marked the birthday at his graveside instead. Not far away, a grandfather named Heydar Sadeghi lost his grandson Hami in the strike, while Hami's nine-year-old sister survived; most evenings he still sits on a bench by the ruined school, and goes home afterwards, he says, to dance in front of the girl who lived.

A school marked for a decade

Reporting by Sky News and the research group Forensic Architecture found that Shajareh Tayyebeh had appeared, clearly labelled as a primary school, on publicly available maps for more than ten years. There was no ambiguity about what the building was. The

tragedy was not that its identity was unknown, but that this knowledge did not prevent a place where children learned from becoming a place where children died.

Who is responsible

The missiles that killed Fatemeh Zahra's classmates and teachers were fired by the United States, as part of the war it launched against Iran alongside Israel on 28 February 2026. A United Nations fact-finding mission later found reasonable grounds to believe US forces were responsible, and concluded that the attack was indiscriminate and therefore a war crime: it found no evidence the school was used for any military purpose, and that intelligence placing a commander at the site had not been properly verified before the missiles were launched. The United States has not published its own investigation and has called conclusions of wrongdoing premature. None of that diminishes what happened to a schoolyard full of children, and the governments that fought that war, and no one else, are responsible for it.

Living with it

Minab's cemetery now has a section set aside for the dead of Shajareh Tayyebeh, and families gather at the ruined school most evenings to grieve. The gate still carries the paintings that once welcomed children: a map of Iran, oversized pencils, portraits of scientists and poets. Fatemeh Zahra Sheikhabadi goes on living in the town where it happened, carrying the memory of a morning no child should have had to survive, let alone describe to a hall of diplomats an ocean away.

Why she is honoured

This publication has, in other years, honoured ministers, generals and scholars whose power over others was the measure of their influence. Fatemeh Zahra Sheikhabadi has no power over anyone. What she has is a memory she did not choose, and the courage to put it into words rather than let it stay silent. She is honoured not as a symbol of a war, but as herself: a girl who lost her friends and her teachers on an ordinary morning, and who lived to tell their story so that it would not be lost with them. One day, if the courts and the fact-finders ever finish their work, there may be a formal accounting of who is culpable. Until then, the clearest account of what happened at Shajareh Tayyebeh is hers: a schoolbag, a yard full of friends, a morning that did not stay ordinary, and a silence in Geneva that lasted thirty seconds for a loss that will last much longer.

Statistics

- 28 February 2026: two missile strikes on Shajareh Tayyebeh Elementary School, Minab
- Addressed the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva, 18 June 2026
- UN fact-finding mission: the attack was indiscriminate and a war crime (September 2026)



A SELECTED SURVEY OF THE MUSLIM WORLD 2026

Professor Mustafa Abu Sway

This survey highlights the major issues impacting the Muslim world over the past year. Looking at key developments through regional, national, and thematic lenses, we begin in the Middle East—the region that dominates much of this year's focus.

AL-AQSA MOSQUE/AL-HARAM AL-SHARIF: THEOLOGY, POLITICS OF PRESERVATION, AND THE HASHEMITE CUSTODIANSHIP

Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif stands as one of Islam's three holiest sites. The compound covers 144 *dunams* in the Old City of Jerusalem. This sacred site includes the Umayyad Qibli Mosque, Mamluk and Ottoman schools, massive subterranean prayer halls, open courtyards adorned with water fountains, walls framed by minarets, and the iconic golden Dome of the Rock, gilded by the late Hashemite King Hussein of Jordan, which continues to define Jerusalem aesthetically.

The historic understanding of the site extends to the entire compound rather than a single building. The 15th-century *qadi* and historian Mujir al-Din al-Hanbali (d. 1522) observed in his history of Jerusalem and Hebron, *Al-Uns al-Jalil fi Tarikh al-Quds wal-Khalil*, that, "Al-Aqsa Mosque" is the name of the entire defined space. He measured the compound wall-to-wall, spanning from Bab al-Rahmah (the Gate of Mercy or Golden Gate) in the east to the ancient Tankaziyyah School in the west—a historic Mamluk-era building confiscated by Israel after the 1967 war that led to the occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif remains a focal point of regional and international tension, driven by concerns over Israeli actions that alter the historic status quo. Israel acknowledged established arrangements that only Muslims are allowed to worship throughout the compound. Non-Muslims are permitted to visit under the supervision of the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf department, which is officially part of Jordan's Ministry of Awqaf, Islamic Affairs, and Holy Places.

The Hashemite Custodianship of the Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem is formally recognised through major international treaties, multi-



lateral bodies, and global consensus. No sovereign country officially and explicitly rejects or opposes Jordan's Hashemite custodianship of the holy sites in Jerusalem in formal diplomacy. Israel itself formally recognised Jordan's special and historic role in Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites under Article 9 of the 1994 Israel–Jordan Peace Treaty. It notes that Israel respects the present special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem, and will give high priority to the Jordanian historic role when negotiations on permanent status take place. In addition, the State of Palestine signed a formal agreement in 2013 with HM King Abdullah II reaffirming Jordan's custodianship over both Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. International recognition is reflected by the Arab League (22 member states), the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (57 member states), the European Union (EU) (27 member states), and key Western nations, including the United States, all of which explicitly support the preservation of the historic status quo under Hashemite custodianship.

Jordan and other Muslim-majority nations strongly oppose illegal settlers' actions that alter the site's religious character or undermine Awqaf oversight, with concerns intensifying following non-Muslim prayer attempts, Israeli police operations within the compound, and inflammatory political statements.

International bodies, particularly UNESCO, have repeatedly addressed the administrative status, nomenclature, and cultural heritage of the site. UNESCO resolutions (such as executive board decisions in 2016 and subsequent sessions) officially refer to the compound as "Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif", defining the entire 144-dunam area as a single, integral Muslim holy site of worship within the World Heritage site of the Old City of Jerusalem. UNESCO decisions consistently call for the preservation of the historic status quo that prevailed prior to September 2000 (i.e., the status quo ante), emphasising the exclusive authority of the Jordan-managed Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf over the administration, maintenance, and control of access to the compound. Furthermore, UNESCO considers all administrative, legal, or physical measures aimed at altering the character, legal status, or historic identity of the compound to be null and void under international law, calling on Israel as the occupying power to allow for the restoration of the historic status quo under which the Jordanian Awqaf exercised exclusive authority across all affairs relating to the site.

GAZA: HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE AND DESTRUCTION OF PALESTINIAN COLLECTIVE LIFE

B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, recently described Gaza as the centre of a deliberate campaign that has combined mass killing, large-scale displacement, destruction of basic infrastructure, severe bodily and mental harm, and the dismantling of educational, cultural, social, and family institutions. Its Gaza overview frames the crisis as a man-made humanitarian disaster shaped by Israeli policy, emphasising that restrictions on daily life, devastated infrastructure, and extreme poverty have created conditions in which civilian survival itself is at risk. Testimonies gathered by B'Tselem from Gaza residents underscore the lived consequences of this crisis: food kitchens have been reduced, families queue for scarce meals, children's schooling has been disrupted, and ordinary life has narrowed around finding food, water, shelter, and medical care. In this account, Gaza is not merely a battlefield but a society whose institutions and basic conditions for life have been systematically destroyed. In its report titled 'Our Genocide', B'Tselem said:

"Since October 2023, Israel has shifted its policy



toward the Palestinians. Its military onslaught on Gaza, underway for more than 21 months, has included mass killing, both directly and through creating unliveable conditions, serious bodily or mental harm to an entire population, decimation of basic infrastructure throughout the Strip, and forcible displacement on a huge scale, with ethnic cleansing added to the list of official war objectives.

This is compounded by mass arrests and abuse of Palestinians in Israeli prisons, which have effectively become torture camps, and tearing apart the social fabric of Gaza, including the destruction of Palestinian educational and cultural institutions. The campaign is also an assault on Palestinian identity itself, through the deliberate destruction of refugee camps and attempts to undermine the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

An examination of Israel's policy in the Gaza Strip and its horrific outcomes, together with statements by senior Israeli politicians and military commanders about the goals of the attack, leads to the unequivocal conclusion that Israel is taking coordinated, deliberate action to destroy Palestinian society in the Gaza Strip. In other words: **Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip**."

In the West Bank, B'Tselem's September 2026 report 'The Elimination Project' argues that Israeli policy has entered a new phase since late 2022 and especially since October 2023, using mutually reinforcing mechanisms of violence, intimidation, territorial takeover, movement restrictions, and institutionalised dispossession to dismantle Palestinian collective life. The report presents these developments as a single political project rather than isolated incidents. B'Tselem's settler-violence documentation states that since October 7, 2023, military attacks and settler violence have displaced Palestinian communities in the West Bank on a scale not seen since the beginning of the occupation in 1967, including dozens of fully or partially displaced communities. Its reporting also describes joint attacks by armed settlers and military forces, including assaults on Palestinian villages, injuries, livestock theft, and destruction of property, as central to the process of forced displacement.

On 12 January 2021, B'Tselem published a report describing Israel as enacting an apartheid regime:

"The Israeli regime enacts in all the territory it controls (Israeli sovereign territory, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip) an apartheid regime. One organising principle lies at the base of a wide array of Israeli policies: advancing and perpetuating the supremacy of one group—Jews—over another—Palestinians.

B'Tselem rejects the perception of Israel as a democracy (inside the Green Line) that simultaneously upholds a temporary military occupation (beyond it)."

Over the past year, the state of affairs in Gaza transitioned from full-scale, active warfare toward a highly fragile, contested, and internationally monitored ceasefire framework established following the October 2025 agreement. However, despite this shift in the security paradigm, a severe humanitarian and political crisis continues to grip the territory. The initial agreement laid out a comprehensive framework designed to halt active combat, secure the mutual release of hostages and Palestinian prisoners, scale up humanitarian aid delivery, and oversee the step-by-step withdrawal of Israeli forces to designated lines.

To manage this complex transition, the international community presented the Board of Peace in early 2026, a transitional governing structure created to supervise post-war governance, reconstruction, aid logistics, and security protocols in Gaza. Under this framework, day-to-day civilian administration was designated to be handed over to a non-partisan, technocratic Palestinian committee led by figures such as Dr. Ali Shaath, operating under the international oversight of the Board of Peace and its operational Gaza Executive Board.

In practice, implementation has remained remarkably slow and intensely disputed, defined by deep structural friction on multiple fronts. Regarding governance and oversight, while day-to-day civilian authority is nominally assigned to the Palestinian technocratic committee, questions remain regarding ultimate authority.

Humanitarian conditions also remain at a severe breaking point despite the formal end to widespread offensive operations. Persistent Israeli restrictions on aid entry, delays in physical reconstruction, destroyed sanitation infrastructure, and millions living in inadequate temporary shelters, restricted to one-third of the tiny Gaza Strip and subject to ongoing strikes, continue to fuel a severe civilian emergency.

The broader political response to these arrangements remains sharply divided. Supporters view the Board of Peace as a necessary mechanism for stabilisation, security, and economic reconstruction. Conversely, critics argue that the structure risks bypassing true Palestinian self-determination by concentrating external control over the territory's future. Ultimately, the past year in Gaza has been marked less

by a clear transition to lasting peace than by a fragile ceasefire, unresolved governance questions, continuing humanitarian hardship, and competing visions for control over the region's future.

THE IRAN WAR

On 28 February 2026, the United States and Israel launched Operation Epic Fury against Iran. This joint illegal military campaign targeted Iranian nuclear and ballistic missile facilities, security institutions, and civilian infrastructure and institutions. The opening strikes targeted Iranian leadership, killing Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and at least five other military commanders and senior officials. The United States launched a strike that hit the Shajareh Tayyebeh primary school in Minab, Hormozgan Province, killing more than 150 people, including approximately 120 schoolchildren; a UN investigation considered it a war crime because the school was a clearly marked civilian institution.

The confrontation rapidly expanded into a global economic crisis centred on the Strait of Hormuz. After the February strikes, Iran declared the strait closed and deployed sea mines, drones, and naval forces. The U.S. Navy then imposed a counter-blockade on commercial vessels bound for Iranian ports. With over 20% of global oil flow halted, oil prices experienced their largest monthly spike in recent history, disrupting global markets for liquefied natural gas, fertiliser, and raw commodities. To bypass Iranian coastal defences, shippers established alternative corridors near Oman. However, maritime brinkmanship persisted, as Iranian forces continued targeting non-compliant commercial tankers and naval assets. Meanwhile, the Saudi East-West 1,200 km oil pipeline that reaches the port of Yanbu on the Red Sea, was reportedly hit by Iraqi Shi'ite militias' drones, temporarily halting operations. Saudi Arabia showed restraint toward Iraq, consistent with the GCC countries opting for diplomatic neutrality, and avoiding being dragged into a war waged on behalf of Israel.

Meanwhile, in Iraq, militia strikes against U.S. outposts sparked intense political debates in Baghdad, prompting calls for militia disarmament to prevent direct U.S. retaliation. In Yemen, the Houthis, a key Iranian ally, first targeted Red Sea shipping and Saudi infrastructure. They later seized the key port of Mokha, establishing a second choke point at the Bab al-Mandeb Strait.

Strategically, after the UN-brokered, near five-year de facto ceasefire was shuttered, the Trump administration still refused to use force against the Houthis, even as they controlled the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. This came after their capture of strategic islands and ports, expansion of the territory they control in Yemen, and their attacks on major Saudi cities, including Riyadh.

The war precipitated a severe macroeconomic collapse in Iran. New U.S. sanctions and maritime blockades deepened the collapse. As crude oil exports fell from 2.1 million barrels per day to near zero, state coffers lost roughly $435 million in daily revenue. This decline pushed the Iranian Rial to a record low near 2.3 million per U.S. Dollar (official rate: 42,000 IRR). It also drove annual inflation to 88% and caused prices for staple goods like bread, meat, and dairy to surge. The IMF projects Iran's GDP to contract by -5.4% to -6.1% in 2026. Total war-related damage is estimated between $50 billion and $144 billion.

Although Pakistani-led mediation produced a Memorandum of Understanding intended to open a path to negotiations, a durable settlement remains elusive. Disputes over nuclear capabilities, sanctions relief, and freedom of navigation remain unresolved, so progress continues to stall. As formal agreements repeatedly break down, the conflict has settled into a war of attrition. Iran's latest proposed seven-day plan demands that Washington lift its naval blockade of Iranian ports, waive sanctions on Iranian oil sales, release an estimated $12 billion in frozen Iranian assets, and observe a ceasefire covering the region, including Lebanon and Yemen. President Trump rejected the plan and vowed to resume strikes after the midterm elections in November 2026. Since President Trump shifts his position frequently, the strikes might not take place. Even if these strikes do take place, there is no guarantee that the Strait of Hormuz will reopen, nor is there a guarantee that the whole region will not be affected.



ALGERIA-MOROCCO

The rivalry between Algeria and Morocco remains the most entrenched geopolitical fault line in North Africa. Tensions reached a tipping point in August 2021 when Algeria formally severed diplomatic relations with Morocco, closed its airspace to Moroccan aircraft, and halted gas supplies via key regional pipelines. Without direct diplomatic channels and firmly entrenched in opposing global alliances, the two neighbours exist in a state of cold war, driven by unresolved territorial disputes, contrasting foreign policies, energy competition, and a high-stakes battle for influence across the Sahel.

Several structural pillars drive this ongoing dispute. Western Sahara remains the primary flashpoint, with Morocco claiming full sovereignty over the territory through its proposed autonomy plan, while Algeria hosts, arms, and politically backs the pro-independence Polisario Front. Diplomatic momentum has tilted heavily toward Rabat following official backing for its autonomy framework from key international powers, including the United States, France, Spain, Israel, Denmark, and Greece. Morocco's normalisation of relations with Israel via the Abraham Accords, and the recent official declaration of opening embassies in both countries—accompanied by the United States' recognition of Moroccan claims over Western Sahara—deepened Algerian strategic anxieties. Algiers views defence and intelligence cooperation between Rabat and Tel Aviv as an explicit national security threat. In contrast, Algeria maintains historical strategic alignment with Russia and non-aligned blocs, whereas Morocco remains anchored to Western nations and Gulf monarchies. Algeria severed its diplomatic relations with the UAE in September 2026, while the UAE kept the door open for resuming diplomatic relations, despite their different positions on several geopolitical issues.

In addition, Rabat and Algiers compete for diplomatic dominance and influence in West Africa. Morocco promotes its Atlantic Initiative to provide landlocked Sahelian states with access to its maritime ports, such as Dakhla; while Algeria relies on military diplomacy, intelligence networks, and legacy mediation frameworks. Nevertheless, its influence faces headwinds following political shifts in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, with the latter's transitional president, Captain Ibrahim Traore, accepting the credentials of the Israeli Ambassador on 26 June 2026, days before severing all ties with France.



Future relations between Morocco and Algeria are projected to persist as an extended cold war and economic decoupling. It is also projected that direct military conflict will be avoided but closed borders and airspace will remain the norm, with Morocco continuing to leverage international backing to solidify control over Western Sahara, and Algeria maintains support for the Polisario Front to prevent total Moroccan consolidation.

EGYPT

Egypt's political, economic, and regional dynamics reflect a complex and delicate balancing act across multiple strategic fronts. On the macroeconomic level, annual inflation dropped from roughly 24% in early 2025 down towards 11.9% by early 2026, providing crucial price stabilisation for Egyptian households following consecutive rounds of currency devaluation. Governed by its $8 billion Extended Fund Facility with the International Monetary Fund, Cairo managed to reduce the general government debt towards 84% of gross domestic product which is still very high. The government allocated foreign investment capital—including proceeds from major real estate development deals like the $3.5 billion Alam El Roum project with Qatar—directly toward debt payoff, targeting a primary budget surplus of around 4%. Meanwhile, national unemployment remains steady in the range of 6.7% to 7.0%, though structural youth unemployment continues to present long-term challenges.

This economic transformation coincides with a major relocation of state power. In late 2025, the government megaproject was officially designated as The New Capital. State ministries, parliament, and central banking administrative operations completed their functional transition to the new city, effectively shifting the day-to-day administrative seat away

from downtown Cairo. The Egyptian Octagon in the New Capital is at least seven times larger than the American Pentagon in terms of floor area.

On the international front, water insecurity remains an acute priority following developments in Ethiopia. Ethiopia finalised the multi-stage filling of the 74-billion-cubic-metre reservoir behind the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and fully commissioned the hydroelectric power generation plant. In the absence of a legally binding tripartite agreement on water allocation during drought years, Cairo escalated its diplomatic posture toward Addis Ababa, maintaining that upstream Nile river flow management is an existential issue for its agricultural sector and freshwater security.

Egypt is also actively navigating security challenges along its immediate borders. In Sudan, Cairo expanded its diplomatic and military coordination with the Sudanese Armed Forces under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan against the Rapid Support Forces, providing operational intelligence, drone platform support, and logistic coordination hubs along the southern border. Along its western frontier, Egypt maintains active influence over eastern Libya alongside the Libyan National Army led by Khalifa Haftar to secure its border, prevent cross-border militant smuggling, and manage regional migration flows.

The Gaza Strip has been an ongoing national security issue for Egypt which resisted pressure to open the borders for Palestinian refugees in the aftermath of the genocide, decimated infrastructure, and deliberate lack of adequate food and water. It prevented mass permanent population displacement into Egyptian territory while managing humanitarian transit. Israel does not hide its intention to ethnically cleanse the Palestinians under the false claim of "voluntary" immigration.

Finally, Red Sea instability and neighbouring crises continue to exert significant strategic and financial strain. Prolonged maritime security disruptions and Houthi anti-ship missile attacks in the southern Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb forced major global shipping lines to reroute around the Cape of Good Hope, causing a sharp drop in Suez Canal transit fees and constraining Egypt's primary source of foreign currency.

IRAQ

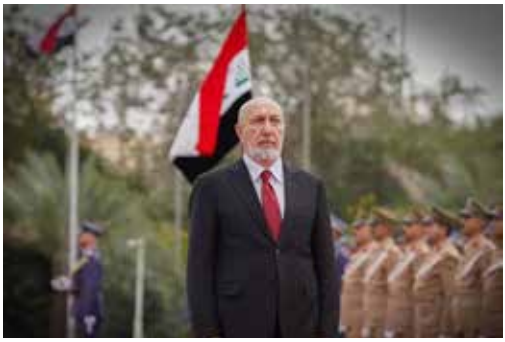
COALITION FORCES LEAVE

Iraq navigates deep political shifts, regional spillover, and ongoing economic challenges. Following late-2025 parliamentary elections, the political alliance known as the Coordination Framework consolidated its authority in parliament. In early 2026, parliament elected Nizar Amidi as President, who subsequently designated Ali al-Zaidi to form the government as Prime Minister. Prime Minister Zaidi pledged to bring non-state armed groups under exclusive state control. Some pro-Iran armed factions made their willingness to disarm conditional on the withdrawal of US forces, while others resisted disarmament or proposed retaining their weapons under alternative arrangements.

The coalition forces completed their departure by the end of September 2026.

Military escalation across the Middle East saw heavy activity by Iran-aligned factions under the umbrella of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, including Kata'ib Hezbollah. These groups launched drone and missile strikes targeting bases hosting United States personnel and strategic regional targets. Operating with high autonomy, armed factions targeted energy infrastructure in the Kurdistan Region and federal security facilities, prompting United States forces to respond with targeted retaliatory strikes against militia command nodes and logistics hubs in central and southern provinces. Additionally, Iraq's financial sector and maritime shipping routes in the Persian Gulf were increasingly leveraged to move and trade Iranian crude oil, circumventing international sanctions amid broader regional market volatility.

Relations between the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil remain strained over independent oil ex-



ports, budget allocation formulas, and public sector payroll transfers. Due to Erbil's political alignment with Western security partners, energy infrastructure and airports in the Kurdistan Region faced repeated drone and rocket strikes from southern militias. Internally, the region faces severe structural challenges, as the ruling duopoly between the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan has deepened administrative fragmentation, while public discontent grows over delayed civil service salaries and systemic corruption.

Iraq's broader economic picture remains tied to hydrocarbon reliance, where high oil revenues continue to cover a massive public sector payroll while the country struggles with severe economic diversification deficits, persistent power grid failures, and climate-induced water degradation. Iraq consistently ranks near the bottom of Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index compared to the broader Arab region, lagging far behind Gulf economies like the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, and remaining comparable to conflict-affected states like Syria, Libya, and Yemen. Public oversight evaluations estimate that up to 20% of public procurement funds are lost to systemic corruption, political patronage networks, and illicit capital flight. Prime Minister Zaidi conducted a bold anti-graft campaign, with arrests including a former minister.

The most likely baseline future scenario involves a fragile coexistence, where Iraq remains a sovereign state on paper while armed factions retain heavy representation in parliament, independent armed wings, and lucrative shadow market networks. Structural threat of socio-economic collapse looms over the coming decades, driven by rapid population growth, high youth unemployment, severe Tigris-Euphrates water supply declines, and global energy transitions that threaten to exhaust state reserves and spark widespread civil instability.

LEBANON

Over the past year, Lebanon has remained deeply affected by the devastating fallout of the Israel–Hezbollah conflict. After initial ceasefire efforts, cross-border violence escalated again in 2026, as renewed Israeli airstrikes and ground operations in southern Lebanon prompted retaliatory rocket and drone attacks from Hezbollah. As the warfare continued, massive civilian displacement followed, and negotiations persisted over a US-brokered framework aimed at establishing security arrangements



and military withdrawal timelines.

At the centre of Lebanon's political debate was the state's monopoly on force—President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam moved to reinforce state sovereignty by expanding the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) south of the Litani River and developing plans to centralise control over non-state weaponry. This objective faced immediate friction as Hezbollah steadfastly rejected disarmament demands prior to a complete Israeli withdrawal. Adding to the uncertainty is the planned drawdown of UNIFIL peacekeeping forces.

Breakthrough diplomatic developments took centre stage through unprecedented US-brokered negotiation rounds held in Washington between Lebanese and Israeli delegations. Starting in mid-April, these talks—led by Lebanese envoy Simon Karam and Israeli officials—focused on formalising a ceasefire and coordinating security mechanisms along the border. These meetings culminated in a landmark June 2026 framework agreement establishing "pilot zones" in southern Lebanon, where Israeli forces began a phased withdrawal as the LAF assumed exclusive territorial control to enforce disarmament and prevent hostilities between the neighbouring states.

As Lebanon's Prime Minister Nawaf Salam was speaking at the 81st session of the UNGA, calling for an end to the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon and the full enforcement of the ceasefire, Israeli shelling and demolitions continued. Al Jazeera reported on 25 September 2026, "More than 60 towns in southern Lebanon are still occupied by the Israeli army, where the Israelis are carrying out a systematic campaign of demolitions," and that Israeli forces are "blowing up people's homes". Israel occupies 600 sq. km in Lebanon, mostly south of the Litani River.

Amnesty International's research reveals that more than 10,000 structures were heavily damaged or destroyed between October 2024 and January 2025. Amnesty International stated that "the visual evidence shows that Israeli troops deliberately left a

trail of destruction as they moved through southern Lebanon. Among the structures affected are homes, mosques, cemeteries, roads, parks and football pitches." Amnesty International has previously called for attacks by both Israel and Hezbollah to be investigated as war crimes.

LIBYA

Over the past year, Libya reached a critical juncture marked by transactional elite collaboration, record energy output, shifting geopolitical alliances, and persistent administrative fragmentation. Libya remains divided between two competing authorities: the UN-recognised Government of National Unity in Tripoli, led by Prime Minister Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah, and the eastern-based Government of National Stability, aligned with Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army and the House of Representatives in Tobruk. Despite this political division, top-down collaboration has emerged between key family scions—specifically Ibrahim Dbeibah, nephew and adviser to Tripoli's prime minister, and Saddam Haftar, son and military chief of staff to Khalifa Haftar. Mediated by international partners, including the United States, this informal arrangement facilitated the passage of Libya's first unified national budget in 13 years, totalling 190 billion dinars, or approximately $30 billion. Constitutionally, Libya remains a unified state, yet in political practice this mediated agreement reflects a malfunctioning de facto confederation.

In the hydrocarbon sector—which generates nearly 97% of state revenue—crude production reached a 12-year peak of 1.37 to 1.43 million barrels per day. Both administrations have coordinated to reopen licensing rounds and secure major contracts with international energy companies, including Chevron, Total Energies, and ConocoPhillips. Despite this surge in oil production, Libya suffers from chronic power outages, leaving the eastern region's electricity reliant on a power grid from Egypt. Furthermore, increased oil revenues have not alleviated domestic economic hardship. Dinar devaluations by the Central Bank of Libya have driven up import costs and inflation, while a significant portion of state-subsidised fuel imports continue to be diverted into elite-managed smuggling networks.



Foreign influence continues to dictate Libya's strategic trajectory. In a major diplomatic realignment, Saddam Haftar visited Ankara for formal talks with Turkish defence officials. This shift allows the Haftar family to seek broader political legitimacy, military cooperation, reconstruction contracts, and diplomatic leverage against Russia, while enabling Türkiye to secure its 2019 maritime boundary agreement and commercial interests in eastern Libya. At the same time, United States policy focuses on promoting fiscal transparency, energy reliability, and counterbalancing Russia's military presence via the Africa Corps, formerly known as the Wagner Group. Concurrently, the European Union prioritises border security and migration management, maintaining technical engagement with eastern authorities alongside naval initiatives like EUNAVFOR MED Irini.

Libya's most probable medium-term outcome is ongoing de facto dual rule, where rival factions co-manage public funds and oil revenue allocations while preserving separate territorial control and postponing national elections. Less likely scenarios include United Nations-brokered institutional unification, renewed nationwide military conflict, systemic economic collapse, or formal territorial partition.

QATAR

Qatar pursued its Third National Development Strategy over the past year, balancing ambitious growth targets with geopolitical risks stemming from regional instability. The fallout from regional conflict includes severe damage to Qatar's Ras Laffan complex, where two of the 14 liquefied natural gas production trains and one gas-to-liquids facility were severely damaged. Consequently, Qatar Energy declared force majeure on long-term contracts with buyers in countries including Italy, Belgium, South Korea, and China. Repairs are expected to take three years at an estimated cost of $26 billion, with annual lost revenue near $20 billion. Amid these challenges, Qatar, along with Pakistan, continues to mediate between Iran and the United States.

Despite these disruptions, Qatar maintained economic growth and cultural momentum. Qatar Energy advanced its North Field East project—the



world's largest liquefied natural gas expansion—securing multiple 20-plus-year supply contracts toward its goal of 142 million tonnes per annum. Backed by Invest Qatar initiatives, the state expanded non-hydrocarbon growth across digital infrastructure, transport, and education, maintaining a non-oil sector share of over 65% of gross domestic product. Building on post-World Cup momentum, annual visitors exceeded multi-million milestones, supported by cruise tourism, Formula 1, and preparations for the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup.

Lacking alternative export pipelines, Qatar remains dependent on the Strait of Hormuz for maritime liquefied natural gas shipments and regional airspace availability for Qatar Airways operations. With a high reliance on maritime food imports and coastal desalination facilities for municipal water, regional maritime instability presents persistent risks to supply chain continuity.

Hosting Al Udeid Air Base, where Pentagon and USCENTCOM officials are weighing options not to fully rebuild damaged fixed assets in their original state across Gulf Cooperation Council countries, underscores Qatar's strategic defence ties. At the same time, maintaining a neutral mediating role through ceasefire, hostage, and humanitarian talks highlights Qatar's continuous balancing act between strategic defence alliances, regional diplomacy, and mediation.

SAUDI ARABIA

Despite maintaining official neutrality during broader regional conflicts with Iran, Saudi Arabia experienced significant economic and security pressures from maritime disruptions in both the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. To mitigate energy export bottlenecks, the Kingdom halted Gulf exports out of Ras Tanura and rerouted crude through its East-West Pipeline to Red Sea terminals in Yanbu. However, Iraqi Shi'ite militias struck the 1,200-kilometre pipeline, causing a temporary shutdown. Concurrently, a renewed frontline escalation by Houthi forces in Yemen—marked by the capture of coastal strongholds such as Mokha and Mayyun Island, pushing militarily and expanding inland, declaring naval blockade in the Red Sea, and cross-border missile and drone strikes against Saudi infrastructure including Riyadh—prompted direct coalition airstrikes.

In response to these regional war shocks, Riyadh adapted both its security posture and domestic development agenda. On 7 August 2026, Saudi Arabia signed the Makkah Pact, also known as the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, alongside Türkiye and Pakistan to establish a mutual defence framework, though its partners kept active troop deployments in reserve during initial Houthi cross-border attacks. Additionally, Saudi Arabia and 13 other Arab and Islamic countries announced the creation of a maritime military coalition to safeguard freedom of navigation through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden. This dual maritime chokepoint squeeze, with Iran disrupting the Strait of Hormuz and Houthi control affecting Bab al-Mandeb, created a secondary naval bottleneck that choked global trade, spiked maritime insurance, and pushed crude oil prices past the $100-per-barrel threshold.

Strained state revenues and oil export disruptions ultimately led to a pragmatic reset of Vision 2030, with capital shifted away from mega-projects like NEOM's The Line and redirected toward infrastructure resilience, renewable energy grid integration, housing, mining, and localising 50% of military procurement. Long-term projections now centre on fiscal discipline and structural diversification, supported by non-oil activity rising above 52% of gross domestic product, falling national unemployment, and female workforce participation surpassing 33%.

SUDAN

The civil war between General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan's Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has settled into a bloody, entrenched impasse. Defined by major geographic shifts, human rights atrocities, and complex foreign interventions, the conflict has effectively partitioned Sudan geographically, politically, and ethnically.

The past year has solidified a clear territorial split across the country. In a significant tactical turning point, the SAF recaptured key areas of Omdurman, Bahri, and Central Khartoum, including the presidential palace, airport, and military headquarters, which allowed the SAF-aligned administration

under Prime Minister Kamil Idris to re-establish a functional government presence in the national capital. Conversely, the RSF expanded its dominance in western Sudan. Following an 18-month siege, the paramilitary force captured Al-Fasher in late 2025 and advanced into Kordofan, seizing critical infrastructure including the Heglig oil field. At the same time, conflict around key hubs like El Obeid and Kadugli has devolved into long-range drone strikes and heavy artillery bombardments targeting markets, logistics nodes, and civilian infrastructure. Sustained by gold mining, local taxation, looting, and mobile tactics, the RSF maintains the capability to conduct a prolonged asymmetrical campaign despite lacking the political legitimacy to govern eastern Sudan.

Both warring parties have committed widespread violations of international law. The SAF has conducted unguided aerial bombardments on urban centres, engaged in arbitrary detentions, and obstructed humanitarian access. However, international investigators highlight that RSF abuses are systemic. The RSF and its allied Arab militias have carried out ethnic cleansing and massacres against non-Arab groups, particularly the Masalit, in Darfur, used widespread sexual violence as a weapon of war, and systematically destroyed critical healthcare and water infrastructure.

This violence has triggered the world's largest displacement crisis, with over 14 million people fleeing their homes, including 9 million internally displaced and more than 4 million refugees entering Chad, Egypt, and South Sudan. Compounded by deliberate aid blockades and agricultural collapse, severe famine now grips broad areas of Darfur and South Kordofan. The acute food crisis has escalated into the world's largest humanitarian emergency, leaving nearly 19.5 million people facing severe hunger, including 825,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition and 135,000 people trapped in catastrophic, famine-like Phase 5 conditions. Responsibility for this widespread starvation falls primarily on the warring military factions, whose ongoing conflict since 2023 has deliberately weaponised food by blocking aid convoys, destroying local markets, and displacing millions of farmers. This human-made catastrophe is further aggravated by a severe international funding collapse, leaving emergency operations like the World Food Programme (WFP) facing hundreds of millions of dollars in shortfalls and unable to safely reach the hardest-hit areas.

Both the SAF and the RSF continue to use starvation as a deliberate tactic of war by systematically choking off life-saving humanitarian access. The RSF has maintained an 18-month chokehold around the regional capital of Al-Fasher and its surrounding access roads, where paramilitary checkpoints routinely harass, rob, and detain drivers while food supplies are routinely intercepted or looted. Operating from Port Sudan, the SAF-led government has severely restricted cross-border aid clearances through regulatory blockades, delayed visas, and denied permissions that prevent international non-governmental organisations and United Nations agencies from transporting food from neighbouring Chad into rebel-held territories. Furthermore, humanitarian operations have faced direct attacks on medical and logistics assets, routine looting of warehouses, and arbitrary detention or execution of aid workers by both warring factions.

Sudan is now divided between two competing administrative entities: the SAF-aligned Government of Hope based in Port Sudan and Khartoum, and the RSF's Government of Peace and Unity in Nyala. External actors actively shape the trajectory of this conflict. Egypt serves as the SAF's primary regional partner to prevent border spillover, maintain Nile water security, and contain militia expansion along its southern border, leading political forums for Sudanese civilians while maintaining military ties with Burhan. The United Arab Emirates has been accused by United Nations experts of supplying heavy weapons and logistical backing to the RSF via routes in Chad and Libya to secure commercial interests in Sudan's gold reserves, agricultural land, and Red Sea access. Saudi Arabia operates as a mediator balancing relations with both sides, co-sponsoring the Jeddah Talks alongside the United States to secure localised ceasefires and protect Red Sea maritime routes. Meanwhile, multilateral bodies including the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the United Nations, and the European Union are working within a framework that suspended Sudan's African Union membership, pushed for an inclusive civilian transition roadmap, expanded targeted sanctions against commanders, and imple-



mented bans on the Sudanese gold trade to restrict conflict financing.

Although broader geopolitical friction has constrained foreign aid pipelines by disrupting supply routes to the RSF and limiting drone shipments to the SAF, both warring factions receive support from Arab countries, and retain sufficient revenue and arms to perpetuate the war. A protracted conflict in Sudan will most likely lead to a de facto partition similar to the Libyan scenario, where the SAF consolidates control over eastern and central regions while the RSF retains Darfur and parts of Kordofan, leaving competing parallel quasi-governments to fund localised war economies amid low-intensity drone warfare and skirmishes.

SYRIA

Following the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime in late 2024, Syria entered a transitional phase led by interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa. Over the past 12 to 18 months, the nation has pursued international re-engagement alongside macroeconomic stabilisation, while grappling with deep domestic security frictions, unresolved territorial enclaves, and borderland militarisation.

The central government in Damascus moved to formalise its administrative authority through an interim constitutional declaration and the formation of a 210-seat People's Assembly. Between October 2025 and May 2026, 140 members were selected via local electoral colleges, with President Sharaa appointing the final 70 lawmakers in July 2026. Despite these steps, power remains heavily concentrated within the executive branch. A major milestone in centralising state authority occurred on 25 August 2026, when SDF Commander Mazloum Abdi formally announced the dissolution of the Syrian Democratic Forces as an independent military body. Originally formed in October 2015 as the primary United States ground ally against ISIS and defence force for north-eastern Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces long held one-third of the country, including major energy reserves and detainee facilities like al-Hol. Building on agreements initiated in early 2026, Syrian Democratic Forces units, administrative bodies, border posts, and oil fields were phased into central state defence and interior ministries in exchange for guaranteed Kurdish cultural, linguistic, and civil rights.

Conversely, the Druze-majority province of Suwayda in southern Syria remains a primary holdout against central integration. Local resistance prevented the holding of Electoral College elections in Suwayda, leading President Sharaa to appoint two representatives directly to fill the province's seats. Governed by local civic and spiritual councils alongside armed factions such as Rijal al-Karama, Suwayda refuses to disband its local security apparatus without constitutional guarantees for federalism or municipal policing control. This resistance is reinforced by informal Israeli deterrence against Damascus military movements in southern Syria, though Suwayda faces potential economic isolation from state reconstruction funds. Meanwhile, internal peace remains fragile nationwide. Early vigilante retaliations against Alawite civilians along the coast, alongside clashes between Bedouin communities and Druze groups, highlight the central government's ongoing challenge to restrain state-aligned militias and preserve inter-communal security.

Damascus executed a swift foreign policy shift that enabled extensive Western and regional re-engagement. The United Nations and the United Kingdom eased key terror designations against President Sharaa, and on 24 August 2026, the United States officially removed Syria from its State Sponsors of Terrorism list. In addition, the transitional government terminated Russia's long-term naval base lease in Tartus, returning the strategic port to full national control. Broad diplomatic outreach across Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar led major Gulf conglomerates, such as DP World, to commit capital toward redeveloping Syrian ports, energy grids, and trade infrastructure. These efforts helped expand Syria's estimated gross domestic product from $20 billion in 2024 to $32 billion in 2025, with projections targeting $50 billion. The Damascus Securities Exchange reopened, and international financial institutions relaxed restrictions on the central bank to encourage foreign direct investment.

Despite macroeconomic progress, everyday citizens face acute cost-of-living pressure. Supply disruptions prompted 30% to 40% government price hikes on gasoline and diesel, sparking localised protests across multiple governorates. On human rights, the government established the Transitional Justice Commission and the National Commission for the Missing, allowing international bodies access to investigate past regime atrocities. However, human rights organisations emphasise that these commissions largely overlook recent abuses committed by newly integrated state-aligned forces.

In south-western Syria, security dynamics are heav-

ily shaped by the situation surrounding the Golan Heights, a 1,200-square-kilometre plateau occupied by Israel since 1967 and unilaterally annexed under its 1981 Golan Heights Law. Following the collapse of the Assad regime, Israeli forces declared the 1974 United Nations Disengagement Agreement defunct and advanced past the UNDOF-monitored Alpha Line buffer zone. The Israel Defence Forces occupy 800 square kilometres of Syrian territory and expanded their physical footprint into parts of Quneitra and western Daraa, securing strategic high ground on Jabal al-Sheikh and establishing military outposts, drawing formal condemnation from Damascus and the United Nations for sovereignty violations.

Syria's long-term trajectory involves pragmatic realpolitik and economic recovery, where executive power remains centralised under the interim constitution while lifting sanctions enables sustained Gulf and Turkish investment, leading regional enclaves to gradually accept central authority in exchange for municipal autonomy. In the light of the closure of the Straits of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb, Syria could become the land bridge and host to oil pipeline and trade route between many GCC countries and the Syrian ports on the Mediterranean.

TÜRKIYE

Located at a critical juncture bridging Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Black Sea basin, Türkiye operates under a doctrine of strategic autonomy. Under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Ankara balances alliances across competing global power blocs while expanding its sovereign defence, industrial, and diplomatic footprint.

In domestic politics and governance, executive centralisation remains pronounced under the presidential system introduced in 2018, with President Erdoğan retaining central authority over foreign policy, defence procurement, and state administration. Following major municipal election losses for the ruling AKP in 2024, the state intensified administrative and legal pressure against opposition parties.

Prosecutors opened a probe *ex officio* investigating former PM Ahmet Davutoğlu who served as Türkiye's foreign minister (2009–2014) and prime minister (2014–2016) under Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) before falling out with the president and resigning. The investigation stems from a resurfaced video originally recorded five years ago where Davutoğlu criticised government corruption, alleged that officials enriched their relatives, and claimed Türkiye was handed over to "five contractors". Davutoğlu appeared before prosecutors to testify on 7 September 2026, stating afterward that he respects the judiciary. Ahmet Davutoğlu was the architect of Türkiye's foreign policy, especially in the Arab world. He is a profound political theorist and strategist, and the probe is an attack on free expression.

Regarding economic realities and disinflation strategy, Treasury and Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek and the Central Bank continue implementing orthodox monetary tightening policies, maintaining high benchmark interest rates to combat inflation triggered by previous low-rate economic models. Although official annual inflation slowed to approximately 31.5% by mid-2026, independent research groups such as ENAG estimate figures remaining substantially higher due to elevated energy, housing, and food costs. Austerity policies and suppressed real minimum wage growth continue to impact household purchasing power, delaying single-digit inflation goals into subsequent years. The World Bank expects inflation in 2026 to decline to around 28.3% by year-end.

In its multidirectional foreign policy and defence posture, Türkiye maintains its core position as NATO's second-largest standing military while actively pursuing pragmatic ties with non-Western blocs, including a formal bid for BRICS membership, deep economic cooperation with Russia, and broader diplomatic outreach across the Global South. Ankara projects global power through an expanding defence industry, producing Bayraktar uncrewed systems, indigenous fighter platforms like KAAN, and naval combatants, with defence export deals spanning Europe, Africa, and Central Asia. In terms of regional security, Ankara maintains a permanent military buffer zone along its southern border against Kurdish YPG/PKK forces while actively shaping political transition and security arrangements in post-Assad Syria. In the Black Sea, Türkiye acts as a key diplomatic mediator between Kyiv and Moscow while maintaining strict



regulatory oversight of Turkish Straits maritime traffic under the Montreux Convention. Meanwhile, in the Eastern Mediterranean, it pursues the Mavi Vatan or Blue Homeland doctrine to project naval influence and secure sovereign claims over offshore natural gas corridors and exclusive economic zones.

Türkiye faces ongoing counter-insurgency operations in northern Syria and Iraq, Israeli incursions and occupation in Lebanon and Syria, and Israeli right-wing leaders including former PM Naftali Bennett who called Türkiye the "New Iran", which in Israeli politics is tantamount to a call for war.

YEMEN

The capture of Mayyun Island, also known as Perim Island, alongside the nearby historic port city of Mokha by Houthi forces marks a major strategic shift in both the broader Middle East conflict and Yemen's domestic landscape. Mayyun sits directly inside the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, a narrow 18-mile-wide channel through which roughly 12% of global seaborne trade and millions of barrels of oil pass daily.

This geographical position enables direct control over the maritime chokepoint. Controlling Mayyun Island allows the Houthis to station short-range anti-ship missiles, coastal radar, and artillery directly inside the narrowest point of the waterway, significantly reducing their reliance on long-range ballistic missiles and drones to target maritime traffic. Furthermore, the rapid collapse and retreat of the government-aligned National Resistance Forces led by Tareq Saleh dismantled the primary land-based buffer securing the southern Red Sea, as Mayyun Island and Mokha previously served as vital operational bases to monitor maritime activity, and protect regional shipping lanes.

The economic and energy implications of this offensive ripple globally. Occurring alongside simultaneous maritime and drone disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, Houthi control of the Bab al-Mandeb exerts severe pressure on global energy flows. Although Saudi Arabia had increasingly relied on Red Sea ports and the East-West Pipeline to bypass shipping risks in the Gulf, Houthi forces adopted an escalation-for-escalation strategy, actively threatening Saudi oil tankers, infrastructure, and commercial vessels while declaring navigation safe for unaligned shipping. Consequently, spiking maritime insurance premiums and rerouting expenses around the Cape of Good Hope continue to prolong global supply chain



delays and inflate global freight costs.

American officials met with Houthi leaders in Oman in September 2026, and the Houthis agreed not to attack US warships and tankers in exchange for the United States not attacking the Houthis, similar to the May 2025 ceasefire. This explains President Trump's refusal to attack the Houthis when, on 10 September 2026, Saudi Arabia requested direct American military strikes against Houthi forces in Yemen—a request that President Trump declined. The agreement between the Houthis and the United States has been reported to include a commitment not to attack Israeli ships, which the Houthis denied.

Regionally, the coastal advance shattered the fragile stalemate held since 2022, reigniting heavy frontline combat across Taiz and Hodeidah governorates. Houthi forces declared a siege-for-siege blockade in July 2026, targeting crude tankers and energy infrastructure in Yanbu, Jizan, and southern Saudi facilities. By 10 September 2026, the Houthi offensive secured Mokha, Mayyun Island, and the Hanish archipelago, solidifying physical control over Bab al-Mandeb. Resumed Houthi ballistic missile and drone strikes targeting southern Saudi cities like Abha, Jizan, and Najran prompted retaliatory Saudi-led coalition air raids across Sanaa, Hodeidah, and Red Sea coastal positions. Aligning with Iran in the broader regional context, but joining late, Houthi forces also maintained long-range missile and drone attacks targeting maritime routes.

The renewed fighting coincides with significant political shifts within the Yemeni government and the collapse of diplomacy. Following a rollback of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) expansionism across eastern governorates, STC Chairman Aidarus al-Zoubaidi saw his influence wane. Presidential Leadership Council Chairman Rashad al-Alimi issued a decree in January 2026 appointing Foreign Minister Shaya Mohsin Zindani as Prime Minister to head a reorganised cabinet following the resignation of Salem bin Buriek. Meanwhile, direct bilateral negotiations between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis

stalled over Presidential Leadership Council exclusion, revenue distribution debates, and international backlash against Red Sea shipping attacks, before completely dissolving amid the 2026 cross-border strikes.

Ongoing military actions continue to degrade domestic infrastructure, civil transport, and aid distribution. Because the Houthis do not operate an independent civil aviation authority, civil aviation legally remains under the Aden-based Presidential Leadership Council authority, with Sanaa International Airport relying on Yemen for limited, intermittent flights. Yemen operates a commercial fleet of just ten active airframes constrained by historical wartime destruction, airspace restrictions, and periodic Houthi seizures of aircraft landing in Sanaa. On the humanitarian front, the World Food Programme suspended general food assistance across Houthi-controlled northern territories in December 2023. The late 2026 combat around Taiz and Hodeidah displaced tens of thousands of additional households, deepening systemic food insecurity.

Yemen's future remains heavily constrained by basic survival demands and its strategic positioning along the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. There is a very strong presence of tribalism, which could translate into taking sides as tribes, with the possibility of warlords challenging central authorities. The Houthis are on the offensive, and it is unlikely that they will give up power. If the balance of power continues to be in their favour, the most likely scenario is formal partition, wherein the Houthis consolidate a militarised state across the densely populated northern highlands and Red Sea coast, while the Presidential Leadership Council governs the oil-rich southern and eastern governorates.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa has emerged as the global epicentre of violent jihadist activity, shaping the security landscape for over 370 million Muslims, roughly a third of the region's total population. As militant groups expand across rural hinterlands, global powers are manoeuvring through competing strategic, economic, and security initiatives.

Foreign engagement across the continent has undergone a major structural transformation. As Western militaries withdraw from Niger and the broader Sahel, Washington has shifted from expansive bases toward intelligence-sharing, drone partnerships, trade frameworks like the African Growth and Opportunity Act, and health programmes like the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Geopolitically, the United States focuses on securing transition minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and rare earth minerals to counter Chinese and Russian influence, highlighted by infrastructure initiatives like the Lobito Corridor connecting the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia to the Atlantic. Concurrently, France's historic security presence collapsed following military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, ending operations like Barkhane. European nations have pivoted toward bilateral economic deals, green energy initiatives in solar and hydrogen, and funding border security in North and West Africa to manage Mediterranean migration, alongside the European Union's Global Gateway infrastructure plan countering Chinese state-backed loans across East and Southern Africa. Meanwhile, Moscow reorganised the Wagner Group into the state-controlled Africa Corps under the Ministry of Defence, deploying expeditionary forces to Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and the Central African Republic to trade regime survival, counterinsurgency assistance, and diplomatic protection for lucrative gold, diamond, and uranium concessions.



Highlighting rare earth minerals and mining concessions can obscure the severe economic realities faced by the region, which accounts for 67% of global extreme poverty despite representing 16% of the world's population. Over 53 million people face severe deprivations in health, education, and living standards, while 390 million lack safe drinking water according to UNICEF Africa. Addressing these dire conditions—for which former European colonisers bear responsibility—is essential, as paying North African nations to curb border crossings cannot stop illegal migration to Europe without resolving these root causes.

Militant activity across key regional theatres is driven by several primary coalitions. Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin operates as the dominant Al-Qaeda affiliate in the Sahel, expanding from rural Mali and Burkina Faso toward coastal West Africa,

where it has intensified pressure around Bamako and Ouagadougou and launched cross-border raids into northern Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Ivory Coast. In the Lake Chad Basin across Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, and Islamic State West Africa Province, Boko Haram continuously targets state militaries and rural infrastructure. In East Africa, Al-Shabaab maintains shadow governance across southern Somalia while targeting urban centres and transit hubs, recently regaining rural districts as counter-insurgency operations stall. In Central and Southern Africa, the Islamic State Central Africa Province works alongside the Allied Democratic Forces predominantly in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province.

Instability continues to escalate within these zones. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported the execution of dozens of surrendering Malian soldiers in Gao by Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin and Tuareg-led Azawad Liberation Front forces. Juntas in the Alliance of Sahel States relying on Russia's Africa Corps face operational fatigue, setbacks, and rising civilian casualties, with Amnesty International reporting that Malian armed forces and Wagner personnel committed war crimes including murder and torture during joint operations. Concurrently, the Sudanese civil war has opened weapons-smuggling corridors across Central and West Africa, while governance vacuums, a lack of basic state services, and severe climate conditions exacerbating land and water competition provide fertile ground for ongoing conflict and extremism.

NIGERIA

President Bola Tinubu is pursuing fiscal stabilisation and economic diversification. Core measures include ending the petrol subsidy, unifying the foreign-exchange market, and consolidating taxes under the Nigeria Tax Act. While these reforms seek to reduce market distortions and strengthen domestic production, they have also heightened short-term household pressures. Specifically, the removal of fuel subsidies and the floating of the Naira have triggered severe inflation hovering near 34.8%. Consequently, national poverty rates remain high at approximately 56%, which has widened regional and social divides, exacerbated food insecurity, and limited equitable access to basic healthcare and education.

The government simultaneously faces banditry, jihadist violence in the northeast, separatist activity, and public resistance to economic adjustment. In response, it has introduced anticorruption measures and a National Single Window to simplify trade and reduce administrative leakage. Exchange-rate stabilisation and improved sovereign credit assessments may support policy continuity, although inflation and the cost of living remain significant risks.

Widespread violence persists across the country, including Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorism in the northeast, violent banditry and mass kidnappings in the northwest, farmer-herder clashes in the Middle Belt, and separatist agitation in the southeast. Kidnapping has morphed into a multi-billion-naira illicit enterprise that severely damages agriculture, paralyses rural transport, and forces families into financial ruin. Both Muslim and Christian communities suffer from criminal violence and terrorism. For instance, most of the girls in the famous 2014 Chibok kidnapping in Borno State were a mixture of Christians and Muslims, whereas kidnappings of girls in south-eastern Niger, around Diffa, affect a roughly 99% Muslim community.

Recent United Nations findings highlight a severe human rights and humanitarian crisis in Nigeria, marked by widespread mass abductions and systematic violence. According to the OHCHR, at least 402 people—predominantly schoolchildren—were kidnapped across Niger, Kebbi, Kwara, and Borno states in a single wave, with only 88 individuals managing to escape or regain freedom. UN Independent Experts have raised grave alarms over targeted violations by groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP against Christian and religious minority women and girls in northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt, including abductions. Furthermore, a CEDAW inquiry report underscores that child abductions have continued unabated since the 2014 Chibok kidnapping, with dozens of the original victims still missing alongside persistent failures to provide reparations, reintegration support, or protection for survivors. Exacerbating this situation, the World Food Programme (WFP) notes that escalating attacks on rural farming communities have driven nearly 35 million Nigerians toward severe food insecurity across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states. In response, UN officials and experts urge Nigerian authorities to take immediate, lawful action to halt abductions, rescue remaining captives, dismantle systemic impunity, protect IDP camps, and reform local security and justice responses.

On the economic front, GDP growth reached 4.4%, supported by stronger oil and non-oil activity, with non-oil exports exceeding $6 billion. Resources formerly used for fuel subsidies are being redirected

toward infrastructure, employment, and production-focused poverty alleviation programmes. Future outcomes will depend on effective implementation, inflation control, and whether benefits successfully reach vulnerable households.

Internationally, Nigeria uses its BRICS partnership to advocate for wider Global South representation and the reform of international financial institutions. It simultaneously maintains important security and trade ties with Europe and the United States, though President Trump continues to misrepresent the security situation in Nigeria. Within ECOWAS, Abuja seeks deeper integration, renewed trust following recent divisions in the Sahel, and regionally led security responses.

ASIA

BANGLADESH

Following the August 2024 uprising that ended former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year administration, Bangladesh underwent political restructuring, economic realignment, and institutional reform under an interim administration led by Chief Adviser Dr Muhammad Yunus alongside Head of State President Mohammed Shahabuddin. The interim government operated under four key imperatives: restoring public order and civil authority following the crisis; advancing constitutional and legal reforms; pursuing accountability for past abuses; and managing state affairs to ensure a clean democratic transition back to an elected parliament.

In mid-November 2025, Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal sentenced ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to death in absentia for crimes against humanity linked to lethal force used against civilian protesters during the July–August 2024 unrest. To curb executive overreach and expand parliamentary oversight, the interim leadership drafted the constitutional reform proposals of the July Charter, which voters endorsed in a national referendum. On 12 February 2026, Bangladesh held national parliamentary elections, where the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by Tarique Rahman, won a two-thirds majority. This victory returned the party to power and concluded the interim mandate as Tarique Rahman assumed office as Prime Minister.

On the macroeconomic front, gross domestic product growth stabilised around 4.0% amid high-single-digit inflation, with steady diaspora remittance inflows and foreign exchange stabilisation providing essential external relief. The FY2025–26 budget incorporated austerity measures to curb public debt servicing costs, while state banking regulators underwent leadership restructuring to address non-performing loans and capital flight. Although Ready-Made Garment exports faced intense regional competition, key international market access agreements and tariff adjustments helped preserve baseline export revenues.

Critical progress also continued across infrastructure and energy development. The Bangladeshi government and the World Bank signed agreements financing the Bay Terminal Marine Infrastructure Development Project in Chittagong to expand deep-water port capacity. Preparations advanced for the trial run and grid integration of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, aimed at improving base-load reliability and reducing dependence on imported liquid fuel. However, logistics and aviation supply chains experienced temporary operational delays following a major fire at the freight facility of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

Social, defence, and regional dynamics presented ongoing challenges. Instability in Myanmar's Rakhine State sustained security pressure along the Cox's Bazar border, while domestic security forces maintained operations targeting insurgent groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Government commissions initiated probes into past cases of enforced disappearances, administrative corruption, and violence associated with the 2024 uprising, monitored closely by civil society organisations emphasising fair trial standards. Simultaneously, climate adaptation policies gained priority as Bangladesh approached graduation from Least Developed Country status, shifting its eligibility for multilateral concessionary finance.

The situation is further complicated by the persistent Rohingya humanitarian crisis. The Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority native to Ra-



khine State, were stripped of citizenship rights under Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law, leading to pervasive statelessness and severe restrictions on basic liberties. Following a 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar, over 700,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh. Today, Bangladesh hosts approximately 1.2 million refugees, primarily in crowded camps across Cox's Bazar, with a smaller population relocated to Bhasan Char island. Decreasing international aid through the United Nations Joint Response Plan has constrained basic food and medical provisions, while the camps face seasonal flooding, fire risks, and security threats from gangs. Stalled repatriation efforts have driven thousands to attempt hazardous sea crossings across the Bay of Bengal toward Southeast Asia. Internationally, Myanmar faces genocide proceedings at the International Court of Justice alongside ongoing investigations at the International Criminal Court.

INDONESIA

President Prabowo Subianto is advancing the Golden Indonesia Vision 2045, a national strategy prioritising industrial development, education, and food, energy, and water security. Major initiatives include the Free Nutritious Meals programme and Danantara, a state holding entity tasked with coordinating strategic assets, infrastructure, and housing investments.

Internal politics have also shifted under Prabowo, who has reshaped the Red and White Cabinet by appointing career officials and specialists to several key posts. His administration has strengthened the security apparatus to address territorial tensions—particularly in Papua—while maintaining a broad political coalition ahead of the 2029 election cycle.

Economically, annual GDP growth is estimated at 5.2%, anchored by downstream processing policies that require nickel, bauxite, and copper to be refined domestically rather than exported as raw ore. Public spending and infrastructure investments aim to reduce poverty (currently reported at 8.5%) and transition workers from informal jobs into higher-skilled occupations. While these initiatives support long-term productivity, they also raise fiscal deficits and debt-service demands. Although the full-year annual deficit is expected to reach 2.85% of GDP—remaining below the statutory legal cap of 3.0%—rising deficit pressures could still trigger budget cuts in education and healthcare, where rural areas are already at a disadvantage.

External economic challenges have further strained domestic stability. In June 2026, the Indonesian Ru-



piah fell to a record low of 18,028 per US dollar, driven by surging crude oil prices tied to Gulf hostilities during the US-Israel war on Iran. As a net oil importer, Indonesia saw its trade surplus collapse from $3.3 billion to $89 million in April, causing dollar demand to surge while supply shrank. Regional economic uncertainty is further compounded by proposed US import tariffs stemming from forced labour allegations.

On the environmental front, Indonesia holds the world's third-largest tropical rainforest area, behind only the Amazon and Congo basins. However, agricultural expansion, including palm oil production, has relied heavily on deforestation and open burning. Haze from Indonesian forest and peatland fires has regularly forced school closures across several states in neighbouring Malaysia, with air quality impacts extending to Singapore and the Philippines.

In foreign policy, Indonesia balances BRICS membership with defence cooperation with the United States, commercial ties with Europe, and leadership within ASEAN. This strategy seeks greater influence for the Global South without compromising traditional Western partnerships. Regionally, Indonesia prioritises maritime logistics, small-business integration, and building more resilient supply chains.

MALAYSIA

Under Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia is pursuing economic and social reform through the Malaysia Madani ("Civilised Malaysia") framework. Launched in 2024 as an 11-year plan, it combines technology-driven growth with targeted welfare assistance. While Madani serves as the overarching national ideology, the PuTERA35 roadmap specifically aims to advance Bumiputera economic participation while shifting portions of the social safety net toward needs-based eligibility. This builds upon Malaysia's affirmative action history: following the violent 1969 racial riots in Kuala Lumpur between ethnic Malays and ethnic Chinese, the government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971. The decades-old framework was designed to elevate the eco-

nomic standing and wealth share of the indigenous *Bumiputera* ("Sons of the Soil"). By navigating these reforms, Anwar addresses a sensitive topic in Malaysian politics—balancing historical affirmative action with broader economic modernisation without destabilising ethnic harmony.

Politically, Anwar leads a multi-ethnic Unity Government facing persistent pressure from conservative Islamic parties like PAS and Malay-nationalist opponents. His administration has prioritised anticorruption initiatives and proposed a two-term limit for prime ministers. Despite intense political competition, the civil service and state institutions offer structural continuity leading into the 2028 federal election cycle. Anwar's political trajectory informs his current approach: originally the second leader of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), he was recruited into UMNO by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in 1982 before his high-profile ouster in 1998, after which he founded the People's Justice Party (PKR). Today, his alignment with former political rivals remains pragmatic.

Economically, annual GDP growth is projected at 4.3%–5.5% over the next decade, fuelled by investments in AI data centres, renewable energy, and semiconductor manufacturing. To manage public finances and address living costs, the government is replacing broad subsidies with income-targeted assistance to alleviate extreme poverty. Concurrently, PuTERA35 targets 30% Bumiputera equity ownership and 70% skilled employment representation.

In foreign policy, Malaysia balances relationships with major global powers while utilising ASEAN and its BRICS partnership to advocate for a multipolar order and resist supply-chain fragmentation. However, domestic immigration policies continue to draw international scrutiny. Reports concerning the repatriation of nearly 1,500 detained Myanmar nationals (out of 5,000) raised concerns from the UNHCR and civil-society groups regarding voluntary return and non-return principles, though the Malaysian government maintains that no Rohingya were forcibly returned. Additionally, the new Digital Passenger Processing (DPP) biometric system shifts refugee registration and status management under direct state oversight. Because Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, unauthorised entry and stay remain criminalised under domestic law. As documented by organisations like the Global Detention Project, this framework enables an immigration detention system that holds thousands of undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in depots and prisons without fixed time limits.

PAKISTAN

Over the past year, Pakistan has navigated an intricate set of economic stabilisation challenges, regional security pressures, and major-power diplomatic balancing acts. On the economic front, headline consumer price inflation cooled down toward 7.1% to 7.2%, providing substantial relief from previous historical peaks. Following programme reviews under the Extended Fund Facility and the Resilience and Sustainability Facility, the International Monetary Fund approved disbursements totalling over $3.3 billion to strengthen central bank foreign exchange reserves and support external debt obligations. Meanwhile, real gross domestic product growth stabilised in the 3.2% to 3.7% range, anchored by steady agricultural output, services, and a moderate recovery in Large-Scale Manufacturing, particularly within the construction materials and automotive sectors. Additionally, overseas worker remittances surged past $30 to $40 billion, remaining a fundamental pillar supporting the current account.

In its regional and Middle Eastern relations, Pakistan pursued a policy of strict non-alignment following military strikes in the wider Middle East in early 2026 in the context of the war on Iran. Islamabad engaged in regional shuttle diplomacy to advocate for de-escalation, even as domestic energy markets faced immediate pressures via elevated import costs and emergency fuel conservation measures. Defence and strategic security ties with Saudi Arabia deepened significantly through bilateral security arrangements, which developed into the Makkah Pact, a trilateral treaty including Türkiye.

Islamabad maintains strategic partnership with Riyadh while keeping open diplomatic channels and border communication with Tehran. Further north, tensions along the Durand Line remained elevated



over cross-border militant activity, security incidents, and ongoing formal repatriation initiatives for undocumented Afghan nationals. Along the Line of Control, relations with India remained in a managed diplomatic stalemate marked by occasional security operations, with Islamabad continuing to raise Kashmir's status at international forums while maintaining a cold, formal bilateral posture with New Delhi.

Pakistan continues to balance its engagement among major global powers. Development proceeded on Phase II of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, focusing on special economic zones, agricultural technology transfers, and power grid modernisations, while Beijing provided critical debt roll-overs to keep Pakistan's foreign debt servicing requirements manageable. Bilateral engagement with the United States centred on counterterrorism, regional stability, and economic assistance programmes, alongside navigating domestic political reactions to regional American actions. Finally, trade and energy ties with Russia expanded through grain imports, alongside ongoing consultations concerning regional transport infrastructure and long-term energy cooperation.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE AND THE AMERICAS

Islamophobia, defined as structural discrimination, prejudice, and systemic bias directed against Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim, remains a major global human rights challenge. Monitored by the United Nations, international human rights organisations, and regional advocacy groups, anti-Muslim sentiment manifests across legal, institutional, political, and social spheres.

Across the United States, advocacy groups such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations document high volumes of civil rights complaints, largely concentrated in employment discrimination, immigration processing delays, and institutional surveillance, while anti-Shari'ah legislative proposals periodically re-emerge at state and federal levels. Anti-Muslim rhetoric regularly intensifies during national election cycles, domestic security debates, and heightened geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East, while physical vandalism, harassment, and security threats against mosques, Islamic community centres, and student organisations present ongoing safety concerns.

Many politicians and officials harbour anti-Muslim sentiments. Pete Hegseth, Defence Secretary, writes in his book, *American Crusade*, that the United States is under a cultural invasion "not just at our shore, it's in your community and schools". His 2020 book states, "Muhammad is now a top ten boys' name in America." And that "Our present moment is much like the 11th Century. We don't want to fight, but, like our fellow Christians one thousand years ago, we must." "Arm yourself—metaphorically, intellectually, physically. Our fight is not with guns. *Yet*."



A quick search of the most popular names in the USA does not include "Muhammad" among them. According to the US Social Security Administration, Muhammad ranked No. 239 in 2025, with 1,473 births, representing 0.080% of total male births in 2025. It is Islamophobia for Hegseth to compare the USA in the 21st century to 11th-century crusaders, who killed Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It is dangerous because Hegseth has the Crusaders' slogan *Deus Vult* tattooed on his arm. Closer to his heart, he has a prominent Crusaders' cross tattooed on his chest.

In the United Kingdom and Europe, monitoring organisations highlight similar reports. The Islamophobia Response Unit documents that discrimination in workplace and educational environments accounts for a major share of reports, with Muslims representing nearly 45% of religious hate crime cases in England and Wales, while Tell MAMA recorded over 6,000 verified online and offline anti-Muslim incidents, marking a significant increase compared to 2022 baseline levels. Furthermore, several European nations maintain legal restrictions on religious attire, including bans or limits on the hijab, *niqab*, or religious symbols in public schools, civil service roles, and civic institutions, while reports from the Collective Against Islamophobia in Europe highlight that Muslim women wearing head coverings face a disproportionate share of public discrimination, verbal harassment, and employment barriers.

In Australia and within global institutions, systemic responses continue to evolve. A landmark federal report in Australia detailed the institutional impact



of Islamophobia, resulting in government-backed security grants for religious institutions and updates to anti-bias educational guidelines.

At the international level, the United Nations designated 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia and appointed the High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations as the Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia to coordinate system-wide anti-discrimination strategies.

From a theoretical perspective, Islamophobia intersects closely with xenophobia while operating through distinct socio-political mechanisms. While both could be manufactured, xenophobia denotes a generalised fear or hatred of perceived foreigners, Islamophobia functions through the racialisation of religion, where prejudice attaches religious identity to physical traits, traditional attire, or non-Western naming conventions, operating similarly to racial bias. This construct frames Muslim populations as permanent outsiders who are fundamentally incompatible with national identities, regardless of whether individuals are native-born citizens.

Building on Edward Said's landmark work *Orientalism*, critical scholars argue that Western cultural and political discourse historically framed Islam as passive, irrational, or intrinsically violent, allowing Western institutions to define themselves by contrast as rational, secular, and progressive. The Muslim becomes the ultimate Other.

Under this framework, over 2 billion diverse individuals are frequently collapsed into a single homogenised identity, while state security apparatuses reduce Muslim citizens to potential threat categories, normalising exceptional surveillance and civil liberties restrictions. Media and public discourse regularly reinforce these dynamics, where public anxieties surrounding regional conflicts or political debates are at times redirected by political actors into generalised anti-Muslim hostility.

These dynamics are clearly visible in public discourse, where prominent political statements demonstrate how anti-Muslim tropes become normalised in comparison to counter-narratives that emphasise human rights and interfaith understanding. Across global electoral and media spheres, political figures and commentators have integrated explicit anti-Muslim rhetoric into mainstream platforms. In Israel, *Haaretz* has documented this trend in pieces like *As Islamophobia Is Embraced Worldwide, Israel Allows Itself to Let Loose and Welcome to Israel's Most Racist Election*, noting how leaders like Benjamin Netanyahu frantically fuel anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia. A similar pattern appears in American politics; in *At Two Jewish Conferences, Speakers Turn Fears of Antisemitism Into Attacks on Islam*, *Haaretz* highlights how some conservative leaders leverage Jewish anxieties about antisemitism by casting Muslims as a central threat in the hope of shifting Jewish voters to the right.

In contrast, former US President Barack Obama highlighted in his 2009 Cairo address that Islam has always been part of America's story while acknowledging its historic academic contributions. Among religious and intellectual figures, Pope Francis emphasised that authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Qur'an are opposed to every form of violence upon signing the 2019 Document on Human Fraternity, while historian Arnold J Toynbee observed in *Civilization on Trial* that the elimination of race consciousness among Muslims represents one of the major social achievements of human civilisation.

CONCLUSION

Inspired by the overarching messages conveyed by Arab and Muslim leaders during the Eighty-First Session of the United Nations General Assembly, a clear consensus emerges regarding the most pressing challenges facing the Arab and Islamic worlds and the strategic frameworks needed to resolve them. Central to this vision is the recognition of the Palestinian issue as the fundamental core of regional stability. Addresses such as that delivered by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan underscored how global crises, including economic disparity, food insecurity, climate disasters, and protracted conflicts, compound humanitarian suffering and directly impact average families worldwide. Addressing this primary challenge requires a unified diplomatic approach: the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) must spearhead coordinated initiatives to halt military operations and civilian displacement across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank,

establish sustained humanitarian corridors, and drive post-conflict reconstruction. Concurrently, regional bodies must firmly oppose forced displacement and protect the historical status quo of Muslim and Christian holy sites in East Jerusalem, particularly Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif, by rallying behind the Hashemite Custodianship.

HM King Abdullah II reminded world leaders that the Arabs and Muslims extended their hands for peace. The Arab Peace Initiative (2002) called for Israel to end its occupation of all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights, and for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. In return, it offered recognition of Israel and the normalisation of relations with all 22 Arab States, together with security guarantees for all states in the region. King Abdullah II sent a clear message that the international community must take action, asking: "The question now is: will we act? Because the world's political inaction is not for lack of options. So, let's call it what it is: a choice. We have tools: sanctions, asset freezes, embargoes, diplomatic isolation. And we have a record of using them elsewhere. Yet with Israel, resolutions end where they begin: on paper."

Regional instability in countries like Libya, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon is driven by internal conflicts, proxy warfare, and state fragility, which cause severe humanitarian crises and threaten trade routes like the Red Sea. To fix this, external Arab and Muslim nations must stop arming warring factions, act as neutral mediators, dismantle non-state armed groups, and help restore national sovereignty.

The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamid Al Thani, in addressing the 81st session of the UNGA, warned that the Gulf region is passing through a dangerous phase and stressed the need for a regional collective security system. He advocated for diplomatic dialogue and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz to prevent wider conflict. The "regional collective security system" is excellent, but it should be open to all Arab and Muslim states, for all of them are negatively impacted by the current war, and the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb crises.

No long-time security is possible without taking care of economies of all Arab and Muslim states who are at a disadvantage. The region faces a sharp divide between wealthy GCC nations and low-growth, heavily indebted non-oil economies suffering from inflation and high youth unemployment. Solutions require targeted cross-regional investments—such as developing Sudan's agriculture for regional food security—and accelerating post-oil transitions through investments in renewable energy, AI, infrastructure, and sovereign wealth development. An example of an agreement for futuristic development took place on the sidelines of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The UAE will equip one million Lebanese with generative AI skills.

At the geopolitical level, regional nations are shifting away from sole dependence on traditional Western defence guarantees—now viewed as inadequate—and foreign military bases, choosing instead to pursue strategic multi-alignment by strengthening ties with China, India, and BRICS. To shield against global power dynamics, the region must establish autonomous, self-reliant defence networks, utilising models such as Saudi-Pakistan bilateral pacts, arrangements involving Türkiye, and the 14-nation Arab and Islamic maritime coalition. Ultimately, building a unified pan-Arab and Islamic security framework offers a definitive path toward protecting sovereignty, boosting local defense manufacturing, enabling diplomatic mediation, and driving long-term self-reliant development.



Professor Abu Sway frequently lectures globally as well as in the heart of Jerusalem, Palestine, at Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa. 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. He is the 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*.

SPECIAL FEATURE

UPDATE ON THE ABOMINABLE DESOLATION OF GAZA AND WEST BANK POGROMS

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SPECIAL FEATURE - UPDATE ON THE ABOMINABLE DESOLATION OF GAZA AND WEST BANK POGROMS

An update to the two special features of *The Muslim 500: The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims* 2025 and 2026 editions.

2025 - *The Abomination of the Desolation of Gaza*
2026 - *West Bank Pogroms*

TWO FEATURES, ONE FILE

The 2025 edition gave its special feature to Gaza – *The Abomination of the Desolation of Gaza*. The 2026 edition gave its special feature to the West Bank – *West Bank Pogroms.* This supplement treats them as a single file, because in the year since the second was written the evidence for reading them as one policy has become considerably harder to argue with.

Three things have changed since those features were published. First, the Gaza ceasefire of October 2025 has produced neither an end to killing nor a beginning of reconstruction, and the shape of what it has produced instead is now measurable. Second, the West Bank has recorded the highest rate of settler attacks in the 20 years such attacks have been counted, and the first sustained emptying of refugee camps since 1967. Third, and most consequentially for the reader, the endpoint has stopped being an inference. Serving ministers now describe it on the record, in front of cameras, as policy they are prepared to execute.

HOW TO READ THE FIGURES

Where a number is attributed to the Gaza Ministry of Health, it is a confirmed, named count of bodies received or identified. It is a floor, not an estimate. Independent mortality studies place total deaths materially higher. Where a number comes from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), it is drawn from incident-level verification, and the series definitions differ between reports; where two OCHA series appear to disagree, both are given with their definitions rather than reconciled.

ON THE WORD "POGROM"

The 2026 feature chose it deliberately. The defining feature of a pogrom is not the scale of the violence but the relationship between the mob and the state: the mob acts, and the state does not restrain it, because the state does not wish to. Human Rights Watch found in August 2026 that settlers carrying out these attacks operate with the financial, material and legal backing of the Israeli state, and that attacks frequently occur alongside army units or with soldiers standing by. That is the relationship the word names.

NOTES AND SOURCES

Source series. Gaza Ministry of Health counts are described by international agencies as generally reliable and are maintained by medical professionals.

HRW, 20 Aug 2026. "West Bank: Israel-Backed Settler Violence Drives Displacement."

Definitions. OCHA counts a "settler attack" only where it caused casualties or property damage; other series count all recorded incidents. The two produce different daily averages.

GAZA — THE DESOLATION IN NUMBERS

The 2025 feature was written when the confirmed toll stood in the mid-40,000s. These are the figures of record as this supplement closes.

73,821

Palestinians confirmed killed since 7 October 2023
Gaza Ministry of Health, to 17 September 2026

21,500

of them children
Gaza Ministry of Health, to 17 September 2026

~174,800

injured
Gaza Ministry of Health, September 2026

1,386

killed after the ceasefire took effect, with 4,789 injured
10 October 2025 to 17 September 2026

107,941

housing units severely damaged, destroyed or otherwise uninhabitable — 60% of the 178,632 inspected
Detailed Damage Assessment, reported by OCHA, 4 September 2026

627

housing units repaired by humanitarian partners in all of 2026 to August
Shelter Cluster, via OCHA

$71.4bn

estimated cost of reconstruction
United Nations estimate

THE RATIO

The Ministry figure counts the identified dead. A mortality study published in February 2026 estimated 75,200 violent deaths and a further 8,540 excess non-violent deaths for the period to 5 January 2025 alone — some 34.7% above the Ministry's count at that date — and found that 56.2% of the violent deaths were women, children and the elderly. A separate analysis of a classified Israeli military database, reported in May 2025, listed roughly 8,900 Palestinian fighters among a toll then standing at 53,000, implying a civilian proportion above 80%.

The ratio matters because it is the ratio, not the raw total, that speaks to intent. Among recorded conflicts since 1989, very few produce a civilian share at this level.

NOTES AND SOURCES

Al Jazeera. Ceasefire violation tracker, citing the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza.

NPR, 18 June 2026. Reported the ceasefire toll passing 1,000, noting near-daily strikes and fire along the line dividing Gaza into Israeli and Palestinian-controlled zones.

Scale. 627 repaired against 107,941 uninhabitable is one unit restored for every 172 lost.



GAZA — WHAT THE CEASEFIRE PRODUCED: A SIEGE CONTINUED BY OTHER MEANS

The October 2025 agreement stopped the offensive. It did not stop the killing, restore the health system, or permit reconstruction. Eleven months on, what it has produced is a static population penned inside a demolished territory under daily fire.

THE LINE

Gaza is divided by the "yellow line" into Israeli-controlled and Palestinian-controlled zones. Two million people remain confined to less than half the land area. Between 10 October 2025 and 14 April 2026, the Gaza government media office recorded 921 occasions on which Israeli forces shot at civilians, 97 raids beyond the yellow line, 1,109 bombardments and shellings, and 273 demolitions of property.

HEALTH

Of 37 hospitals, 20 remain partially functional and none is fully functional. More than 1,825 health facilities have been damaged or destroyed. The World Health Organization (WHO) recorded 22 attacks on healthcare in the early months of 2026 alone. Sixty-two per cent of primary healthcare medications were out of stock in April 2026. Roughly two functioning CT scanners serve the entire population. Chemotherapy drugs, anaes-

thetics and antibiotics are all in critical shortage, and patients are dying of conditions that would ordinarily be treatable.

SHELTER, THROUGH TWO WINTERS

An estimated one million people still urgently required emergency shelter assistance at the start of 2026. Storms and flooding on 30 December and 9 January drove families into contaminated floodwater; at least five children died of exposure after the ceasefire, and a seven-year-old drowned when an improvised displacement site flooded. Shelter assistance then fell 37% between May and June 2026 on funding shortfalls. As the 2026 rainy season approaches, OCHA reports that winter shelter supplies are still awaiting Israeli approval to enter, and that most of the land less vulnerable to flooding remains inaccessible.

CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL

Only about 42% of Gaza's school-age population was enrolled in any temporary learning space for the 2025–26 academic year. In January 2026 Israeli authorities announced the suspension of several international NGOs across the occupied territory, a measure the Secretary-General asked them to reverse.

The 2026 humanitarian appeal sought $4.06bn for 2.97 million people, 92% of it for Gaza. It was not met.

NOTES AND SOURCES

MAP, June 2026. Health-system figures, with testimony from Al-Shifa: shortages unchanged since the ceasefire.

OCHA Situation Report 60. Winter flooding, exposure deaths, one million requiring shelter.

UN Security Council, Aug 2026. Acting Special Coordinator Ramiz Alakbarov told the Council that shelter and non-food stocks were depleted and Gaza was at breaking point before winter.

Resolution 2803 (2025). Endorsed the US-backed plan: Hamas disarmament, staged Israeli withdrawal, reconstruction. Withdrawal and reconstruction have not occurred.



GAZA — THE STATED ENDPOINT: THE GOAL, IN THEIR WORDS

The 2025 feature had to argue from conduct what the objective was. That is no longer necessary. On 2 September 2026, at a conference hosted by Ynet and Yedioth Ahronoth, Israel's Defence Minister was asked what the solution for Gaza is.

> *"There is no real solution for Gaza in the end without this migration."*
>
> — Israel Katz, Minister of Defence, 2 September 2026. Reported by Al Jazeera.

Asked how it would be carried out, he said the government is organised and prepared to get Palestinians out — "by sea, by air, by every way possible" — and that Egypt's refusal closes that route. He added that the plan awaits American cover, and that the US President has not cancelled it.

> *"Currently, President Trump didn't cancel this; he froze it."*
>
> — Israel Katz, same remarks, as reported by Middle East Eye. He added that the moment would come when Israel judged Hamas to be in breach, at which point it would move forward militarily and territorially.

Four days later the National Security Minister put numbers to it. His party's plan, launched into the campaign for the 27 October election and named for both the 2005 disengagement and the 7 October attack, proposes a dedicated government ministry to administer departures.

250,000

people to leave Gaza in year one

Otzma Yehudit, "Disengagement 710", 3 September 2026

1,110,000

within three years

1,860,000

within seven years — the great majority of the population

> *"Instead of illusions of peace now, we need actions of emigration now."*
>
> — Itamar Ben-Gvir, Minister of National Security, 3 September 2026. Reported by *The Times of Israel*.

Behind the campaign rhetoric sits machinery. A Defence Ministry agency to oversee "voluntary departure" was approved by the security cabinet in March 2025. Three leaked development plans circulating around the Board of Peace — the GREAT Trust, Project Sunrise, and a Rafah compounds pilot run through the US-led Civil-Military Coordination Center — incorporate relocation of the population explicitly or implicitly.

NOTES AND SOURCES

France 24, 2 Sep 2026. Katz: the government "is organised and prepared to get them out".

Carnegie, July 2026. Analysis of the Board of Peace charter, which does not mention Gaza, and the three plans that appear to inform its activity on the ground.

JTA, 6 Sep 2026. Reports the concept moving from taboo to mainstream position across the Israeli right during the election campaign.

Al Jazeera, Mar 2025. Security cabinet approval of the Katz plan for a departures agency under the Defence Ministry.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS · MINISTERS AND RABBIS: THE LANGUAGE OF INTENT

The quotations given previously are recent and explicit. The ones that follow are older, and in some cases more disputed, but they form the rhetorical ground from which those statements grew — and South Africa has cited several of them directly in its genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

NETANYAHU: AMALEK

On 28 October 2023, as Israeli ground forces entered Gaza, Prime Minister Netanyahu addressed the nation: Israel's soldiers, he said, were "longing to recompense the murderers… committed to eradicating this evil from the world," before invoking Deuteronomy's command concerning the Amalekites — a people the Bible instructs Israel to "utterly destroy… both man and woman, child and infant." He closed: "Remember what Amalek did to you. We remember and we fight." On 3 November he repeated the phrase in a letter to troops, adding that the war was one "between the sons of light and the sons of darkness." Footage subsequently surfaced of Israeli soldiers chanting "wipe off the seed of Amalek" inside Gaza.

On 11 January 2024, at the opening day of South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), lawyers cited the Amalek invocation directly as evidence that senior Israeli officials had expressed genocidal intent, and submitted the soldiers' chant as corroborating conduct.

NETANYAHU: THE MAP, AND THE RIVER TO THE SEA

On 22 September 2023, addressing the UN General Assembly, Netanyahu held up a map of "The New Middle East", showing Israel in full colour across the territory of the West Bank and Gaza, with no Palestinian state marked anywhere on it. Commentators described the map as an open embrace of "Greater Israel" under cover

of a normalisation push with Saudi Arabia. In January 2024, pressed by Washington on a postwar settlement, Netanyahu told reporters he would not accept Palestinian sovereignty and that Israel needed security control "over all territory west of the Jordan" — the formula widely read as Israeli control "from the river to the sea", a phrase his own Likud party platform has used of Israel's borders since 1977.

GREATER ISRAEL, MAPPED BY A SITTING MINISTER

In March 2023, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich addressed a Paris conference from a podium bearing a map, modelled on the emblem of the pre-state Irgun militia, showing Israel's borders extended across Jordan, southern Lebanon, southern Syria and part of Saudi Arabia. Jordan summoned Israel's ambassador in protest; Israeli officials disavowed the map and affirmed the peace treaty border. In a 2024 documentary, Smotrich repeated the claim in religious terms: "It is written that the future of Jerusalem is to expand to Damascus," adding that Israel's borders should "absolutely" extend east of the Jordan river, "but slowly." In April 2026, announcing plans for Israel's position in southern Lebanon, he said there would be "a political component in Lebanon that will extend our borders to the Litani river."

MINISTERS ON REMOVING GAZA'S POPULATION

In January 2024, before the "migration" language on the previous page became mainstream, Smotrich told Israeli Channel 12 he supported what he called voluntary emigration from Gaza: "All we need is to find countries willing to take them in." That November, Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu told a radio interviewer that dropping a nuclear weapon on Gaza was "one way" that Israel "wouldn't hand the Nazis humanitarian aid," and that Gaza's people "can go to Ireland or deserts." Netanyahu suspended him from cabinet meetings and called the remarks "not based in reality"; Eliyahu was later reinstated.

THE RABBINATE

Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu, Chief Rabbi of Safed since the late 1980s and the minister's father, endorsed his son's nuclear remarks days later in a weekly lesson: "There is now much debate about what should be done with Gaza… Should we drop a nuclear bomb on them? It's an option." He has a long record of such statements: in 2010 he told an Israeli newspaper that "a Jew should make the Arabs flee," and in 2005 he called for a hundred armed volunteers to resettle the evacuated Gush Katif settlements in Gaza.

His father, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel from 1983 to 1993, wrote to Prime Minister Olmert in 2008 that there was "absolutely no moral prohibition against the indiscriminate killing of civilians" in Gaza during a prospective offensive, on the grounds that the whole population bore collective responsibility for rocket fire. The ruling predates the current war by 15 years; the family has continued to restate its substance since 2023.

Rabbi Dov Lior, Chief Rabbi of Hebron and Kiryat Arba from 1976 to 2014 and still head of the Council of Rabbis of Judea and Samaria, the main rabbinic body for West Bank settlements, told Israel National News in 2026: "In war, there are no innocent civilians. The concept is a creation of the Left." He has separately written that Jewish law permitted the destruction of Gaza to secure Israel's safety, and has in the past called for Bedouin citizens of Israel to be encouraged to leave the country.

NOTES AND SOURCES

ICJ, South Africa v. Israel. Opening oral submissions, 11 Jan 2024, citing the Amalek speech and soldiers' chants.

Likud charter, 1977. States that "between the Sea and the Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty."

Jordan, Mar 2023. Summoned Israel's ambassador over Smotrich's map; the UAE separately condemned it.

***Times of Israel*, Nov 2023.** Eliyahu suspended from cabinet, later reinstated after Ben-Gvir's intervention.

Israel National News / Daily Sabah, 2026. Dov Lior interview, "no innocent civilians".

WEST BANK — THE POGROM IN FIGURES: THE WORST YEAR ON RECORD

As of late October 2026, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) verified that 1,145 Palestinians (including at least 250 children) have been killed in the West Bank since October 7, 2023, including 98 so far in 2026. The pattern of violence has broken every record in the 20 years such violence has been documented.

1,380+

settler attacks causing casualties or property damage, 1 January to 31 July 2026 — about 6.6 a day

OCHA, 31 July 2026

6,200+

Palestinians displaced by settler violence since January 2023, including more than 3,000 children

OCHA, 23 July 2026

250+

Palestinian communities affected by those attacks

123

communities fully or partially displaced — of which 47 emptied entirely, with settler outposts established afterwards on some of the vacated land

~900

Palestinians injured in settler attacks by end July — more than half of all Palestinian injuries recorded in the West Bank

17

Palestinians displaced per day in 2026 by settler attacks and permit demolitions — double the daily rate of the preceding three years

OCHA, 10 July 2026

~170

injured by settlers in March 2026 alone: the highest single month since documentation began in 2006

OCHA

THE TRAJECTORY

The rate is the argument. Recorded settler incidents rose from roughly one every three days in 2020 to more than three a day in 2026. In the Jordan Valley, attacks causing casualties or property damage ran at 23 a month by July 2026, against two a month in 2020. Injuries caused by settlers averaged 2.3 Palestinians a day in 2025 and 3.8 a day in 2026. Killings by settlers reached at least 15, including two children, by 24 July 2026, on course to pass the previous record of 16 set in 2023.

THE CHILDREN

By July 2026, 16 Palestinian children had been killed and 187 injured by Israeli forces or settlers across the West Bank and East Jerusalem in that year, and more than 1,500 children had been displaced by settler attacks, permit demolitions and forced evictions.

CLOSURE AS A WEAPON

Movement restrictions have isolated roughly 12,000 Palestinians in communities west of Ramallah. In one documented case the transfer of a four-month-old baby to hospital was delayed at an Israeli-staffed road gate; the infant was pronounced dead on arrival. Meanwhile the World Food Programme (WFP) has cut West Bank food assistance from 400,000 people to 200,000.

NOTES AND SOURCES

UN News, 21 Jul 2026. Settler attacks account for 55% of Palestinian injuries in the West Bank in 2026.

Series note. OCHA's six-a-day average counts only incidents causing casualties or property damage; the one-in-three-days to three-a-day comparison uses a broader incident series. Both show the same direction.

Jiljiliya, 16 May 2026. 22 Bedouin families — 137 people, 81 of them children — forcibly displaced after a mass settler attack. They had already been displaced from three other communities in 2023.



WEST BANK — THE BEDOUIN AND HERDING COMMUNITIES: ETHNIC CLEANSING, AND THE VILLAGES THAT NO LONGER EXIST

In June 2026 Amnesty International concluded that Israel is carrying out a state-driven campaign of ethnic cleansing against Palestinian Bedouin and herding communities in Area C. Three months later the Israeli group B'Tselem reached the same word independently, from inside Israel's own civil society.

TWO REPORTS, THE SAME CONCLUSION

- **Amnesty International, "Erasing anything Palestinian", 10 June 2026.** Based on 64 testimonies and satellite evidence, the 150-page report found that 117 predominantly Bedouin and herding communities, comprising 5,910 people, were fully or partially displaced between January 2023 and April 2026, and that settler violence functions as an integral part of an organised state policy. It concluded this amounts to the war crime of unlawful transfer and the crime against humanity of forcible transfer, committed to ethnically cleanse Area C and expand settlements at the displaced communities' expense. Amnesty's Secretary General, Agnes Callamard, launched the report in Berlin and called on Germany and other EU states to impose sanctions and a trade ban on the settlements.
- **B'Tselem, "The Elimination Project", 14 September 2026.** Drawing on almost 2,000 testimonies and three decades of documentation, this 249-page report identifies five interlocking mechanisms — violence, movement restriction, economic strangulation, social and political destruction, and ethnic cleansing — that together dismantle the conditions for continued Palestinian existence in the West Bank. It counts 1,107 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces between 7 October 2023 and 31 August 2026, including 245 children; 75 communities displaced; and 1.07 million dunams (about 18% of the West Bank) seized by outposts and settlement farms. B'Tselem names Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich's 2017 "Decisive Plan" as the policy's ideological framework, and says the same "logic of elimination" it has applied to Gaza, where it has separately used the word genocide, is being realised in the West Bank by different means.

THE COMMUNITIES NAMED

Both organisations, and OCHA's own tracking, name specific places. Among the communities reported fully or partially emptied since January 2023:

- **Masafer Yatta / South Hebron Hills.** Khirbet Zanuta — entirely depopulated after repeated settler threats; roughly 250 residents fled in October 2023, and by Amnesty's March 2025 satellite survey the hamlet "no longer exists". Khirbet Bir al-Idd and other Masafer Yatta hamlets — herding communities forced out after sustained attacks on water and livestock infrastructure. Khirbet al-Rakeez and Jinba — hamlets inside the military's designated "Firing Zone 918", facing recurring demolition orders.
- **Jordan Valley and central West Bank.** Wadi al-Seeq — roughly 200 residents given one hour to leave by settlers and soldiers on 12 October 2023; most are registered Palestine refugees, and the village has stood empty since. Ein Samiya — over 200 residents displaced under systemic settler pressure. Al-Qabun and Abu el-Ajaj (near al-Jiftlik) — depopulated or severely damaged by repeated demolition waves.
- **Khan al-Ahmar and the E1 corridor.** Khan al-Ahmar — the Jahalin Bedouin community whose decade-long legal fight against demolition, to clear ground near Ma'ale Adumim, is the best-known case of threatened Bedouin displacement. Abu Nawar and Abu al-Sultan — Bedouin communities inside the E1 corridor, facing the same pressure.

None of this is separate from the annexation architecture described on the pages that follow: Amnesty and B'Tselem both read the displacement of herding communities and the planning law that clears E1 as the same project.

NOTES AND SOURCES

Amnesty, 10 Jun 2026. 117 communities, 5,910 people; report based on 64 testimonies.

B'Tselem, 14 Sep 2026. 1,107 killed to 31 Aug 2026; 1.07m dunams seized; names Smotrich's 2017 plan as the framework.

Settlement growth. By April 2026, Peace Now counted 363 settler outposts in the West Bank; the current government has approved a record 104 new settlements since taking office.



WEST BANK — OPERATION IRON WALL, AND THE END OF THREE REFUGEE CAMPS

On 4 September 2026 the UN human rights office published its findings on what happened to the Jenin, Nur Shams and Tulkarem refugee camps. It is the clearest account yet of how a population is removed without a single deportation order being signed.

The operation began on 21 January 2025 in Jenin, extended to Tulkarem on 27 January and to Nur Shams on 9 February. Israeli forces went door to door ordering residents out. They then used airstrikes, armoured bulldozers and controlled detonations to render the camps uninhabitable, cut water and electricity, destroyed hundreds of homes and blocked humanitarian access. UNRWA could not operate inside.

33,000+

residents forcibly displaced — the entire population of all three camps

OHCHR, September 2026

102

Palestinians killed in the period covered, including 21 children — 46% of all killings by Israeli forces in the West Bank over that period

33,362

still displaced as of July 2026, eighteen months later

UNRWA

52 / 48 / 36%

of structures destroyed or damaged in Jenin, Nur Shams and Tulkarem camps by October 2025

THE INTENT, AS RESIDENTS WERE TOLD IT

Displaced Palestinians told the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) that Israeli officers said there would be no more refugee camps, and that they should "all go to Jordan". In 2025 the Defence Minister ordered the military to remain in the three camps and stated that the displaced would not be allowed to return. Operations in Jenin have now run past 590 consecutive days.

> *"...to expel as many Palestinians as possible and make way for more illegal Israeli settlements".*
>
> — Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, describing the apparent aim of the operation, 4 September 2026. He called on Israel to comply with the ICJ's finding that its presence in the occupied territory must end as rapidly as possible.

WHY THIS IS THE GRAVEST FINDING

OHCHR concluded that displacement on this scale, this systematic and this prolonged, raises serious concerns of the crime against humanity of forcible transfer, and that rendering entire areas uninhabitable to prevent return, absent imperative military necessity, also raises concerns of collective punishment and ethnic cleansing. These camps housed people already made refugees in 1948, holding recognised refugee status and a recognised right of return. Destroying the camp destroys the claim attached to it. That is the point of destroying the camp.

NOTES AND SOURCES

OHCHR thematic report. "Destruction of Palestinian refugee camps in northern West Bank", December 2024 – January 2026.

Named among the dead. Sondos Shalabi, eight months pregnant, shot as she tried to drive away from Nur Shams. Saddam Hussein Rajab, ten, shot in the stomach in Tulkarem while waiting for his father to walk with him to the mosque. In Jenin, a two-year-old girl shot in the head while eating dinner.

Context. Israeli military operations were already the single largest cause of West Bank displacement — 42% of the total — between January 2023 and December 2024.

WEST BANK ANNEXATION: THE LEGAL AND PHYSICAL ARCHITECTURE, AND WHAT IT IS FOR

Settler violence clears ground. Planning law keeps it. The two have been running in parallel, and the second is now moving faster than the first.

63,311

housing units advanced through planning across the occupied territory in 2025 alone

European External Action Service, 2025 settlements report

3,401

units approved in E1, the corridor east of Jerusalem; a tender for the first 1,234 opened 18 August 2026, with bids closing 19 October — eight days before the general election

54

new settlements officially approved in 2025 — an annual record

51,000+

housing units approved for deposit or final authorisation since this government took office in 2022

figure issued by the Finance Minister's office, end 2025

WHAT E1 DOES

E1 occupies roughly 12 square kilometres at the geographic heart of the West Bank. Once built, it severs the northern West Bank from the south, cuts East Jerusalem off from both, and forecloses any contiguous Palestinian metropolitan area linking Ramallah, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Ir Amim judges that even partial implementation would create irreversible facts. The Secretary-General has called it an existential threat to a contiguous Palestinian state. Israel committed three billion shekels to its infrastructure in September 2025, allocated 335 million shekels in March 2025 for a segregated "Sovereignty Road" diverting Palestinian traffic around it, and demolished some 50 Palestinian shops at al-Eizariya in May 2026 to clear the route.

ANNEXATION BY STATUTE AND BY ARCHAEOLOGY

In February 2026 the security cabinet approved measures extending Israeli authority into areas nominally administered by the Palestinian Authority. Separately, a bill to apply Israeli domestic law to all antiquity sites in the West Bank was advanced through the Knesset's Education Committee, alongside expropriations at Sebastia in February 2026 and Nabi Samwil in May. Peace Now reads the timing plainly: the government is using every remaining month before the election to create facts on the ground.

"maximum land with minimum Arab population"

— Bezalel Smotrich, Minister of Finance, presenting a plan to annex 82% of the West Bank, 3 September 2025. He described this as the plan's main principle, and said there can never be a Palestinian state. Reported by Press TV.

"The goal of sovereignty is to, once and for all, remove the Palestinian state from the agenda."

— Bezalel Smotrich, same press conference. Reported by Truthout. The accompanying map left six Palestinian population centres as islands.

Of E1 itself he said its approval buries the idea of a Palestinian state, and, in light of the February 2026 cabinet measures, that they will continue to bury it. In April 2026 he told the *Jerusalem Post* that everything Israel does in the West Bank is coordinated with the US administration, that sovereignty over the whole territory is not yet supported by Washington but that he hopes to succeed in that too, and that there is now much less international condemnation than there used to be.

NOTES AND SOURCES

Knesset, July 2025. A non-binding motion to apply sovereignty to the West Bank and Jordan Valley passed 71–13.

Crisis Group, Oct 2025. "Sovereignty in All but Name". Notes the 2022 coalition agreement committing the Prime Minister to work toward applying sovereignty, and the transfer of civilian authority in the West Bank to the Finance Minister.

August 2026. The UK summoned Israel's ambassador over the E1 tender. 85 members of the US Congress wrote to the Secretary of State in June urging action to stop it.



THE CONVERGENCE: ONE POLICY, TWO THEATRES, ONE ENDPOINT

Read separately, the two features describe a war and a crime wave. Read together, against the statements now on the record, they describe one demographic project pursued at two speeds in two places, with a single objective: the maximum land under Israeli sovereignty holding the minimum number of Palestinians.

The method differs because the terrain differs. In Gaza the instrument is mass destruction followed by a managed exit: a population penned in rubble, denied reconstruction, kept hungry through successive winters, while ministers assemble the agencies and receiving-state arrangements to move them out. In the West Bank it is attrition at the scale of the household: the hilltop attack, the burnt olive grove, the demolition order, the road gate, the emptied camp, the tender published eight days before an election. Neither requires a single order of expulsion to be written down.

WHAT EACH THEATRE SUPPLIES TO THE OTHER

- Gaza supplied the precedent that a population can be displaced at scale without decisive international consequence. The West Bank is where it is being applied.
- The West Bank supplies the political coalition. Annexation is its organising purpose, and the Gaza emigration ministry is now an election promise inside it.
- Both supply each other with vocabulary. "Sovereignty" for annexation, "migration" for expulsion, "closure areas" for confinement, "heritage" for expropriation — each chosen to survive translation into a diplomatic communiqué.

THE FINAL GOAL, STATED RATHER THAN INFERRED

The 2025 and 2026 features could only reason from conduct to intent. This update does not have to. The endpoint has been described by the ministers responsible for delivering it, in these terms, within the past twelve months:

- Israeli sovereignty applied to 82% of the West Bank, on the principle of maximum land with minimum Arab population, leaving six Palestinian enclaves.
- The Palestinian state removed from the agenda permanently, which is stated as the purpose of sovereignty rather than a side effect of it.
- No return for the refugee camp populations, and no more refugee camps.
- For Gaza, no solution without "migration"; a government organised and prepared to move people out by sea, by air and by every way possible; a seven-year schedule for 1.86 million departures; and a dedicated ministry to run it.

The UN Commission of Inquiry found in September 2025 that statements by senior Israeli officials, taken with the conduct, were sufficient to establish genocidal intent. That is the legal significance of the quotations in this supplement: under the Genocide Convention, public statements by those with authority are not rhetoric—but evidence.

B'Tselem reached a parallel conclusion from inside Israeli civil society: its 2025 report "Our Genocide" found Israel's conduct in Gaza met the legal threshold for genocide, and its September 2026 report, "The Elimination Project", argues that Gaza and the West Bank are "different manifestations of the same regime project", with the West Bank subjected to the same logic of elimination by non-genocidal means. That an Israeli human-rights organisation, working independently of Amnesty and the UN Commission, arrived at the same structural reading is itself part of the evidence.

Commission of Inquiry. The September 2025 report found four of the five acts prohibited under Article II of the Genocide Convention and recommended genocide charges be added to the ICC arrest warrants; the June 2026 report found Palestinian children deliberately targeted.



OBLIGATION: WHAT FOLLOWS FOR EVERYONE ELSE

The legal position is not ambiguous, and it does not wait on the ICJ's final judgment.

WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DETERMINED

- **ICJ, July 2024.** Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful and must be brought to an end as rapidly as possible; settlements must be evacuated; third states must not aid or assist in maintaining the situation.
- **ICJ provisional measures, 2024.** The Commission of Inquiry has confirmed that these placed all states parties on notice of a serious risk of genocide, which is the trigger for the duty to prevent.
- **Commission of Inquiry, September 2025 and June 2026.** Genocide in Gaza; war crimes in the West Bank; children deliberately targeted.
- **OHCHR, September 2026.** Serious concerns of the crime against humanity of forcible transfer in the northern West Bank camps.

"...flagrantly disregarded the orders for provisional measures from the International Court of

Justice...”

— Navi Pillay, then chair of the Commission of Inquiry, quoted in the UK House of Commons, 5 February 2026.

THE DUTY TO PREVENT

Under the Genocide Convention as interpreted in Bosnia v. Serbia, the obligation to prevent arises the moment a state learns, or should have learned, of a serious risk — not when a court delivers final judgment. The Commission's findings make ignorance unavailable as a defence. Its recommendations include ceasing arms transfers, including jet fuel, that could aid the commission of genocide.

WHAT HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH ASKED OF THIRD STATES IN AUGUST 2026

- Targeted sanctions on those implicated in ongoing grave abuses.
- Suspension of arms transfers to Israel.
- A ban on trade with illegal settlements.
- Consideration of suspending preferential trade agreements.

Thirty-seven non-governmental organisations have been effectively banned from the territory and international media are excluded. This supplement exists because a small number of UN bodies, Israeli and Palestinian monitoring organisations and local journalists have kept counting under those conditions. That capacity is itself now a target, and its loss would not be incidental damage — it would be the last precondition for doing all of this unobserved.

PRINCIPAL SOURCES

UN bodies — OCHA oPt Situation Reports (Apr–Sep 2026), Gaza Reports 60 & 66, West Bank Updates 347–358; OHCHR, “Destruction of Palestinian refugee camps in northern West Bank”, 4 Sep 2026; Commission of Inquiry reports, Sep 2025 & June 2026; UNRWA, July 2026; Security Council releases.

Monitoring organisations — Human Rights Watch, 20 Aug 2026; Medical Aid for Palestinians, June 2026; Peace Now, Ir Amim, Emek Shaveh, Kerem Navot, Terrestrial Jerusalem, via FMEP reports.

Amnesty International and B’Tselem — “Erasing anything Palestinian: Israel’s ethnic cleansing of West Bank Bedouin and herding communities,” 10 June 2026; “The Elimination Project”, 14 September 2026.

Analysis — European External Action Service, 2025 settlements report; International Crisis Group, “Sovereignty in All but Name”, October 2025; Carnegie Endowment on the Board of Peace, July 2026; Chatham House on de facto annexation, April 2026.

Ministerial statements — Al Jazeera, France 24, Middle East Eye, *The Times of Israel*, *Jerusalem Post*, JTA, NPR, Truthout, Press TV, UN News, Hansard.

ICJ, South Africa v. Israel — opening oral submissions, 11 January 2024, citing the Amalek speech and soldiers’ chants.

On the Rabbinate — Israel National News, *Daily Sabah*, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Ynetnews, *Jordan News*, *Times of Israel.*

THE HOUSE OF ISLAM

I. THE HOUSE OF ISLAM

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(with the exception of President Obama's speech)

The 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 this 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 seeth 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.'[1]

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*'.[2] 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:

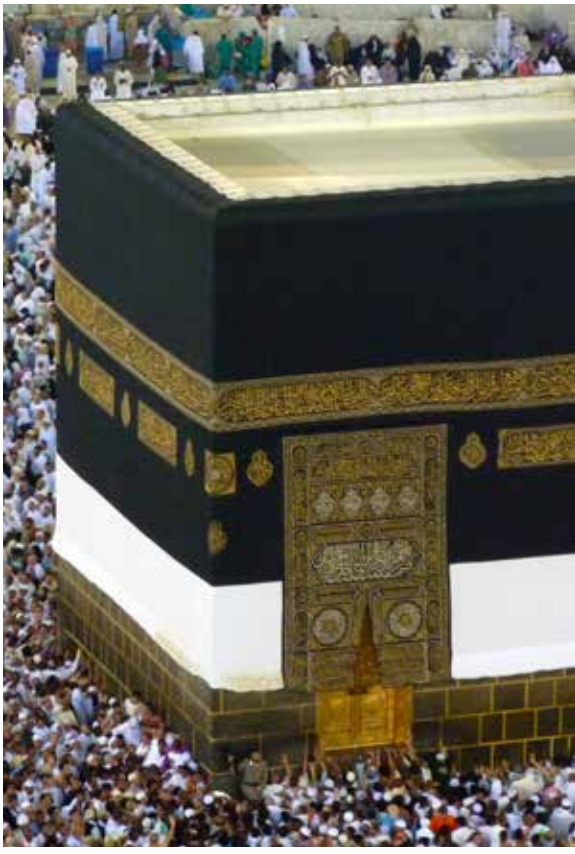
> And Jesus answered him, The first of all commandments is...the Lord our God is one Lord; And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy understanding, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second commandment is like, namely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

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:[4] 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 then 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 *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 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 Avenzoor [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.'[5]

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



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



II. MAJOR DOCTRINAL DIVISIONS WITHIN ISLAM

Sunni Theology

1) ASH'ARI AND MATURIDI SCHOOLS: SUNNI ORTHODOXY[1]

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.

1 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 'seveners' 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 20th 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'h* 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 *mutabarrikin* (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.

THE TOP 50

The Top 50

1. HM King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud
King of Saudi Arabia, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (8)

&

HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud
Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia (14)

1. HE Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif
Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (450 lists)

&

Field Marshal Asim Munir
Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of the Army Staff of Pakistan (450 lists)

1. HE President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
President of the Republic of Türkiye (7)

4. HE Ayatollah Sayyid Mojtaba Khamenei
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran (New)

5. HM King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein
King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Custodian of Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem (5)

6. HH Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani
Emir of Qatar (1)

7. HE Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Usmani
Mufti and Leading Scholar (2)

8. HE Sheikh Al-Habib Umar bin Hafiz
Founder and Director of Dar Al-Mustafa (3)

9. HE Sheikh Dr Ahmad Muhammad Al-Tayyeb
Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar University, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque (6)

10. HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah
President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies (18)

11. HE Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Al-Sistani
Marja of the Hawza (11)

12. HH President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan
President of the UAE (9)

13. HE Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim
Prime Minister of Malaysia (10)

14. HM King Mohammed VI
King of Morocco (12)

15. Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda
Scholar and Educator (13)

16. HE President Prabowo Subianto
President of Indonesia (15)

17. Sheikh Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi
Leader of the Houthi (21)

18. Maulana Mahmood Madani
President of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (16)

19. HRE Amirul Mu'minin Sheikh As-Sultan Muhammadu Sa'adu Abubakar III
Sultan of Sokoto (17)

20. Professor Ibrahim Kalin
Scholar & Director of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) (20)

21. HE Yahya Cholil Staquf
General Chairman of Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama (19)

22. HE President Abdel Fattah Saeed El-Sisi
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt (22)

23. HE Sheikh Dr Ali Gomaa
Former Grand Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt (23)

24. Sheikh Habib Ali Zain Al-Abideen Al-Jifri
Director General of Tabah Foundation, UAE (24)

25. Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson
Teacher and Co-Founder of Zaytuna College (25)

26. Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Ali Cisse
Leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi Order (26)

27. Sheikh Usama Al-Sayyid Al-Azhari
Minister of Awqaf (Religious Endowments) (27)

28. Sheikh Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi
Scholar and Spiritual Guide (33)

29. HE Captain Ibrahim Traoré
Interim President of Burkina Faso (29)

30. Sheikh Mustafa Hosny
Televangelist (28)

31. Al-Habib Muhammad Luthfi bin Yahya
Preacher (31)

32. Maulana Tariq Jamil
Scholar and Preacher (32)

33. Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr
Philosopher and Professor (34)

34. Dr Timothy Winter (Sheikh Abdal Hakim Murad)
Scholar (35)

35. HE Samia Suluhu Hassan
President of Tanzania (36)

36. HE Sheikh Muqtada Sadr
Scholar and Politician (40)

37. HE Sheikh Uthman Taha
Calligrapher (37)

38. Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi
President of Ennahda Party (38)

39. Mohamed Salah
Footballer (39)

40. HE President Shavkat Mirziyoyev
President of Uzbekistan (450 lists)

41. Maulana Nazar ur-Rehman
Amir of Tablighi Jamaat (41)

42. HE Ibrahim Saleh Al-Hussaini
Scholar (42)

43. HE Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada
Leader of the Taliban (43)

44. Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas Attar Qadiri
Preachers & Spiritual Guides (44)

45. HE President Mahmoud Abbas
President of Palestine (45)

46. HE Ahmed Al-Sharaa
Interim President of Syria (47)

47. Professor Mustafa Abu Sway
Scholar (49)

48. Sheikh Dr Hatim Al-Awni
General Supervisor of the ICSFP and Scholar (450 list)

49. HE Zohran Mamdani
Mayor of New York City (450 lists)

50. HE Dr Hussam Abu Safiya
Former Director of Kamal Adwan Hospital and Paediatrician (New)

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.

Rulers and Politicians

1. The Following are Joint Number 1
   - HM King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, & HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, Saudi Arabia
   - HE Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, & Field Marshal Asim Munir, Pakistan
   - HE President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye
4. HE Ayatollah Sayyid Mojtaba Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
5. HH Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Qatar
6. HM King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Custodian of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem
7. HH President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, UAE
8. HE Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia
9. HM King Mohammed VI, King of Morocco
10. HE President Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia
11. Sheikh Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi, Leader of the Houthi, Yemen
12. Professor Ibrahim Kalin, Scholar & Director of the National Intelligence Organization, Türkiye
13. HE President Abdel Fattah Saeed El-Sisi, Egypt
14. HE Captain Ibrahim Traoré, Interim President of Burkina Faso
15. HE President Samia Suluhu Hassan, Tanzania
16. HE Sheikh Muqtada Sadr, Scholar and Politician, Iraq
17. HE Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi, Politician, Tunisia
18. HE President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan
19. HE Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, Leader of the Taliban, Afghanistan
20. HE President Mahmoud Abbas, Palestine
21. HE President Ahmed Al-Sharaa, Syria
22. HE Zohran Mamdani, Politician, USA
23. Khalil Al-Hayya, Head of Hamas, Palestine
24. HE Former Prime Minister Imran Khan, Pakistan
25. Sir Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, UK
26. HE Abdulrahman Mohamed El-Sayed, USA

Scholars, Admin of Religious Affairs and Preachers

1. HE Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Usmani, Scholar and Deobandi Leader, Pakistan
2. HE Sheikh Al-Habib Umar bin Hafiz, Scholar and Founder of Dar Al-Mustafa, Tarim, Yemen
3. HE Sheikh Dr Ahmad Muhammad Al-Tayyeb, Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar University, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque, Egypt
4. HE Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Al-Sistani, Marja of the Hawza, Najaf, Iraq
5. HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, Mauritania
6. Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda, Scholar and Educator, Saudi Arabia
7. Maulana Mahmood Madani, Leader and President of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, India

8. HRE Amirul Mu'minin Sheikh As-Sultan Muhammadu Sa'adu Abubakar III, Sultan of Sokoto, Nigeria
9. HE Yahya Cholil Staquf, Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia
10. HE Sheikh Dr Ali Gomaa, Former Grand Mufti, Egypt
11. Sheikh Habib Ali Zain Al-Abideen Al-Jifri, Director General of Tabah Foundation, Yemen
12. Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson, Teacher and Co-Founder of Zaytuna College, USA
13. Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Ali Cisse, Leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi Order, Senegal
14. Sheikh Usama Al-Sayyid Al-Azhari, *Min*ister of *Awqaf* (Religious Endowments), Egypt
15. Sheikh Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi, Scholar, Syria
16. Sheikh Mustafa Hosny, Preacher, Egypt
17. Al-Habib Muhammad Luthfi bin Yahya, Preacher, Indonesia
18. Maulana Tariq Jamil, Scholar and Preacher, Pakistan
19. Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Philosopher and University Professor, USA
20. Dr Timothy Winter (Sheikh Abdal Hakim Murad), Scholar, UK
21. Maulana Nazar ur-Rehman, Amir of Tablighi Jamaat, Pakistan
22. HE Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh Al-Hussaini, Scholar, Nigeria
23. Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas Attar Qadiri, Founder of Dawat-e-Islami Movement, Preacher, Pakistan
24. Professor Mustafa Abu Sway, Scholar, Palestine
25. Sheikh Dr Hatim Al-Awni, Scholar, Saudi Arabia
26. HE Grand Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi Amoli, Iran
27. Dr Aref Ali Nayed, Libya
28. HE Sheikh Salih Al-Fawzan, Saudi Arabia
29. Professor Akbar Ahmed, Pakistan
30. Dr Ingrid Mattson, Canada
31. HE Alhaji Dr Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, Nigeria
32. Mufti Abul Qasim Nomani, India
33. Dr Mohamed Bechari, France
34. HH Prince Rahim Aga Khan V, UK
35. Dr Amr Khaled, Egypt
36. Sheikh Nuh Keller, Jordan
37. Dr Muhammad Al-Arifi, Saudi Arabia
38. Dr Zakir Abdul Karim Naik, India

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

1. HE Sheikh Uthman Taha, Calligrapher, Syria
2. Mohamed Salah, Footballer, Egypt
3. HE Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, Palestine
4. HM Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, Jordan
5. Sami Yusuf, UK
6. Sheikh Abdul-Rahman Al-Sudais, Saudi Arabia
7. Bisan Owda, Palestine
8. Mehdi Hasan, UK
9. Bassem Youssef, USA
10. Sadio Mané, Senegal
11. Khabib Nurmagomedov, Russia

1

For the first time ever, *The Muslim 500* has named a joint Number 1 for its 2027 edition. While this unified top spot features five individuals, it is actually divided into three shared entries that represent a massive shift in how Muslim nations are working together to protect one another.

The main reason for this historic decision is the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement. Signed on 7 August, 2026, and activated during an emergency summit in Riyadh, this mutual-defence pact unites the immense wealth of Saudi Arabia, the advanced tech and manufacturing of Türkiye, and the powerful military strength of Pakistan into a collective alliance. Modelled on a "one for all, all for one" approach to security, this pact has completely reshaped regional politics. In recognition of this new alliance, the 2027 edition honours the leaders who built it at the very top of the list:

Saudi Arabia

- **HM King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud *(Last Year: 8)***
  Bio: Born in 1935, King Salman became the absolute monarch of Saudi Arabia in 2015. He holds immense significance for the world's 2.2 billion Muslims as the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.
- **HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud *(Last Year: 14)***
  Bio: Born in 1985, the Crown Prince (often called MBS) is the Kingdom's Prime Minister and day-to-day ruler. He is the architect behind "Vision 2030", an ambitious plan modernising Saudi Arabia's economy, and a chief driver behind the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement.

Pakistan

- **HE Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif *(Last Year: 450 Lists)***
  Bio: Born in 1951, Sharif is a veteran politician currently serving his second term as Pakistan's Prime Minister. Known as an effective administrator, his administration rapidly approved the necessary political frameworks to lock Pakistan into the trilateral security pact.
- **Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir Ahmed Shah *(Last Year: 450 Lists)***
  Bio: Born in 1968, Munir is Pakistan's first Chief of Defence Forces and Army Chief. Promoted to Field Marshal in May 2025, he directs the alliance's vital defensive backbone, including the rapid deployment of troops, air-defence systems, and strategic military infrastructure.

Türkiye

- **HE President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan *(Last Year: 7)***
  Bio: Born in 1954, Erdoğan has shaped Turkish politics for over two decades, first as Prime Minister and now as President. Under his leadership, Türkiye has become a global powerhouse in defense technology.

This 2027 edition captures a historic turning point, highlighting five leaders whose shared vision for collective security has completely transformed modern Islamic diplomacy.



﴾ 1 ﴿

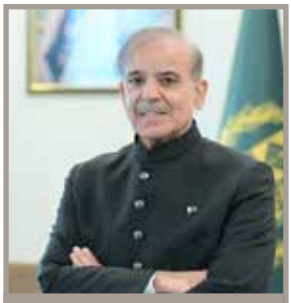
His Majesty
King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud

&



﴾ 1 ﴿

His Royal Highness
Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud



﴾ 1 ﴿

His Excellency
Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

&



﴾ 1 ﴿

His Excellency
Field Marshal Asim Munir



﴾ 1 ﴿

His Excellency
President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

HM King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud

King of Saudi Arabia, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques



﴿ 1 ﴾

Country: Saudi Arabia
Born: 31 December 1935 (age 91)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: King with authority over 35 million residents of Saudi Arabia
School of Thought: Moderate Salafi
2026 (8)
2025 (5)
2024 (2)

HM King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud was proclaimed the seventh King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in January 2015, following the death of his half-brother, King Abdullah. Prior to this, he served as Crown Prince from June 2012 and held numerous senior roles, including Governor of Riyadh Province for nearly five decades.

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques: As Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman oversees the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, which are visited annually by millions of global pilgrims. Each year, between two and three million Muslims perform the Hajj, while millions more undertake the Umrah. Under the auspices of Saudi Vision 2030, multibillion-dollar expansion projects have entered highly comprehensive operational phases across the *Masjid al-Haram* in Makkah and the *Masjid an-Nabawi* (Prophet's ﷺ Mosque) in Madinah.

The Landmark Makkah Joint Defence Agreement: On August 7, 2026, the geopolitical security architecture of the Middle East underwent a historic realignment when Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Pakistan officially signed the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement at Al-Safa Palace. The agreement marks a profound structural shift away from historical reliance on traditional Western security guarantees. It pairs Saudi financial influence and strategic geography with Türkiye's advanced military technology (as NATO's second-largest military force) and Pakistan's strategic operational capacity as the only nuclear-armed power in the Muslim world.

Military Spender

Saudi Arabia has consolidated its position as one of the world's most aggressive military spenders, dedicating an estimated $83 billion to defense annually. Consistently ranking among the top global spenders, the Kingdom allocates roughly 6.5% of its total GDP to advanced defense hardware, cutting-edge radar networks, and sophisticated missile shields.

Strategic Transition of Oil Reserves and Vision 2030: Saudi Arabia holds 17% of global oil reserves, making petroleum the foundation of its economy. However, through Saudi Vision 2030, the Kingdom is shifting away from oil dependency. This socioeconomic blueprint aims to diversify state income by turning the nation into a global hub for logistics, tourism, renewables, and AI. While financial adjustments have recently scaled back massive gigaprojects, Saudi Arabia is rapidly expanding its international influence by investing heavily in global sports, culture, and golf, notably securing the hosting rights for the 2034 FIFA World Cup.

Global Humanitarian Footprint: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief) delivers rapid aid to victims of natural disasters and civil conflicts globally, having funded over 2,400 distinct projects spanning more than 92 nations, with total expenditures surpassing $6 billion.

Stance on the Gaza and Regional Conflicts: The Kingdom's official diplomatic position has explicitly stated to international intermediaries that there will be no diplomatic normalization with Israel without the immediate cessation of hostilities, a complete withdrawal of forces from Gaza, and the implementation of an irreversible pathway toward an independent, globally recognized Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

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

Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia



1

Country: Saudi Arabia
Born: 31 August 1985 (age 41)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia
School of Thought: Moderate Salafi
2026 (14)
2025 (12)
2024 (12)

HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud is the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia. He is widely regarded as the Kingdom's de facto ruler and principal architect of its current political, economic, and social transformation. He is often referred to in Western media as MBS.

Rise to Power: At the beginning of 2015, outside Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman was a relatively unknown prince. Following his father's accession to the throne in January 2015, he was quickly elevated to a series of senior posts, including Minister of Defense and head of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs. In June 2017, he was named Crown Prince after King Salman removed Prince Mohammed bin Nayef. In September 2022, he was officially appointed Prime Minister, a position traditionally held by the King, further consolidating his domestic executive power.

The New Trilateral Defence Pact: On 7 August 2026, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Pakistan officially signed the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement at Al-Safa Palace. Signed under the executive direction of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the landmark treaty establishes a collective security framework in which an armed attack against any one member is treated as an attack on all. The agreement signals a profound structural shift away from historical reliance on traditional Western security guarantees, significantly deepening Saudi Arabia's strategic and defence ties with two of the Muslim world's leading military powers.

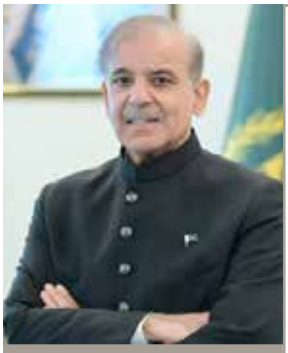
The Yemen Conflict and Diplomatic Fallout with the UAE: A central element of MBS's foreign policy shifted from leading a 2015 military coalition in Yemen to seeking an exit track. However, the wider regional war shattered the informal truce. By October 2026, intense conflict was reignited, with deadly Houthi missile strikes hitting Riyadh's airport and Aramco headquarters, triggering heavy retaliatory Saudi airstrikes.

Catalyst of Social Change: The Crown Prince has spearheaded sweeping reforms, easing restrictions on women to allow driving, independent travel, and full workforce integration. He has revitalised the cultural landscape by reopening cinemas, hosting major music festivals, and leading a landmark 2017 anti-corruption drive. Simultaneously, his Saudi Vision 2030 strategy has entered its final phase in 2026, aiming to permanently diversify the economy away from hydrocarbon dependency. Backed by the Public Investment Fund, this master plan drives futuristic gigaprojects like NEOM and Qiddiya while securing the hosting rights of the 2034 FIFA World Cup to cement Saudi Arabia's global soft power.

Stance on the Gaza Genocide: MBS has repeatedly and strongly condemned military operations in Gaza as disproportionate and a form of "collective punishment". He has also explicitly reiterated that Saudi Arabia will not establish formal diplomatic normalization with Israel without an immediate cessation of hostilities and a clear, irreversible pathway toward an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

HE Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan



1

Country: Pakistan
Born: 23 Sept 1951 (age 75)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: Primie Minister of 260 million Pakistani citizens
School of Thought: Sunni
2026 (450 lists)
2025 (450 lists)
2024 (450 lists)

Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is the 24th Prime Minister of Pakistan, assuming office for his second term in March 2024. The younger brother of three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, he serves as the President of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). Known to be a workaholic and a rigorous administrator, he previously served as the longest-serving Chief Minister of Punjab.

Economic Turnaround and Macroeconomic Stabilization: Under Sharif's targeted administrative governance, Pakistan successfully pulled back from the brink of default, transitioning from a phase of volatile crisis to verified macroeconomic stability. Supported by structural reforms executed under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Extended Fund Facility, the nation's key economic indicators have demonstrated a marked turnaround: Real GDP growth accelerated to 3.70% in FY 2026, up from 3.18%; national consumer price inflation fell sharply from crisis-era peaks of nearly 30% to an average of 6.2%; and the State Bank of Pakistan's liquid foreign exchange reserves more than doubled, climbing to $21.4 billion.

The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement: In a historic expansion of Pakistan's regional security footprint, Sharif signed the landmark Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (the Makkah Pact) on 7 August 2026 alongside Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Signed at the Al-Safa Palace in Makkah, the mutual accord establishes a collective defense clause stipulating that an armed attack against any one of the three signatory nations will be treated as an attack against all parties. Sharif has firmly championed the pact as a purely defensive instrument of solidarity designed to project Islamic unity, strengthen regional deterrence, and safeguard holy sites, positioning Islamabad as a vital external security provider.

Sincere Peace Mediator in the Middle East: Amidst the devastating international crisis involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, Sharif has successfully positioned Pakistan as an indispensable, neutral peace mediator. Partnering with the Pakistani military high command and regional actors like Qatar, Sharif facilitated critical direct back-channel diplomacy to de-escalate hostilities in the Gulf. His efforts culminated in the mediation of the Islamabad Memorandum on 18 June 2026—a historic diplomatic framework signed alongside US President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian that successfully established a 60-day negotiation window. Addressing the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2026, Sharif reaffirmed Islamabad's enduring commitment to playing the role of a "sincere and honest mediator" to ensure stability across strategic global waterways.

Domestic Challenges: He faces intense domestic gridlock, navigating a severe economic crisis marked by historic inflation and crushing debt. His administration remains deeply polarized by the persistent popularity and digital influence of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan. Mass protests by Khan's supporters constantly disrupt major cities, presenting Sharif with an ongoing struggle when it comes to maintaining political stability.

Field Marshal Asim Munir

Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of the Army Staff of Pakistan



﴿ 1 ﴾

Country: Pakistan
Born: 1968 (age 58)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: Head of military which de facto controls Pakistan
School of Thought: Sunni
2026 (450 lists)
2025 (450 lists)
2024 (450 lists)

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir is the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, commanding the world's sixth-largest military and its only Muslim nuclear weapons power. Ascending to the five-star rank of Field Marshal in May 2025, Munir has consolidated an unprecedented level of political, military, and constitutional authority over a nation of 250 million Muslims, making his sphere of influence arguably the most consequential in the Islamic world heading into 2027.

Lineage and Spiritual Grounding: Born in Rawalpindi to a highly respected, scholarly family of Syeds who trace their direct ancestry back to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Munir's late father was a schoolteacher and Islamic cleric. Munir is the first army chief in Pakistan's history to be a *Hafiz al-Qur'an*, having fully memorised the holy book during a prior military deployment in Saudi Arabia.

An Intelligence and Defense Veteran: Munir holds the unique distinction of being the only military officer to have chaired both Military Intelligence (MI) and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Today, he sits atop a nuclear leviathan, commanding a massive standing apparatus of 660,000 active-duty personnel, 550,000 reservists, and a strategic nuclear deterrent estimated at 170 warheads.

The Crucible of the 2025 War: The defining moment of Munir's military legacy came during the explosive 2025 India–Pakistan conflict. Facing intense nuclear brinkmanship following Indian missile and drone strikes, Munir orchestrated a decisive military response. Relying heavily on indigenous technology, Pakistani forces successfully repelled the aggression, culminating in a dramatic four-day aerial standoff where multiple Indian fighter jets were downed. Munir's direct leadership secured a ceasefire on 10 May 2025, fundamentally reshaping the strategic balance of South Asia.

The Makkah Pact and Transnational Diplomacy: Beyond Pakistan's borders, Field Marshal Munir has emerged as a premier architect of transnational Islamic unity. On 7 August 2026, he spearheaded the landmark Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, cementing a robust trilateral alliance linking the nuclear capabilities of Pakistan, the spiritual heartland of Saudi Arabia, and the advanced military power of Türkiye. Furthermore, his delicate backchannel diplomacy directly facilitated crucial mediation between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran, contributing to a temporary regional ceasefire in early 2026 and earning him direct praise from US President Donald Trump.

Domestic Iron Fist: Domestically, Munir has maintained absolute internal stability through an unyielding stance on national discipline, insulating the state's executive and economic frameworks from partisan disruption. This includes the uncompromised imprisonment of former Prime Minister Imran Khan and a strict suppression of political dissent. While these aggressive crackdowns and the consolidation of state authority have drawn fierce criticism, leaving him highly unpopular among vast segments of the Pakistani populace, his raw geopolitical footprint remains unmatched.

Country: Türkiye
Born: 26 Feb 1954 (age 72)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: President of 88 million Turkish citizens
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (7)
2025 (8)
2024 (7)

"The current system, which backs the mighty even if they are wrong and oppresses the weak even if they are right, has produced instabilities, crises, and injustices for decades."

$65
billion in tourism income in 2025

2nd
largest standing military force in NATO



1

His Excellency

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

HE President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

President of the Republic of Türkiye

His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has dominated Turkish politics for over two decades, progressing from Mayor of Istanbul (1994–1998) to Prime Minister (2003–2014) and serving as President since August 2014.

Electoral History and Global Power Status: Leading the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2001, Erdoğan secured three consecutive prime ministerial victories with parliamentary majorities in 2002, 2007, and 2011, ushering in unprecedented economic growth, infrastructure booms, and constitutional reforms. As Türkiye's first popularly elected president, he won successive mandates in 2014 (52%), 2018 (52.6%), and a highly competitive 2023 runoff. He has systematically built Türkiye's identity as a modern geopolitical powerhouse, bridging its traditional NATO membership with leadership across the Islamic world.

Prominent Role in the Makkah Pact: In August 2026, President Erdoğan spearheaded a monumental geopolitical realignment by joining Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to sign the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (the Makkah Pact) in the holy city of Makkah. Functioning with a mutual defense architecture closely resembling NATO's Article 5, the historic trilateral accord explicitly stipulates that an armed attack on any one of the three allied nations constitutes an attack on all three, signalling a major new security partnership among three of the Muslim world's most influential states. Erdoğan hailed the Makkah architecture as a decisive, necessary step toward addressing Middle Eastern security threats from within the region itself, while emphasizing that the treaty is purely defensive and not directed against any outside nation.

Landmark PKK Peace Process and USA Relations: Following the PKK's 2025 decision to disarm, a sweeping draft law reached parliament in August 2026 to facilitate the societal reintegration of former fighters. Concurrently, July 2026 signalled a major turnaround in USA–Türkiye relations when Donald Trump made the first visit to Ankara by a sitting American president in eleven years. Leveraging this momentum, Erdoğan expanded Türkiye's role as a central Middle East mediator, offering to guarantee prospective USA–Iran accords while actively engaging Gulf leaders to prevent a wider regional spillover.

Regional Footprint in Syria: Following the historic collapse of the Bashar al-Assad regime, Türkiye maintains localized security zones across northern Syria to counter Islamic State (ISIS) remnants and armed Kurdish militias linked to the PKK. While Türkiye has accommodated millions of displaced Syrian refugees over the past decade, domestic public debate regarding their structured, safe repatriation has intensified significantly within parliament.

Economic and Domestic Political Challenges: The March 2024 local elections saw the AKP reduced to second place nationally at 35.5%, its lowest national marker since 2001, amid voter dissatisfaction over persistent inflation.

"Erdonomics"—Erdoğan's long-standing, unconventional low-interest-rate dogma—contributed to a heavy depreciation of the Turkish Lira, which fell over 400% against the USD since 2008 and drove inflation to an 85% peak in late 2022. However, the appointment of Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek and the subsequent pivot back toward orthodox fiscal policies have since stabilized market expectations.

Cultural Projection and Soft Power: In July 2020, Erdoğan signed a decree restoring the historic Hagia Sophia as an active mosque, reversing Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's 1934 secular museum designation. In 2022, the United Nations formally adopted the country's official name, Türkiye. This cultural footprint is strongly reinforced by the nation's massive television and film export market. The Turkish broadcasting sector exports over 300 major cinematic productions to nearly 200 countries, engaging roughly one billion unique viewers globally. Historical epics such as *Diriliş: Ertuğrul*, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (The Magnificent Century), and *Payitaht: Abdülhamid* remain extraordinarily popular, with *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* alone surpassing 3 billion cumulative global views.

Stance on Palestine and the Gaza Trade Embargoes: In May 2024, Ankara announced a total suspension of its $7 billion annual direct trade relationship with Israel, subsequently closing Turkish airspace to Israeli flights and banning Israeli vessels from entering Turkish maritime ports. Despite these aggressive economic measures, Erdoğan continues to face domestic and regional criticism from opposition factions regarding persistent supply chain loopholes.

Country: Iran
Born: 8 Sept 1969 (age 57)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: President of 93 million Iranian citizens
School of Thought: Traditional Shia

"Prayer provides a direct connection between people and the divine and plays an important role in strengthening individuals and society during periods of struggle."

98%
Youth literacy

41
million mourners at his father's funeral



4

His Eminence

Ayatollah Sayyid Mojtaba Khamenei

HE Ayatollah Sayyid Mojtaba Khamenei

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Ayatollah Sayyid Mojtaba Khamenei assumed absolute constitutional authority as the third Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 8 March 2026, succeeding his father, Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who had ruled the nation for nearly four decades.

Tragic Succession: On 28 Feb, 2026, a joint USA–Israeli assassination of his father, Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, completely destroyed the family's primary residence and claimed the lives of several immediate family members, including Mojtaba's wife, Zahra Haddad-Adel, and his teenage son, Mohammad Bagher. Mojtaba Khamenei narrowly survived the targeted strike. The Assembly of Experts officially elected him to office on 8 March 2026.

Supreme Leader, Velayat-e Faqih, and Historical Foundations: Khamenei's influence stems from his position as a religious leader, which gives him a unique and absolute role in political affairs. His constitutional mandate is to enact the *Velayat-e Faqih*—the guardianship of the jurist. In real terms, this translates into a political and administrative system where scholars of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) hold a controlling, non-negotiable say in the legislative, judicial, and executive affairs of the state.

The rule of the jurist was a concept systematically codified by the revolutionary founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, but its core tenets draw upon deep ideas that have run through Iranian political history since the time of Shah Ismail. In the early 16th century, under the rule of the Safavid Dynasty, Shah Ismail made Shia Islam the national religion of Iran, structurally intertwining temporal monarchical rule with the religious authority of the Shia clergy (*ulama*).

Decades of Inward Influence and Technical Training: Long before his public ascension, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei spent more than two decades operating as one of the most powerful behind-the-scenes figures within the Iranian state. Born in Mashhad, he was raised in an environment of intense political struggle and clerical scholarship. In his youth, during the devastating Iran–Iraq War, he volunteered for military service, joining the front lines as a combatant within the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Habib Battalion. This early experience forged lifelong, unbreakable bonds of trust and mutual respect between him and the high command of Iran's military and intelligence apparatus.

Following the war, he dedicated himself to advanced Shia theological studies in Tehran under his father and then moved to Qom in 1999 to undertake formal, higher-level seminary studies at the prestigious Qom Seminary. He studied under some of the most prominent jurists of the modern era, including Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi and Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi. This rigorous schooling grounded him deeply in the *Usuli* school of Shia thought, which emphasizes the use of rational derivation (*ijtihad*) in legal matters.

As he advanced in his studies, he simultaneously took on an increasingly central role within the *Bayt-e Rahbari* (the Office of the Supreme Leader). Serving as his father's chief trusted aide, he managed complex domestic political portfolios, oversaw the administration of massive religious endowments (*bonyads*), and coordinated policy between the presidency, the parliament, and the security forces.

Wartime Governance and Global Geopolitics: Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei assumed control of the state during the most volatile geopolitical crisis in modern Iranian history. Directing national policy through close-knit advisory councils and written decrees while recovering from his injuries, he has maintained absolute authority over the country's armed forces and its sophisticated nuclear enrichment program. A hardline traditionalist, his governance is characterized by an uncompromising commitment to national sovereignty and a fierce rejection of Western cultural and political intervention.



Country: Jordan
Born: 30 January 1962 (age 64)
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 11 million Jordanians; outreach to Traditional Islam
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (5)
2025 (1)
2024 (5)

"The Hashemite Custodianship of Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian holy sites is a historic duty and a sacred trust that we bear with honour."

3
million refugees in Jordan

41st
generation direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ



5

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

The Gaza Crisis & Global Leadership: Despite Jordan's severe resource constraints, HM King Abdullah II is one of the world's most proactive diplomatic and humanitarian anchors. Following the catastrophic escalation of the Gaza war, he launched an intense campaign of international shuttle diplomacy alongside HM Queen Rania to shift Western policymaking and counter extremist narratives. When hardline factions in Israel threatened "Plan B" layouts to forcibly expel Palestinians into Egypt and Jordan, King Abdullah and President Sisi firmly established forced transfer as an absolute "red line," with Jordan treating any threat to regional borders as an existential act of war.

At the UN General Assembly in September 2026, King Abdullah II delivered a defining address condemning global inaction to stop the Gaza genocide and firmly stating that Jordan will actively defend its sovereignty. The speech instantly became a digital phenomenon, with short-form clips on platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels generating millions of collective views and tens of thousands of individual user interactions, spreading his message far beyond traditional diplomatic channels.

Historic Humanitarian Relief Operation: When complete blockades throttled traditional land routes into Gaza, Jordan spearheaded historic aid mechanisms to bypass the bottlenecks:

1. **The Amman International Donors Conference:** Organized by King Abdullah to streamline international aid efforts and directly audit critical medical shortages.
2. **The Royal Airdrops:** Beginning November 6, 2023, the Jordanian Air Force initiated direct, tactical airdrops into Gaza, with King Abdullah personally boarding early supply flights. As of September 2025, Jordan successfully managed the delivery of over 119,000 tons of humanitarian aid across 35,000 targeted supply pallets—marking the third-largest sustained military relief operation globally since the 1948 Berlin Airlift.
3. **Military Field Infrastructure:** Jordan maintains two critical military field hospitals in Khan Yunis and one in Tal al-Hawa, alongside medical sites in the West Bank. Operating when Gaza's domestic healthcare system was severely compromised, these stations performed over 160,000 surgical operations and administered care to 4 million cases by autumn 2025. Additionally, Jordan introduced specialized 3D-printing mobile labs that provided over 14,000 custom prosthetic limbs to wounded civilians.
4. **Containing a Regional War:** King Abdullah has continuously navigated intense geopolitical tensions to keep the global focus centered on Palestinian welfare. Jordan successfully intercepted cross-border missile paths over its territory to prevent escalations from spiralling into a broader war, and deployed top diplomats to Tehran to engage with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, encouraging strategic restraint.

The King's Position: HM 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 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.

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 cities 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 2.2 billion Muslims, a situation with explosive potential consequences.

The King's Lineage: HM 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: As Custodian of Al-Haram Al-Sharif—housing Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock—and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, HM King Abdullah II plays a vital role in maintaining the pre-1967 Status Quo, which is a critical insurance against attempts at temporal and spatial division of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Judaizing its surroundings. As custodian of Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, King Abdullah II has personally funded major restoration efforts, including the 2016 restoration of Jesus' Tomb and the subsequent 2018 preservation project at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The King's Traditions: The legal and social fabric of the Kingdom retains deep institutional roots in Islamic jurisprudence and historical regional administration. Roughly 80% of Jordan's statutory provisions draw directly from the legacy of the Ottoman *Majalla*, anchoring civil and legal standardisations in traditional Hanafi Sharia. Jordan maintains a centralized spiritual leadership comprised of a Chief Mufti, designated provincial muftis, and specialized army and police grand muftis working alongside formal Sharia courts that handle Muslim personal status cases. Concurrently, the state protects institutional pluralism by maintaining ecclesiastical courts run by Orthodox-Christian clergy for its indigenous Christian population. Jordan strictly guarantees designated Christian seats within its Parliament and ensures broad representation throughout public administration, combining state statutory legislation with additional customary tribal codes to govern local disputes.

The King's Faith: In response to growing global Islamophobia and factional polarization in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, King Abdullah II spearheaded the historic Amman Message (see page 81) in November 2004. Unanimously adopted by the world's leading Islamic jurisprudential and temporal bodies, it established an international standard affirming the peaceful, moderate principles of traditional Islam. To anchor this movement, the King initiated and funded foundational religious projects, including:

- Altafsir.com, a free online repository of classical Quranic commentaries. (see page 164)
- The World Islamic Sciences and Education University (W.I.S.E.) in Jordan.
- Integral Professorial Chairs at prominent sanctuaries to preserve the classical teachings of renowned Islamic scholars like Imam Al-Ghazali (at the Al-Aqsa Mosque), Imam Al-Razi (at the King Hussein Mosque), and the Imam Al-Suyuti, and Imam Al-Nawawi Integral Professorial Chairs.

The King is globally acclaimed for his active interfaith diplomacy, championing the 2007 A Common Word initiative (see page 232) and driving the United Nations General Assembly to unanimously adopt the World Interfaith Harmony Week resolution in 2010 (see page 184). Demonstrating his commitment to interfaith dialogue and his care for Jordan's indigenous Christian population, King Abdullah welcomed three successive popes to Jordan: Pope John Paul II in 2000, Pope Benedict XVI in 2009, and Pope Francis in 2014. In 2015, his efforts helped inscribe the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ (*Al-Maghtas*) on the Jordan River on the UNESCO World Heritage List. While extremist networks were actively 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 2016 King Abdullah issued a Royal Benefaction to provide for the Restoration of Jesus' Tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and in 2018 he helped fund the restoration of the entire Church of the Holy Sepulchre, both from his own personal funds.

The King's Protection: Despite severe economic challenges and deep infrastructure strains, Jordan stands as a vital pillar of stability across a turbulent landscape. Jordan hosts one of the highest shares of refugees per capita anywhere in the world. This includes approximately 3 million individuals impacted by the ongoing Palestinian conflict managed under UNRWA, alongside hundreds of thousands of refugees escaping conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya. While the fall of the Damascus government in late 2024 enabled the safe, dignified voluntary return of several thousand individuals to Syria, Jordan continues to shelter a massive displaced population, earning extensive global praise for its humanitarian footprint.



THE AMMAN MESSAGE

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 ﷺ, 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 ﷺ 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."

Country: Qatar
Born: 3 June 1980 (age 46)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: Ruler of richest country per capita in the world
School of Thought: Sunni
2026 (1)
2025 (3)
2024 (4)

"We do not want to live on the margins of history; we want to be an active part of making the future."

13%
of the world's total proven gas reserves of LNG.

$510
billion sovereign wealth fund



6

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 ascended as Emir of Qatar at the age of 33 after his father, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, abdicated in June 2013. Qatar is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, with a nominal GDP per capita of approximately $68,000 to $73,000. It has a small indigenous population of under 400,000 citizens, while the remainder of its 3.2 to 3.4 million total population consists of foreign expatriate workers. Qatar is the world's second-largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and is home to the third-largest natural gas reserves globally.

Family and Education: 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. Sheikh Tamim completed his studies at a private school in the UK before going on to graduate from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1998. During his time as Crown Prince (2003–2013), Sheikh Tamim had exposure to a wide range of posts including security (serving as deputy commander of the armed forces), economics (as chairman of the Qatar Investment Authority), and sports. He supervised Qatar's successful bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup.



Major Assets: Qatar continues to expand its influence through major global investments. The Qatar Investment Authority manages an estimated $600 billion in assets under management, ensuring it is a major player in global finance. In addition, Qatar operates the state-funded Al Jazeera Media Network, which remains one of the few global media organisations reporting credibly and continuously on the ground during major regional crises, including the Gaza genocide.

Peace Broker: Qatar has deeply positioned itself in the role of an international peace broker. It hosted the historic signing of the USA–Taliban peace deal in 2020, which led to the full withdrawal of USA troops from Afghanistan. It has facilitated delicate prisoner exchanges and child returns between Russia and Ukraine. In November 2023, it brokered a key temporary ceasefire between Israel and Hamas that resulted in the release of roughly 700 Palestinian detainees and 100 Israeli hostages. Qatar adopts a strong position of proactive engagement through dialogue and has funnelled billions of dollars in humanitarian aid to Gaza. Proving Qatar's regional agility, Sheikh Tamim was the first head of state to visit Damascus on 30 January 2025 following the fall of the Assad regime, meeting with transitional President Ahmed al-Sharaa shortly after Qatar became one of the first nations to reopen its embassy there.

Peace Talks Attacked: On 9 September 2025, Israel carried out an unprecedented airstrike on Doha targeting Hamas political leaders. The strike occurred in a residential area during high-level ceasefire negotiations initiated by Qatar, and was widely condemned by the UN and international bodies as a severe violation of Qatari sovereignty. Sheikh Tamim has continued to position Qatar as a major diplomatic mediator. In August 2026, he held talks with USA President Donald Trump as Qatar, Pakistan and Oman worked to facilitate dialogue and de-escalation between the USA and Iran.

The Gaza Genocide: Sheikh Tamim has overseen extensive, continuous aid deliveries to Gaza, working in tandem with international humanitarian organisations. Under his leadership, Qatar has maintained its rigorous diplomatic outreach to pressure regional actors and advocate for civilian protections, reinforcing a proactive stance to mitigate the severe humanitarian crisis.

Country: Pakistan
Born: 5 October 1943 (age 83)
Source of Influence: Scholarly, Lineage
Influence: Leading scholar for the Deobandis and in Islamic finance
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni (Hanafi, Deobandi)
2026 (2)
2025 (6)
2024 (8)

"Islamic finance is not just about avoiding interest; it is about building a just economic system that treats wealth as a trust from God."

1866
the year Darul Uloom Deoband was established

12
major global Islamic financial institutions shariah boards he heads



7

His Eminence

Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Usmani

HE Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Usmani

Mufti and Leading Scholar

Justice Sheikh Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani is a leading global scholar of Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and Islamic finance. He is widely considered the intellectual head of the Deobandi school of Islamic learning, while maintaining immense cross-jurisdictional authority outside of it. He served as a Judge on the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan from 1982 to 2002.

Deobandi Intellectual Leadership & Seminary Administration: Usmani holds a central position as a figurehead within the modern Deobandi movement. Usmani was born in Deoband, India, and is the son of Mufti Muhammad Shafi (the former Grand Mufti of Pakistan), who founded Darul Uloom Karachi, a premier centre of Islamic education. He holds ijaza (authority) to teach hadith from Sheikh al-Hadith Mawlana Zakariya Khandelawi, and traversed the spiritual path of *tasawwuf* (Sufism) under the guidance of Sheikh Dr Abdul Hayy Arifi. In July 2026, Mufti Taqi Usmani was unanimously re-elected as the President of Wifaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia Pakistan for a second consecutive term. As Wifaq-ul-Madaris is the largest federation of Islamic seminaries (*madaris*) in Pakistan, his unopposed re-election solidifies his continued, undisputed control over the religious curriculum and seminary administration across the country.

Pioneer of Global Islamic Finance & Stance on Cryptocurrency: Usmani's profound secondary influence stems from his status as a pioneer in Islamic banking. He has chaired or served on the Shariah boards of over a dozen global Islamic financial institutions. As a definitive authority on modern economic jurisprudence, in June 2026, the Darul Ifta at Jamia Darul Uloom Karachi issued a detailed fatwa signed by Mufti Taqi Usmani, ruling cryptocurrency trading, investment, and purchases impermissible (haram) under Islamic law. The fatwa outlined that cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and USDT do not meet the criteria for *maal* (property or wealth) under Shariah, characterizing digital assets instead as the mere recording of fictitious or notional numbers in digital accounts.

Prolific Author and Translator: He has authored more than 143 books in Arabic, English, and Urdu. His bibliography includes a direct translation of the Qur'an into both English and Urdu, alongside a monumental six-volume Arabic commentary on *Sahih Muslim*. He serves as the Chief Editor of the monthly magazine *Albalagh*. His legal edicts (*Fatawa Usmani*), written over a span of 45 years, are preserved in multi-volume collections.

Masterful New Works: He continues to directly supervise The Hadith Encyclopaedia (*Al-Mudawwanah Al-Jāmiʿah*). This pioneering compilation assigns a universal reference number to each recorded hadith to make global citation as uniform as referring to a verse of the Qur'an. The expansive, multi-volume roadmap is projected to encompass over 300 volume-equivalents upon absolute completion, with the first major volumes already published and distributed. His recent groundbreaking text, *The Jurisprudence (Fiqh) of Trade*, culminates in a proposed statutory Code of Islamic Law for the Sale of Goods, serving as a template for international financial regulators.

State Honours: In 2019, the Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Star of Excellence) was conferred on Usmani by the President of Pakistan. This high civilian honour recognizes individuals who have rendered meritorious contributions to world peace, national security, or significant public and academic endeavours.

Stance on Regional Conflicts and Geopolitics: Mufti Usmani maintains a vocal position regarding Middle Eastern geopolitics. He has repeatedly affirmed the legal and moral right of the Palestinians to resist military occupation, actively calling upon Muslims globally to support relief efforts through structured financial donations and targeted corporate boycotts. Reflecting his broader vision for Islamic solidarity, in August 2026, Mufti Taqi Usmani publicly welcomed the landmark Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, the trilateral defence pact signed between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye. He hailed the strategic agreement concluded near the Holy Kaaba as a monumental and necessary step toward fostering greater defense unity and collective strength across the Muslim world.

Country: Yemen
Born: 27 May 1963 (age 63)
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)
2026 (3)
2025 (1)
2024 (11)

"The essence of knowledge is the realization of your dependence on the Creator, which in turn breeds profound mercy for all of creation."

15
is the age at which he started teaching

1,500
international scholars annually at the Dar Al-Mustafa institute in Tarim, Yemen



8

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 Aal Ba Alawi: The Aal Ba Alawi, derived from "Banu Alawi" or "the clan of Alawi", have called the Hadramaut region in Yemen their home since the 4th-century Hijri (CE 931) when a prominent member of the Prophet's ﷺ family, Imam Ahmad bin Isa al-Muhajir, emigrated there. The Ba Alawi lineage has produced exceptional scholars and devout individuals celebrated for propagating and revitalising Islamic teachings, anchoring their spiritual approach fundamentally in Imam Al-Ghazali's renowned work, the *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din*. They have played a pivotal role in spreading Islam across the globe. In the Malay Archipelago—which includes Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Brunei—they contributed to the spread of Islam through the revered Wali Sanga (the Nine Saints), eight of whom were of Ba Alawi lineage. They also helped spread Islam in various regions of India, including Kerala and Gujarat. In East Africa, their influence continued into the 20th century through figures such as Habib Umar bin Sumayt and Habib Ahmad Mashhur Al-Haddad. This legacy was preserved in the modern era by giants like Habib Abdul Qadir Al-Saqqaf, Habib Muhammad Al-Haddar, Al-Allama Ibrahim bin Aqil, and Habib Muhammad bin Hafiz.

Dar Al-Mustafa and Dar Al-Zahra: Following the unification of Yemen, Habib Umar founded Dar Al-Mustafa in 1993. The landmark seminary is grounded in three fundamental pillars:

- Acquiring sacred knowledge from qualified sources through an unbroken, authentic chain of transmission (*isnad*).
- Purifying the soul and refining character (*tazkiyah*).
- Engaging in *dawah*, the active call to faith.

Since then, thousands of scholars have graduated from Dar Al-Mustafa and have established their own educational networks globally. In 2001 a sister institution, Dar Al-Zahra, was inaugurated to expand rigorous religious instruction to women. Additional branches have since been established across Southeast Asia, operating in close synergy with nearby historical institutions.

Global and Popular Presence: Habib Umar maintains an extraordinarily active global itinerary. His tour of Indonesia attracted over 700,000 attendees across multiple venues, while a concurrent tour of Malaysia alongside Egypt's former Grand Mufti Sheikh Ali Gomaa pulled in over 500,000 people. Further expanding the global reach of the Tarim methodology, in January 2026, his wife, Hubaba Nur, alongside his son, Sayyid Hamid bin al-Habib Umar, launched a highly publicised South African Tour. This historic tour brought the spiritual frameworks, educational blueprints, and traditional learning methodologies of Tarim directly to women's and youth circles across major South African metropolitan hubs.

Teacher of Teachers: His strategic connection to Southeast Asia remains highly streamlined through Muwasala, an organisation he established in 2007 that links over 30,000 active Sunni scholars across the Indonesian archipelago. His influence extends directly into Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the world's largest Islamic organisation boasting over 90 million members. Within NU, Habib Umar serves as a spiritual reference point, conducting monthly online readings and classes for their vast scholarly leadership. Furthermore, his direct students have become prominent global figures in their own right, including Habib Ali Al-Jifri, Habib Kadhim Al-Saqqaf, and Habib Muhammad Al-Saqqaf, the latter of whom established the *Al-Erth Al-Nabawi* (The Prophetic Legacy) satellite television channel, which broadcasts Habib Umar's daily classes to a global audience.

Scholarship and Recognitions: Habib Umar was an influential early signatory of *A Common Word Between Us and You*, a historic initiative fostering theological understanding between Muslims and Christians. He has authored numerous texts, three concise hadith collections, and a summary of the third quarter of Imam Al-Ghazali's *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din*. His devotional compositions for the Prophetic celebration (*mawlid*), namely *Al-Diya' Al-Lami'* and *Al-Sharab Al-Tahur*, are recited globally. He is a recipient of the prestigious King Faisal International Prize for Islamic Studies (2016) and the Sheikh Zayed Award for Human Fraternity (2021), and is recognized widely for his precise emulation of the Prophetic character.

Country: Egypt
Born: 6 January 1946 (age 80)
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
2026 (6)
2025 (13)
2024 (14)

"True peace between nations can only be built upon mutual respect, justice, and the recognition of human fraternity across all faiths."

500k
students globally educated at Al-Azhar

970CE
the year Al-Azhar University was founded



٩

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 Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar in March 2010 following the passing of Dr Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi. Before that, he served as President of Al-Azhar University and earlier as Grand Mufti of Egypt. His scholarship and leadership position him as one of the foremost Sunni clerics globally.

Institutional Leadership of Al-Azhar: 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.

Global Influence and High Recognitions: In May 2026, Al-Tayyeb was named "Person of the Year 2026" at the 11th International Conference of the Arab Impact Factor hosted by Al-Azhar University. The award recognized his lifelong intellectual and humanitarian work, alongside his global efforts to propagate enlightened, moderate Islamic thought. Marking his 80th birthday in 2026, the Muslim Council of Elders launched a global commemorative compilation book titled *In the Presence of Al-Tayeb*.

Clarifying and Advocating Traditional Islam: Sheikh Al-Tayyeb has rigorously pursued his mission to promote traditional Islam since becoming Grand Sheikh. He has explicitly 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, the scholars of Hanafi, Maliki, and Shafi'i jurisprudence, the moderate scholars of the Hanbali school, and the Sufis following the spiritual methodology of Imam Al-Junayd. In February 2026, he further solidified this traditional equity by presiding over a landmark Council of Senior Scholars conference that outlined a comprehensive structural code on women's legal rights and modern protections under Shariah law.

Ethical Stances on AI Development: In June, 2026, Al-Azhar University hosted the inaugural high-level roundtable of the United Nations Artificial Intelligence Initiative, officially launching the global program with a core focus on utilizing AI to advance human and sustainable development. Speaking at the launch, Grand Imam Al-Tayyeb issued a profound warning to the international tech community, asserting that developing artificial intelligence without strict ethical safeguards will cause a severe erosion of human values and consolidate total control over humanity's future in the hands of a powerful few.

Interfaith and Christian-Muslim Relations: His tenure has been heavily marked by global interfaith initiatives. In 2020, he co-established the International Day of Human Fraternity with Pope Francis, which Al-Azhar formally commemorated with widespread high-level diplomacy in February 2026. Domestically and regionally, he continued to actively strengthen Christian-Muslim fraternity in 2026 through close institutional engagement with Pope Tawadros II. This ongoing collaboration reinforced the historic societal cooperation between Al-Azhar and Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church, modeling peaceful coexistence at a time of heightened regional friction.

Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Genocide: Al-Tayyeb has actively advocated for humanitarian relief, repeatedly pressing Arab and Muslim leaders to leverage their collective economic and diplomatic weight to ensure aid delivery and end the bloodshed. He has explicitly rejected all forced demographic displacement schemes, calling for a unified, legally binding regional stance to protect Palestinian sovereignty and prevent forced expulsions.



Country: Mauritania
Born: 1935 (age 91)
Source of Influence: Scholarly
Influence: Significant influence as a leading contemporary scholar of Islamic Jurisprudence
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni (Maliki)
2026 (18)
2025 (17)
2024 (19)

"We must declare war on war so that the results can be peace upon peace."

2
ministerial posts in the 1970s

500
senior global Islamic jurists convened annually by the Abu Dhabi Peace Forum



10

His Excellency

Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah

HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah

President of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies

Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah is one of the world's most respected Muslim scholars, widely recognised for his rigorous Islamic scholarship, piety, and global advocacy for peace. Uniquely, his authority transcends major divisions within the Muslim world, and is held in high esteem by Sunnis across various schools of jurisprudence, Sufis, and Salafi institutions. This rare stature allows him to play a pivotal role in fostering dialogue within the Muslim world and across global religious communities.

Early Life and Traditional Education: Born in 1935 in Timbédra, Mauritania, Sheikh bin Bayyah was raised in a household renowned for sacred scholarship. His father, Sheikh Mahfoudh bin Bayyah, chaired the Conference of Mauritanian Scholars established after independence, instilling in him a lifelong dedication to Islamic learning. He studied in Mauritania's traditional *mahadhir* (desert centres of learning), where students fully immersed themselves in the complete spectrum of classical Islamic sciences.

Judicial and Academic Career: Sheikh bin Bayyah rose to prominence as an elite jurist and statesman in West Africa. He served as a Judge at the High Court of Mauritania, later becoming the Head of Sharia Affairs at the Ministry of Justice, Minister of Islamic Affairs and Education, and the official Minister of Justice and Holder of the Seals. He served as Deputy Head of the International Union of Muslim Scholars alongside Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi before formally resigning from the body in 2014 to distance himself from partisan political leanings. In 2018, he was officially appointed Chair of the UAE Council for Fatwa.

Scholar of Islamic Law and Thought: Sheikh bin Bayyah has written extensively on Islamic legal theory, modern jurisprudence, and minority rights (*fiqh al-aqalliyat*). His foundational works provide dynamic legal guidance for Muslims living in non-Muslim-majority countries, offering a cohesive framework for faithful living while engaging positively in pluralistic societies. His writings on *maqasid al-shariah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) heavily emphasise justice, mercy, and the absolute preservation of human life and dignity—principles that underpin his continuous calls for global peace and coexistence.

Diplomatic Engagement and Global Peacebuilding: Sheikh bin Bayyah is an active member of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy. His influence extends heavily into international diplomacy; in 2013, he visited the White House to urge stronger protections for civilians in regional conflicts, and later met with global philanthropists like Bill Gates to collaborate on universal vaccine and humanitarian initiatives. Sheikh bin Bayyah is the primary driving force behind the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace (formerly known as the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies), which he founded in 2014. He also co-founded the Muslim Council of Elders alongside the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. Among his most notable contributions is the Marrakesh Declaration (2016), which affirmed the rights of religious minorities in Muslim-majority nations by drawing inspiration from the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ *Charter of Medina*. In 2019, he launched the New Alliance of Virtue, reviving the Prophet's ﷺ pre-Islamic pact of *Hilf al-Fudul* as a template for interreligious solidarity, a declaration that has been welcomed by Christian and Jewish organizations globally.

International Peacebuilding Recognition: In 2026, Sheikh bin Bayyah received the Multi-Faith Neighbors Network's 2026 Peacemakers Award at the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit in Washington. The award recognized his long-standing global contributions to bringing religious leaders, scholars, and civil society together to address extremism, human dignity, interfaith dialogue, and international peacebuilding. Further solidifying his status as a diplomatic anchor, on 9 September 2026, King Abdullah II of Jordan awarded Sheikh bin Bayyah the Supreme Order of the Renaissance of the First Degree—one of Jordan's highest state decorations—in recognition of his profound scholarly contributions and international service to dialogue and coexistence.

Stance on Gaza Genocide: Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah maintains a clear stance regarding the human costs of modern conflicts. Speaking before international diplomatic symposiums, he explicitly classified the ongoing war and blockade on Gaza as a "true test of humanity's conscience," firmly condemning military actions that violate the most fundamental principles of human rights and Islamic ethics.

Country: Iraq
Born: 4 August 1930 (age 96)
Source of Influence: Scholarly, Lineage
Influence: Highest authority for 22 million Iraqi Shia, and also internationally known as a religious authority to Usuli Twelver Shia
School of Thought: Traditional Twelver Shia, Usuli
2026 (11)
2025 (9)
2024 (9)

"The true test of authority is its capacity to shield the vulnerable, foster national unity, and prevent the shedding of innocent blood."

80%
of the world's Shia Muslim population follow him

1960
the year he became a mujtahid



11

His Eminence

Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Al-Sistani

HE Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Al-Sistani

Marjaʿ of the Hawza

Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hussein Al-Sistani is the leading cleric and spiritual authority for Twelver (*Ithna ʿAshari*) Shia Muslims globally. He is widely respected for his profound religious scholarship, moral integrity, and role as a quiet but powerful voice in social, political, and humanitarian matters. He heads the *Hawza Al-Ilmiyya* in Najaf, Iraq, which remains one of the foremost centres of Shia learning.

Preeminent Shia Cleric and Authority: Ayatollah Al-Sistani comes from a family of distinguished scholars and began his religious studies in Mashhad before moving to Qom. There, he studied under leading clerics, but his formative years were spent in Najaf, Iraq, under the guidance of Grand Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim Al-Khoei. Following Al-Khoei's death in 1992, Sistani inherited his mantle of authority, rising to become the leading Shia cleric in Najaf and the most influential *marjaʿ* globally.

As a *marjaʿ al-taqlid*, Sistani's authority places him at the apex of Shia religious leadership. His followers, estimated at over 20 million across Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, South Asia, and the wider diaspora, look to him for definitive rulings on matters of jurisprudence, ethics, and faith. He oversees a network of more than 2,000 religious schools, with Najaf serving as the epicentre of Shia learning. Through his role, Sistani has successfully positioned Najaf as a counterbalance to Qom, emphasizing a quietist model of clerical authority.

Financial and Humanitarian Operations: Sistani wields significant financial influence. As a *marjaʿ*, his followers remit a religious tax (*khums*, meaning "one-fifth"). The redistribution of this tax for the common good is one of the key roles of a *marjaʿ*. Much of this remittance is distributed through the Al-Khoei Foundation, the largest Twelver Shia development and relief organisation in the world. The foundation maintains a massive network of educational, healthcare, and humanitarian establishments serving both Shia and non-Shia populations globally, with annual project spending surpassing $100 million.

Quietist Model and Geopolitical Stance: Significantly, Sistani stands against the foundational Iranian concept of *Velayat-e Faqih* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist), maintaining that Shia clerics should not assume direct executive political roles. Paradoxically, this quietist approach has afforded him immense moral authority unsullied by day-to-day politics. Sistani has utilized this position to act as an essential peacemaker in turbulent, post-invasion Iraq. He has consistently identified eliminating systemic political corruption and improving public utilities as the primary duties of the Iraqi state. Historically, his strong rulings against DA'ISH, calling on all Iraqis to unite across sectarian lines, were instrumental in mobilizing national resistance forces.

Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani has also played a crucial role in Iraq's post-Saddam era by consistently advocating for democratic constitutional processes and the strict protection of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities. His guidance has been vital in promoting peaceful coexistence among Iraq's diverse populations. Sistani famously maintains a policy of rarely granting audiences to political officials, making strict exceptions for high-level delegations like Pope Francis during the pontiff's historic visit to Sistani's home in Najaf in March 2021.

Stance on the Iran-Israel-US War: Sistani's office released a public statement denouncing the full-scale military operations directed against Iran. The statement expressed grave concern regarding the massive loss of civilian lives, including many children, alongside the widespread destruction of public infrastructure. Sistani formally called on Muslims and free people worldwide to denounce the unjust war and express solidarity with the oppressed Iranian people.

Stance on the Gaza Genocide: Grand Ayatollah Al-Sistani remains a fierce critic of international policies regarding the Palestinian territories. He has repeatedly addressed the Muslim world directly, calling for unified economic and diplomatic efforts to halt Israeli military actions in Gaza and provide unconditional humanitarian support to Palestinians. The Ayatollah has heavily criticized the systemic lack of international accountability for regional civilian casualties and directly blamed global superpowers for failing to protect basic human rights in the territory.



Country: UAE
Born: 11 March 1961 (age 65)
Source of Influence: Administrative, Development, Philanthropy
Influence: Military and political leadership
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (9)
2025 (7)
2022 (7)

"Our nation will continue to invest heavily in science, knowledge, and technology as the primary drivers of our future economic transition."

$1.40
trillion in sovereign holdings.

7
emirates in the United Arab Emirates



12

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, the blockade on Qatar, and the UAE's involvement in Sudan. Involvement in other key issues shows that the UAE is punching above its weight in international affairs.

Abraham Accords: The UAE (along with Bahrain) normalised relations with Israel by signing the Abraham Accords at the White House in September 2020 with the Israeli Prime Minister and American President Donald Trump in attendance. An Israeli embassy was opened in Abu Dhabi in July 2021 with the President of Israel attending the ceremony. The UAE continues to push ahead with a full normalisation strategy which has outraged Palestinians and their supporters.

Deepening UAE–India Strategic Partnership: During a major working visit to New Delhi on 19 January 2026, Sheikh Mohamed met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fundamentally scale their bilateral relations. The two leaders co-signed landmark defense, science, and energy cooperation frameworks, agreeing to significantly broaden collaboration across space exploration, civil nuclear energy, advanced computing, and food security infrastructure. Building upon the initial success of their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), India and the UAE established an ambitious new target to double bilateral trade to US$200 billion by 2032.

Economic Power: The UAE's state-owned investors collectively manage US$2.93 trillion in assets, ranking the country fourth globally among state investors. This ecosystem includes the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), which independently manages over US$1.18 trillion, alongside Mubadala (US$385 billion) and the newly restructured LIMAD entity. This fiscal power has backed massive domestic construction booms, commercial entertainment parks, and world-class cultural franchises including the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the upcoming Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

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. Abu Dhabi is home to the world's largest falcon hospital, a specialist institution dedicated to the treatment, rehabilitation and conservation of falcons.

Philanthropy and Tolerance: 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 and 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 their faith.

The Gaza Genocide: The United Arab Emirates has accused Israel of committing a genocide in Gaza and has warned that any annexation of the West Bank would endanger the Abraham Accords. It is committed to a two-state solution and has contributed to medical, food, and infrastructure support, while diplomatic channels have been leveraged to reduce hostilities and protect civilians.

Country: Malaysia
Born: 10 August 1947 (age 79)
Source of Influence: Prime Minister of Malaysia
Influence: Political
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (10)
2025 (15)
2024 (17)

"Economic development must never be divorced from moral responsibility; a prosperous nation is one where justice is accessible to all."

1971
founded the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM).

$12
billion annually invested into specialized Islamic social finance and halal commerce initiatives.



13

His Excellency

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim

HE Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim

Prime Minister of Malaysia

HE Anwar Ibrahim became Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister in November 2022, leading the unity government under the Pakatan Harapan coalition. His path to the premiership was marked by decades of political turbulence, including imprisonment. He served as Leader of the Opposition from 2008 to 2015 and again from 2020 to 2022. He also led opposition movements and coalitions outside those periods. His rise is widely seen as a dramatic comeback in Malaysian politics.

Political Foundations and Career Rebounds: Anwar's early life was rooted in Penang, Malaysia, where he was born to a Muslim Malay family. In 1971, he founded and became the president of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) and in 1982 accepted an invitation from then-Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad to join the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). He quickly rose to hold various ministerial portfolios, including Minister of Youth, Culture, and Sports (1983), Minister of Agriculture (1984), Minister of Education (1986–1991), and Minister of Finance (1991–1998), while serving as Deputy Prime Minister from 1993 to 1998.

Trials, Tribulations, and Domestic Pressures: As a key figure in Malaysia's economic boom of the 1990s, Anwar clashed with Mahathir Mohamad during the 1997 Asian financial crisis, leading to his high-profile dismissal in 1998. Over the next two decades he was repeatedly imprisoned and released, including during his tenure as Leader of the Opposition from 2008 to 2015. He was finally released via a full Royal Pardon in 2018. He immediately returned to Parliament, serving as Leader of the Opposition from 2020 to 2022 before successfully capturing the premiership in November 2022. Anwar's unity government has faced mounting domestic political pressure, culminating in a series of electoral setbacks.

Technology, AI, and Semiconductor Strategy: Anwar has prioritised a robust digital and economic transition strategy for Malaysia under his signature *Malaysia Madani* framework, placing artificial intelligence, semiconductors, data centres, quantum computing, and the energy transition at the heart of his government's strategic agenda. In June 2026, Anwar highlighted the energy transition as a key pillar of Malaysia's development agenda, connecting the country's future energy needs directly to the rapid expansion of its high-tech infrastructure sectors.

Contributions to Global Academia: Beyond his political career, Anwar has made significant contributions to academia, holding visiting positions at St Antony's College, Oxford, Johns Hopkins University, and Georgetown University. He is 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 Malaysia (IIUM) from 1983 to 1988, and has received numerous international honorary degrees.

Peace Mediator: Anwar Ibrahim played an important role to ease tensions between Thailand and Cambodia following several days of deadly border clashes in July 2025. As Malaysia's Prime Minister and ASEAN Chair, he hosted talks between the two countries' leaders in Putrajaya that helped secure a ceasefire. Anwar helped build trust between Bangkok and Phnom Penh, reinforcing Malaysia's image as a constructive peace broker in Southeast Asia.

Stance on the Middle East Crisis and Global Conflicts: Anwar remains one of the world's most outspoken heads of state regarding the Palestinian cause, maintaining unyielding state support for civilian protection and humanitarian access in Gaza. His official state meetings with Hamas officials have drawn public pushback from Western nations, which Anwar has explicitly dismissed, asserting Malaysia's absolute sovereign right to conduct its own foreign policy. Taking an aggressive international stance, Anwar announced to the Malaysian Parliament that the country is spearheading a core international coalition drafting a formal resolution to expel Israel from the United Nations General Assembly. Anwar reiterated that Malaysia's absolute non-recognition of Israel is permanent.



Country: Morocco
Born: 21 August 1963 (age 63)
Source of Influence: Political, Administrative, Development
Influence: King with authority over 38 million Moroccans
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni, Maliki
2026 (12)
2025 (10)
2024 (10)

"Development cannot be achieved unless there is a complete integration of all citizens into the economic and cultural life of the nation."

20
million tourists to Morocco in 2025

$140
billion national economy; the strategic economic gateway between Europe and Africa.



14

His Majesty

King Mohammed VI

HM King Mohammed VI

King of Morocco

HM King Mohammed VI has reigned since July 1999, leading Morocco as both monarch and religious figure (*Amir al-Mu'minin*), with his lineage tracing back to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. His rule combines inherited religious authority, constitutional reform, and a modernising agenda that seeks both domestic stability and expanded regional influence.

The Four-Hundred-Year Alaouite Dynasty: The 400-year-old Alaouite dynasty traces its lineage back to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through the line of Al-Hasan. Taking its name from Moulay Ali Cherif, who became Prince of Tafilalt in 1631 CE, the royal house envisions its role as a continuation of the Andalusian Golden Age of Islam, an era historically celebrated for peaceful co-existence, artistic flourishing, and intellectual exchange.

Influence over the Maliki Jurisprudence Network: Morocco is home to the historic University of al-Qarawiyyin in Fez, recognized as the oldest continuously operating university in the world. The institution stands as the historical and intellectual centre of the Maliki school of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence. Leveraging this traditional baseline to enact modern reforms, King Mohammed VI implemented the ground breaking *Mudawana* family law code, which granted women expanded rights in divorce procedures, property ownership, and child custody, alongside establishing citizenship rights for children born to Moroccan mothers and non-Moroccan fathers. Furthermore, the King commissioned the Ministry of Islamic Affairs to train female spiritual guides (*morchidat*), who serve as active religious chaplains and educators to Moroccan communities globally.

Huge Influence over Muslims in Africa: Beyond standard political and economic treaties, Morocco maintains deep, foundational spiritual ties with Muslim communities across the African continent. The city of Fez is home to the highly revered tomb of Mawlana Ahmed ibn Mohammed Tijani Al-Hassani-Maghribi (1735–1815 CE), the founder of the massive Tijaniyya Sufi order. His shrine serves as a major pilgrimage site, attracting millions of practitioners annually from across West and North Africa.

Support for Jerusalem (Al-Quds): King Mohammed VI chairs the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) Al-Quds Committee, mirroring the strong, unyielding support shared by the Moroccan public for the Palestinian cause and the preservation of Jerusalem. The Moroccan link with the Holy City dates back to 1193 CE, when Salah ad-Din's son endowed the historic *Magharbeh Quarter* (Moroccan Quarter) adjacent to the Buraq Wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound to North African pilgrims. This 800-year-old quarter was demolished by Israeli authorities following the capture of East Jerusalem in 1967.

Football and Global Soft Power: Morocco has firmly established itself as a premier global football powerhouse. The national team successfully secured its seventh FIFA World Cup appearance in 2026, marking a historic third consecutive qualification for the Atlas Lions. At the same time, the Kingdom heavily stepped up structural infrastructure preparations to co-host the 2030 FIFA World Cup alongside Spain and Portugal. This hosting milestone follows an unprecedented era of athletic success, highlighted by the Moroccan national team becoming the first African and Arab country to reach a World Cup semi-final in 2022, followed by securing a historic bronze medal at the 2024 Summer Olympics.

The Abraham Accords and Gaza: Morocco normalized diplomatic relations with Israel in December 2020 under the framework of the Abraham Accords, a transaction tied to international recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara. Following the eruption of the protracted Gaza conflict, the King and the Moroccan government have faced significant domestic political pressure, highlighted by mass public demonstrations organized by anti-normalization and pro-Palestinian coalitions protesting events such as the docking of Israeli logistics vessels in Tangier. Throughout the 2026 Middle East conflicts, Morocco has sought to leverage a balanced diplomatic strategy. While officially denouncing military actions against civilians and firmly defending a two-state solution, Rabat has maintained its baseline diplomatic ties with Israel. The Foreign Ministry noted that Morocco's unique positioning under the Abraham Accords has been utilized as a direct channel to transmit extensive food, legal, and humanitarian aid directly into Gaza and Jerusalem.

Country: Saudi Arabia
Born: 14 December 1956 (age 70)
Source of Influence: Scholarly, Media
Influence: 53 published books, supervised IslamToday. net, and reached millions through TV
School of Thought: Moderate Salafi
2026 (13)
2025 (11)
2024 (11)

"My enemies, I thank you! You are who trained me to be patient, to respond to the evil with the good and to overlook."

9
years so far in second imprisonment

22
million followers across social media.



15

Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda

Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda

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 *Islam-Today.net* and his persistent efforts at ministering to the needs of the global Muslim community.

Key Scholar of the Salafi Network: Al-Ouda studied Islamic jurisprudence and in the 1980s he became closely associated with the *Sahwa* (Awakening) movement, which called for political reform, greater government accountability, and vocal opposition to Western military presence in the Arabian Peninsula. His political activism led to his first period of imprisonment from 1994 to 1999 alongside other clerics critical of government policies. Following his release, Al-Ouda's tone shifted markedly; moving away from confrontation, he emphasized peaceful coexistence, inter-faith dialogue, and gradual reform. His writings and television appearances reached millions, particularly through Islam Today, a multilingual website he founded that offered Islamic educational resources in Arabic, English, French, and Chinese. By the 2010s, he had become one of the most followed Muslim scholars on social media, boasting over 22 million followers on Twitter alone.

Ambassador of Non-violence: In an effort to distance himself from alleged connections to perpetrators of terrorism, Al-Ouda has been 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 of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), he led an influential delegation in talks with Arab heads of state regarding the need to unite in opposition to the siege of Gaza in early 2009. He has strongly condemned DA'ISH (ISIS) and publicly called for diplomatic peace and unity between members of the GCC and Qatar during regional rifts.

Arbitrary Arrest and Stalled Legal Proceedings: Al-Ouda was arbitrarily arrested without a warrant in September 2017. The catalyst for his detention ostensibly appears to be nothing more than a tweet expressing a prayer for reconciliation and an end to the diplomatic rift between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Following his arrest, the Public Prosecution charged him with 37 distinct offenses, including affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood, supporting Arab Spring protests, and incitement against the ruler.

Indefinite Confinement and Global Backlash: His open-ended detention has triggered a heavy international outcry from a wide range of global organisations. The International Union of Muslim Scholars, the European Muslim Forum, and Amnesty International have repeatedly called on the Saudi government to immediately and unconditionally drop all charges and release Al-Ouda alongside his two compatriots, Sheikh Ali Al-Omari and Sheikh Awad Al-Qarni, who face identical conditions of confinement.

He remains in prolonged solitary confinement, his health continues to deteriorate, and he still faces a prosecution request for the death penalty in connection with his peaceful religious activities and independent leadership.

Severe Health Concerns and Ill-treatment: Marking his ninth consecutive year in detention in September 2026, Al-Ouda has been held in punishing conditions that human rights groups describe as amounting to physical and psychological torture. His son, academic and advocate Abdullah Al-Ouda, has publicly raised alarms that his father's physical well-being is declining at an increasingly rapid pace, stating that the scholar has lost nearly half of his vision and hearing due to institutional neglect.



Country: Indonesia
Born: 17 October 1951 (age 75)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: Leader of 287 million residents of Indonesia
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (15)
2025 (18)
2024 (450)

"Indonesia's foreign policy will always remain free and active; we seek friendship with all nations while fiercely guarding our independence."

17k
islands

$1.37
trillion nominal GDP



16

His Excellency

President Prabowo Subianto

HE President Prabowo Subianto

President of Indonesia

Prabowo Subianto became Indonesia's eighth president, officially taking office on 20 October 2024, following his victory in the February 2024 elections, when he won approximately 58.6% of the vote. His inauguration marked the culmination of a political journey spanning decades of military service and political bids.

Background and Military Roots: Prabowo Subianto, born 17 October 1951 in Jakarta, comes from a prominent Indonesian family. His father was a world-renowned 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 (Kostrad). Prabowo was also married to Suharto's daughter, Siti Hediati Hariyadi, from 1983 to 1998, further cementing his ties to Indonesia's historical political elite.

Political Rebounds and Ascent to the Presidency: 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 contested the presidency in 2014 and 2019, losing both times to Joko Widodo. In a surprising turn of events, Widodo appointed Prabowo as Defence 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, energy self-sufficiency, and a more assertive foreign policy.

Anti-Corruption Drive and Global Governance Stance: At the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2026, Prabowo delivered a high-profile special address where he strongly denounced systemic corruption and what he termed "greedonomics." He stressed that Indonesia's rapid economic growth must be rigorously matched by stronger institutional governance and transparent state accountability. The President issued a firm warning against economic elites who exploit state infrastructure for personal enrichment, pledging to enact sweeping domestic anti-corruption frameworks to ensure national resources benefit the wider public.

Engagement with the Indonesian Ulema: In July 2026, President Prabowo formally received a series of strategic recommendations from the *Ijtima Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian Islamic Scholars' Assembly). Given Indonesia's status as the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, Prabowo welcomed the council's recommendations, characterizing them as a vital responsibility and a source of strength for his administration. The assembly formally backed the government's strategic measures to defend national sovereignty, accelerate industrial downstreaming, and achieve total food and energy security.

Global Relations and Gaza: As president, Prabowo Subianto has pursued a more active international role for Indonesia, including through its full membership of BRICS, which he represented at the bloc's September 2026 summit in New Delhi. Indonesia also maintains its longstanding diplomatic support for the Palestinian cause, publicly backing South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice over violations of the Genocide Convention in Gaza, while advocating for Palestinian rights in international forums. In 2026, Prabowo officially allied Indonesia with 21 other nations tasked with directing the structural reconstruction and humanitarian recovery of Gaza and greenlit the deployment of the first tranche of an 8,000-strong Indonesian peacekeeping contingent designated for the international stabilization force in Gaza.



Country: Yemen
Born: 22 May 1979 (age 47)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: Leader of the Houthis
School of Thought: Traditional Shia
2026 (21)
2025 (27)
2024 (39)

"Our stance is a matter of religious principle, a moral duty, and an expression of our unyielding commitment to defending the oppressed people of the Ummah."

90%
of food is imported

200k
active combatants



17

Sheikh

Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi

Sheikh Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi

Leader of the Houthi

Sheikh Abdul-Malik al-Houthi is the supreme leader of the Houthi political, religious, and militant movement, known officially as Ansar Allah ("Supporters of God"). Under his leadership, the Houthis have consolidated their position as the de facto governing authority in northern Yemen and a formidable player in regional geopolitics.

The Zaydi Identity: The Zaydis, also known as "Fiver Shi'ism," are a branch of Shia Islam that originated in the 8th century following a succession dispute. Their doctrine emphasizes the need for an active and just imam—a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through his grandsons Hasan or Husayn—who is willing to directly confront corrupt or tyrannical rulers. Centered historically in the Saada governorate, Zaydis form roughly 35% of Yemen's population (amounting to 12 million people), traditionally advocating for social justice and fiercely resisting foreign intervention. While classified as a branch of Shia Islam, Zaydi jurisprudence is closer in many of its practical aspects to Sunni Islam than to Twelver Shia schools.

Origins of the Houthi Movement: The Houthi movement was founded in the early 1990s by Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, Abdul-Malik's elder brother, who was a prominent Zaydi scholar and an outspoken critic of foreign Wahhabi influence and the central Yemeni government. The Zaydis had ruled much of Yemen for over a thousand years until the republican revolution of 1962. Initially established as a revivalist religious and cultural movement to protect Zaydi heritage, the Houthis transformed into an armed political and military force following a series of brutal wars with the central government throughout the 2000s.

Taking Yemen: Abdul-Malik al-Houthi assumed absolute command of the movement following his brother's death in battle in 2004. He masterfully consolidated power during the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, seizing complete control of the northern Saada and Jawf provinces. In September 2014, his forces stormed the capital city of Sana'a, capturing key government ministries, broadcasting networks, and major military installations. During their expansion, Houthi forces systematically targeted and expelled remnants of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) from the regions they seized.

The Coalition Campaign and the Humanitarian Crisis: In March 2015, a Saudi-led military coalition, backed by Western intelligence and regional allies, launched a large-scale intervention against the Houthis, seeking to roll back their territorial gains and restore the internationally recognized government to power. The subsequent multi-year war resulted in more than 150,000 direct combat fatalities and contributed to over 200,000 additional deaths from forced blockades, famine, and total infrastructure collapse. The conflict left nearly 70% of Yemen's population—over 27 million people—entirely dependent on international humanitarian aid, and triggering unprecedented cholera outbreaks. Despite the destruction, the Houthis maintained control over much of northern Yemen, including the capital, while expanding their domestic military resilience, drone capabilities, and ballistic missile manufacturing.

Maritime Blockades, Gaza Solidarity, and the Iranian Alliance: Al-Houthi initiated his movement's maritime campaign first and foremost as an explicit anti-genocide action, framing the naval blockade at the Bab al-Mandab strait as a moral and legal duty to protect civilians in Gaza after global institutions failed to intervene. Using advanced drones and hypersonic missiles, this campaign systematically choked shipping linked to Israel, successfully crippling 80% of trade at its southern port of Eilat. To sustain this strategic power projection, Ansar Allah deeply aligned its operations with Iran's regional network, coordinating closely with Tehran to expand its reach beyond Yemen's borders.

This maritime campaign rapidly expanded into a direct confrontation with Saudi Arabia, functioning as a direct extension of Yemen's decade-long war against the Saudi-led coalition. When wider regional warfare closed the Strait of Hormuz, forcing the Saudis to reroute their crude oil through Red Sea ports, the Houthis retaliated against what they termed years of Saudi bombardment and economic siege by declaring a counter-blockade on Saudi shipping. Concurrently, the group ended a four-year domestic calm by launching strikes that killed over 30 Saudi-backed government soldiers. Despite retaliatory USA, British, and Israeli airstrikes, al-Houthi's operations have successfully granted his movement a powerful veto over global energy and maritime corridors.

Country: India
Born: 3 March 1964 (age 62)
Source of Influence: Scholarly, Political, Administrative.
Influence: 12 million members of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (16)
2025 (14)
2024 (16)

"Patriotism is an integral component of an authentic Islamic identity; we will never allow sectarian forces to isolate us from our nation's history."

12
million Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind followers

3
million+ students in JUH's Deeni Talimi network.



18

Maulana

Mahmood Madani

Maulana Mahmood Madani

President of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind

Maulana Mahmood Madani is the National President of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH), one of the oldest and largest socio-religious organisations of Indian Muslims. He is a strong advocate for justice, communal harmony, and the constitutional rights of minorities. Known for his frank condemnations of terrorism, as well as his unyielding defence of Indian Muslims in the face of rising Islamophobia, Madani represents the continuation of a long legacy of religious scholarship and social activism.

Lineage: Maulana Mahmood's grandfather, Maulana Syed Hussain Ahmad Madani, was a great scholar of Islamic theology who taught Hadith in Madinah and at Darul Uloom Deoband. He served as the president of the JUH until his death in 1957 and was succeeded by his son, Asad Madani (Maulana Mahmood's father), who served as president until his passing in 2006.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH) and Composite Nationalism: The JUH was established in 1919 by leading Deoband scholars who famously argued for the concept of *composite nationalism*—believing that a democratic nation should not be formed on the basis of a single factor (such as religion or ethnicity) but should be pluralistic. Maulana Mahmood has strived to keep this concept alive amid the turmoil of nationalist politics in India.

After graduating from Deoband in 1992, he became actively involved in the JUH, organising national conferences that caused a rapid rise in membership. He served as the General Secretary of JUH from 2001 to 2021, before transitioning to his current executive role as the National President. Following his father's passing in 2006, a leadership dispute led to an administrative bifurcation of the organization, though Mahmood Madani remains its premier global face.

Legal Battles and Constitutional Defenses: Maulana Madani leads numerous legal battles in various courts across India to secure the constitutional rights of Indian Muslims, covering the Right to Citizenship, the Right to Practise Religious Duties, and defending individuals falsely implicated in terror-related charges.

Advocacy and the Protection of Waqf Rights: In July 2026, Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind made the preservation and legal defense of Waqf institutions a primary focus of its national advocacy. Madani framed the safeguarding of Waqf properties as a collective religious obligation for Indian Muslims. He explicitly called upon custodians (*mutawallis*) across the country to counter external encroachments by modernizing internal management through enhanced financial transparency, mandatory audits, total digitization of legal records, and robust documentation.

Combatting Islamophobia: Maulana Mahmood Madani continues to support systematic initiatives to counter hatred and religious-based crime against Indian Muslims. The Justice and Empowerment of Minorities (JEM) cell—formerly operating as the Justice and Empowerment Initiative for Indian Muslims (JEIM)—functions under his aegis to record cases of Islamophobia in a systematic, data-driven manner, providing legal advocacy and material assistance to victims. This represents the first such institutional attempt by Indian Muslims to systematically log communal crimes and present verified data to international human rights organisations.

Stance on the Gaza Genocide: Maulana Madani has maintained a firm voice of support for Palestine, consistently criticizing military actions and civilian blockades in Gaza. Madani frames the ongoing conflict as a severe violation of international law and universal human rights, calling upon global state actors to enforce strict accountability and safeguard civilian life.



Country: Nigeria
Born: 24 August 1956 (age 70)
Source of Influence: Lineage, Development, Administrative
Influence: Central figure for 135 million Nigerian Muslims
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni, Maliki; linked to the Qadiriyyah Sufi order by lineage
2026 (17)
2025 (16)
2024 (18)

"National cohesion remains essential to addressing the country's numerous challenges... We must use piety as a basis for helping one another and promoting national harmony."

20th
Sultan of Sokoto

108
million Nigerian Muslims
(Spiritual Leader)



19

His Royal Emenence

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 organisations in the country, and is considered the spiritual leader of Nigeria's 116 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 is the son of Sultan Siddiq Abubakar III, who reigned for five decades (1938–1988). Before ascending the throne, Abubakar had a distinguished military career. He trained at the Nigerian Defence Academy in Kaduna and later served as a Brigadier General in the Nigerian Army. Before becoming Sultan, he was Nigeria's Defence Attaché to Pakistan. He assumed the Sultanate in November 2006 following the death of his elder brother, Sultan Muhammadu Maccido, in an aeroplane crash.

Lineage Back to Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio: 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.

Soft Power: Sultan Abubakar III remains one of the most influential religious figures in Africa. His ability to blend traditional authority with modern engagement—spanning education, humanitarian relief, counterterrorism, interfaith dialogue, and global justice issues such as Palestine—makes him a pivotal figure in Nigeria's quest for unity and stability. His moral and spiritual authority ensures that his voice continues to carry immense weight in Nigeria's national and international discourse.

Countering Extremism and Promoting Peace: The Sultan has been a leading voice against violent extremism, particularly Boko Haram. He has consistently condemned the group's actions as un-Islamic and has urged Nigerian Muslims to reject radical ideologies. His leadership has been pivotal in mobilising traditional rulers, clerics, and community leaders in efforts to de-radicalise youth and counter extremist narratives. Equally, Abubakar is a global advocate for interfaith dialogue. He has built bridges with Christian leaders to address Nigeria's recurring religious and ethnic tensions, especially in the Middle Belt region. He co-moderates the Council of Religions for Peace (CRP), one of the world's largest interfaith organisations, and regularly engages in joint Muslim-Christian initiatives to promote harmony. His role in calming tensions during outbreaks of sectarian violence has been widely acknowledged.

The Gaza Genocide: Sultan Abubakar III has been vocal about the plight of the Palestinians. He has condemned Israeli military actions as violations of international law and human rights, urging the global community to take stronger action to end what he describes as systematic oppression and collective punishment.



Country: Türkiye
Born: 15 September 1971 (age 55)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: Head of Turkish Intelligence
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (20)
2025 (23)
2024 (24)

"The consciousness that there is a reality greater than us above our heads is a consciousness that determines exactly where and how we walk on this earth."

7
seminal texts authored which bridge Western philosophy and traditional Islamic metaphysics.

$1.20
billion: budget of Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MİT).



20

Professor Ibrahim Kalin

Professor Ibrahim Kalin

Scholar & Director of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT)

Professor Ibrahim Kalin is a prominent Turkish scholar, intellectual, and statesman who is one of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's closest confidants. He was appointed Director of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MİT) in June 2023, marking a structural shift from his long-standing career as a presidential adviser and spokesperson into the absolute heart of Türkiye's security establishment. His trajectory reflects a rare combination of academic philosophy, political strategy, and cultural engagement, making him one of the most versatile figures in contemporary Turkish public life.

Scholar and Intellectual: Born in Istanbul, Professor Kalin pursued higher education with a focus on Islamic philosophy and cross-civilisational dialogue. After completing his undergraduate studies in history at Istanbul University, he earned a master's degree from the International Islamic University of Malaysia before pursuing doctoral studies at George Washington University. Kalin's extensive scholarship spans Islamic philosophy, Sufism, epistemology, and the complex historical relationship between Islam and the West, positioning him as an intellectual bridge between traditions.

Academic and Think Tank Leadership: From 2002 to 2005, Kalin served as a faculty member in the Department of Religious Studies at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 2005, he returned to Türkiye to establish the SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, which grew to become one of the country's most influential state-aligned think tanks. Between 2005 and 2009, Kalin directed SETA, shaping its mission to provide policy-relevant research on governance, regional security, and international affairs. He later held an academic fellowship at Georgetown University, further strengthening his international academic and diplomatic networks.

Political Advisor and Erdoğan's Confidant: Kalin's formal transition into politics began in 2009 when he entered government service as Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister. From 2014 until 2023, he served as the official Presidential Spokesperson and Senior Advisor to the President, functioning as Erdoğan's primary public voice on both domestic and international matters. Kalin played a vital role in high-stakes negotiations during successive phases of the Syrian conflict, mediating directly with global powers including the United States, Russia, and Iran. He has also been a central figure in shaping Türkiye's relations with the European Union, consistently balancing assertive Turkish nationalism with pragmatic, back-channel diplomacy.

Strategic Intelligence Leadership (MİT): In June 2023, Kalin was appointed Director of MİT, succeeding Hakan Fidan, who transitioned to Foreign Minister. His intellectual rigor, deep diplomatic experience, and wide-ranging geopolitical networks uniquely suit him to lead a modern intelligence service. Under his watch, MİT has increasingly integrated multidisciplinary approaches to tackle hybrid warfare, global cyber defense networks, and expansive human intelligence operations. In 2026, Kalin's intelligence directorate has been heavily active across multiple front-line regional security, mediation, and counter-espionage portfolios:

Gaza Ceasefire Diplomacy: Kalin has emerged as a key Turkish intermediary in direct, high-level diplomatic efforts over Gaza. On 1 June 2026, he hosted a delegation of senior Hamas officials in Ankara, meeting directly with Hamas Shura Council Chairman Muhammad Darwish and members of the group's political bureau.

Cultural Influence and Soft Power: Beyond politics and statecraft, Kalin remains a highly accomplished musician. A skilled player of the *bağlama* (long-necked Turkish lute), he has recorded and performed traditional Ottoman classical and Turkish folk music. His musical performances have garnered millions of views across digital platforms like YouTube, underscoring a unique ability to connect with the Turkish public as a cultural figure as well as a senior statesman.



Country: Indonesia
Born: 16 February 1966 (age 60)
Source of Influence: Administrative, Political, Education
Influence: Leader of approximately 90 million members of the Nahdlatul Ulama
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (19)
2025 (16)
2024 (20)

"We must move beyond a defensive mindset and proactively present Islamic values as universal contributions to human rights and global civilization."

31k
boarding schools (pesantren)

40%
of Indonesian Muslims identify as affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama



21

His Eminence
Yahya Cholil Staquf

Yahya Cholil Staquf

General Chairman of Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama

KH Yahya Cholil Staquf, widely known as Gus Yahya, is a prominent Indonesian Islamic scholar and leader within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the world's largest Muslim organisation with more than 90 million members. Under his executive guidance, the NU continues to champion a traditionalist, moderate, and compassionate form of Sunni Islam. Founded in 1926, the NU's teachings emphasise that the essence of Islam is universal love, mercy, and service to humanity. Staquf's influence extends across Indonesia and onto the global stage, making him a central figure in shaping modern Islamic discourse.

Personal Education and Lineage: Staquf comes from a distinguished family of Javanese ulema. His grandfather, KH Bisri Musthofa, was a revered scholar and author of numerous religious works, while his father, KH Cholil Bisri, was a leading NU figure and member of Indonesia's parliament. From an early age, Staquf was immersed in Islamic education and spiritual practice. He studied under KH Ali Maksum, a respected NU leader, and was deeply influenced by KH Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), the former NU chairman and Indonesia's first democratically elected president. Gus Dur's vision of pluralism, democracy, and religious tolerance continues to shape Staquf's leadership approach.

Head of an Expansive Network: The Nahdlatul Ulama's reach is vast, encompassing 30 regional boards, 339 branch boards, 12 special branches overseas, more than 2,600 representative councils, and over 37,000 sub-branches. Through this sprawling network, the NU operates thousands of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), universities, hospitals, and charities that impact millions of Indonesians. Under Staquf's leadership, the NU continues to advocate for the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah*, firmly rooted in classical Islamic jurisprudence and Sufism, while adapting to the needs of modern society.

Traditionalism and Social Reform: Nahdlatul Ulama distinguishes itself from other Islamic movements in Indonesia, particularly modernist and Islamist groups, by upholding traditional practices while engaging in modern social reform. Staquf promotes "Islam Nusantara" (Islam of the Archipelago) and "Humanitarian Islam," which emphasize Indonesia's unique cultural and historical context in interpreting Islam. This model stresses tolerance, coexistence, and the absolute rejection of extremism. Under Staquf's leadership, the NU continues to push for social justice, anti-corruption initiatives, women's empowerment, and poverty alleviation.

National and International Role: Beyond his role in the NU, Staquf has been highly active in Indonesia's governance and international diplomacy, previously serving on President Joko Widodo's Presidential Advisory Council (*Wantimpres*). Globally, Staquf has been instrumental in promoting Islam while emphasising its pluralism and compassion. He co-founded the U.S.-based *Bayt ar-Rahmah* and the Center for Shared Civilizational Values (CSCV). Through these vehicles, he was a key architect behind the establishment of the G20 Religion Forum (R20), a global platform created to prevent the weaponization of identity and foster a peaceful global order based on human dignity.

Stance on the Gaza Genocide: Staquf has spoken out strongly against military operations in Gaza, describing the actions as inhumane and contrary to universal principles of justice. Under his leadership, the NU has consistently joined Indonesian civil society in condemning the "collective punishment" of Palestinians, calling for immediate ceasefire frameworks, unhindered humanitarian aid access, and the realization of a two-state solution.



Country: Egypt
Born: 19 November 1954 (age 72)
Source of Influence: Political
Influence: President of Egypt
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (22)
2025 (20)
2024 (21)

"The establishment of an independent Palestinian state is the key to defusing regional tensions and reaching true and sustainable peace and security."

$58
billion: cost of the New Administrative Capital

12%
the amount of global trade via the Suez Canal



22

His Excellency

President Abdel Fattah Saeed El-Sisi

HE President Abdel Fattah Saeed El-Sisi

President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

HE President Abdel Fattah Saeed El-Sisi assumed office as the sixth President of Egypt on 8 June 2014. Formerly a Field Marshal, he resigned as Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces to run as a civilian candidate in the May 2014 elections.

Post-Arab Spring Transition: Former Field Marshal Abdel Fattah Saeed El-Sisi removed Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi (d. 2019), from power in July 2013 following massive street protests against the Muslim Brotherhood-led government. Outbreaks of violence ensued across Egypt, including the death of hundreds of protesters during the dispersal of the Raba'a Al-Adawiya Square sit-in in Cairo. Sisi subsequently ran for office himself and was sworn in on 8 June 2014. He 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 under current laws.

Economic Landscapes and Systemic Challenges: Under Sisi's leadership, Egypt has navigated profound financial hurdles alongside substantial international bailouts, continuing to implement rigorous structural reforms under its US$8 billion IMF programme. While inflation has fluctuated down from historical peaks near 38%, price pressures remain volatile, affecting the daily cost of living indices for ordinary citizens. Concurrently, human rights organizations continue to raise persistent concerns regarding state security practices and the detention of political opposition figures, adding ongoing scrutiny from international watchdogs.

Mega Projects and Strategic Manufacturing: Since taking power, President Sisi has pushed highly ambitious megaprojects to completely modernize Egypt's economic geography. The crown jewel is the New Administrative Capital (NAC), a $58 billion smart city located east of Cairo, designed to house up to 6.5 million people and featuring major government complexes, Africa's tallest tower (*Iconic Tower*), and the region's largest mosque. As of 2026, the vast majority of government ministries, parliament, and executive bodies have fully completed their physical transitions to the new capital, which hosted Sisi's official third-term inauguration.

Parallel projects include the "New Delta" reclamation master plan, designed to transform millions of acres of desert into active farmland to improve agricultural self-sufficiency through the *Mostaqbal Misr* project. On the Mediterranean coast, construction has accelerated on the massive Ras El Hekma tourism and urban hub—backed by a historic $35 billion investment deal signed with the United Arab Emirates. Furthermore, the $30 billion El Dabaa Nuclear Power Plant, constructed in partnership with Russia's Rosatom, is entering advanced technical assembly phases to inject clean baseline energy into the national grid by 2030.

The opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum in November 2025 marked a major cultural milestone during President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's tenure. One of the world's largest archaeological museums, it reflects Egypt's investment in preserving its ancient heritage and promoting its cultural legacy on the international stage.

Gaza Conflict and Ceasefire Diplomacy: Egypt has maintained a central, indispensable role in the diplomatic and humanitarian architecture surrounding the Gaza conflict. Sisi has established a permanent geopolitical "red line" explicitly rejecting any forced demographic displacement or mass transfer of Palestinians into Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, identifying such moves as an existential threat to Egyptian national security and a death blow to the Palestinian right to statehood.



Country: Egypt
Born: 3 March 1953 (age 73)
Source of Influence: Scholarly, Political
Influence: Leading Religious voice in Egypt
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (23)
2025 (21)
2024 (22)

"Knowledge is a sacred trust. It must be taken from verified, chain-linked authorities (Isnad), not from casual readings or anonymous voices on the internet."

50
books authored

8
million fatwas issued during his tenure at Dar-ul-Ifta in Egypt



23

His Eminence

Sheikh Dr Ali Gomaa

HE Sheikh Dr Ali Gomaa

Former Grand Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Sheikh Ali Gomaa is one of the most influential contemporary Muslim scholars and the former Grand Mufti of Egypt, a position he held from 2003 until 2013. Even after retiring from this role, he has remained an active public figure, scholar, teacher, and spiritual guide, with his counsel in demand across the Muslim world.

Egypt's Weight in Islamic Scholarship: Ali Gomaa's scholarly influence is rooted in Egypt's central role in Islamic thought and law, especially through Al-Azhar University, where he served as professor of jurisprudence. Gomaa has authored more than 50 books and hundreds of articles on Islamic law, spirituality, and contemporary issues. He continues to be a member of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy, the leading body of Islamic jurisprudence under the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). However, in 2021, he was dismissed from the International Union of Muslim Scholars, alongside Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah and Farouk Hamadeh, due to differing jurisprudential stances, reflecting divisions in global Islamic discourse.

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 Sepulchre, 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 making him a target for some extremist Islamists.

Popularised and Simplified Fatwas: As Grand Mufti, Gomaa transformed Dar al-Ifta into a modern institution with global influence. He introduced a system of checks and balances for issuing fatwas, ensuring they were grounded in authentic scholarship. Under his leadership, Dar al-Ifta became internationally recognised for issuing contextualised and accessible rulings on issues ranging from finance to family law, reaching audiences far beyond Egypt.

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 Siddīq al-Ghumari (d. 1993). This is a Darqawi branch of the Shadhiliyya whose chain of transmission is known as a chain of scholars and *mujtahids*. The Order is currently operating in six countries and has several thousand followers.

The Gaza Genocide: Sheikh Ali Gomaa has spoken forcefully on the ongoing war in Gaza, describing Israel's actions as violations of international law and crimes against humanity. Gomaa has further framed the Gaza crisis as part of a wider ethical struggle, warning against indifference to oppression and emphasising that justice and compassion are central Islamic obligations.



Country: Yemen
Born: 16 April 1971 (age 55)
Source of Influence: Scholarly, Lineage, Philanthropy
Influence: Preacher, Social Issues
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (24)
2025 (22)
2024 (23)

"If our spirituality does not translate into empathy, humility, and active service toward the broken hearts of society, then it is merely a deceptive habit."

38th
generation descendant of the Prophet ﷺ

10
is the age began studying under his teachers



24

Sheikh

Ali Zain Al-Abideen Al-Jifri

Sheikh Habib Ali Zain Al-Abideen Al-Jifri

Director General of Tabah Foundation, UAE

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

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 bin Hafiz.

Habib Ali often teaches at Dar al-Mustafa in Tarim, Yemen, and also travels all over the world meeting his students and giving lectures. The Ba Alawi school emphasises a balance between Islamic scholarship, spirituality, and social responsibility. Habib Ali's teachings highlight the necessity of embodying the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ in daily life, combining outward practice with inward purification of the heart. His spiritual guidance is deeply rooted in Sufi principles of mercy, humility, and service.

Think Tank & Public Stances: 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. Notably, Tabah has collaborated with UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) to govern a Zakat donation portal for refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, ensuring the process respects Islamic legal norms in giving to displaced people.

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.

The Gaza Crisis: Habib Ali has spoken out forcefully on the ongoing war, describing the killing of civilians, destruction of infrastructure, and mass displacement in Gaza as crimes against humanity that demand a collective global response.



Country: United States
Born: 1 January 1960 (age 66)
Source of Influence: Preacher, Social Issues
Influence: Scholarly, leading Islamic voice for English-speaking Muslims
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni
2026 (25)
2025 (24)
2024 (25)

"The crisis of the modern world is fundamentally a crisis of meaning. We must restore the intellect and the heart to their proper places to heal our societies."

1977
is the year when he converted to Islam

2008
is the year he co-founded Zaytuna College



25

Sheikh

Hamza Yusuf Hanson

Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson

Teacher and Co-Founder of Zaytuna College

Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson is widely regarded as the most influential Islamic scholar in the Western world. He is the President and co-founder of Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California, the first accredited Muslim liberal arts college in the United States, and is recognized globally as an authoritative intellectual bridging the classical Islamic intellectual tradition and modern Western academic scholarship.

Foundations in Classical Scholarship: Hanson converted to Islam in 1977 and subsequently spent over a decade studying Arabic, philosophy, and traditional Islamic sciences across the Muslim world, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Morocco. His most formative years were spent in Mauritania, where he immersed himself in classical curricula while living alongside the legendary polymath Murabit Al-Hajj Ould Fahfu (d. 2018). After returning to the United States in 1988 with numerous *ijazaat* (traditional teaching licenses), Hanson supplemented his traditional mastery with modern academic credentials, earning undergraduate degrees in Religious Studies, English, and Nursing, followed by a PhD from the Graduate Theological Union in cooperation with UC Berkeley.

Reshaping the English-Speaking Muslim Mind: Hanson's primary legacy lies in his profound disruption of how Islamic knowledge is taught and consumed in the West. Prior to his emergence, Western Islamic literature was largely dominated by literalist interpretations or highly politicized modern tracts. Hanson altered this landscape by teaching classical Arabic treatises in elegant, accessible English, directly mapping historical wisdom onto modern psychological and social crises. His seminal work, *Purification of the Heart* (2004), revolutionized Western Muslim discourse by reframing ancient spiritual ailments–such as arrogance, envy, and consumerist greed–as psychological realities with text-based remedies. His translation of *The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi* (2007) established a definitive, non-sectarian baseline for traditional Sunni orthodoxy in the West.

Institutional Pioneer and Global Educator: Through highly successful and intense travel-study programs, including the Deen Intensive, Rihla, and the annual Reviving the Islamic Spirit (RIS) conventions, Hanson has anchored an entire generation of English-speaking Muslims. His pedagogical approach synthesizes the classical liberal arts tradition with classical Islamic learning, advocating for a holistic "Great Books" curriculum that pairs Islamic scholars like Imam al-Ghazali with Western philosophers like Aristotle. This educational philosophy culminated in the founding of Zaytuna College, establishing an enduring home for accredited, faithful Muslim intellectual life in the West.

Global Statesman and Inter-Faith Advisor: Hanson's intellectual and moral reach extends deeply into international policy and global interfaith diplomacy. He has served as a USA presidential advisor, a Federal Commissioner on Human Rights, a member of the World Economic Forum's C-100 dialogue, and currently serves as a Co-President for Religions for Peace. Alongside his mentor, Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, Hanson actively shapes contemporary legal and peace frameworks as the Vice President of the UAE-based Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies and as an executive member of the Emirates Fatwa Council.

Outspoken Stance on the Gaza Crisis: Amid modern geopolitical upheavals, Hanson remains a moral voice on global ethics and human rights. He has spoken out forcefully against the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, condemning the killing of civilians, the systematic destruction of infrastructure, and the mass displacement of families as acts of genocide and a severe stain on the collective global conscience.





Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Ali Cisse

Leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi Order
Country: Senegal
Born: 1955 (age 71)
Influence: Spiritual Leader
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni

26

Rank (2026): 26
Rank (2025): 25
Rank (2024): 26

Sheikh Ahmad Tijani Ali Cisse is the current spiritual leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi order, the largest Sufi order in West Africa. He has held this position since 15 August 2008, when he was unanimously elected by leading members of the order.

Lineage and Teachers: Born in 1955, Sheikh Tijani Cisse is the son of Sheikh Ali Cisse, the closest disciple of Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse, and Fatima Zahra Niasse, 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 continued his formal studies in Al-Azhar University and continued it through extensive travels where he engaged in religious debates and interfaith dialogue, further solidifying his scholarly credentials.

The Grand Mosque in Medina-Baye: As the Imam of the Grand Mosque at Medina-Baye (founded in 1937 by Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse), Sheikh Tijani Cisse is the spiritual heart of the Tijaniyya community. The mosque attracts millions of visitors every year and up to 2 million during Mawlid celebrations.

Descendant 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 (*awrad*), individually and in gatherings, and an emphasis on developing an inner relationship with God.



Sheikh Usama Al-Sayyid Al-Azhari

Minister of Awqaf (Religious Endowments)
Country: Egypt
Born: 16 July 1976 (age 50)
Influence: Scholarly
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni

27

Rank (2026): 27
Rank (2025): 26
Rank (2024): 30

Sheikh Usama Al-Sayyid Al-Azhari is a distinguished Egyptian Azhari scholar, preacher, and academic who assumed the role of Minister of Awqaf in July 2024. He teaches Hadith, Logic and Islamic Creed at the renowned Al-Azhar Mosque's Riwaq Al-Atrak in Cairo. He also holds a teaching post in the Faculty of Usul Al-Din and Dawah at Al-Azhar University.

Minister of Awqaf: As Minister of Awqaf, Al-Azhari has launched several initiatives: strengthening training and qualification programmes for imams and preachers, including female preachers; reviving traditional Islamic schools (*kuttab*); renewing religious discourse; fostering collaboration between the Ministry of Awqaf, Dar al-Ifta, and Al-Azhar; and increasing the presence of religious guidance in youth centres, universities, and clubs.

Scholar: 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. 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 civilisations, among others.

Diplomacy: He led Egypt's hosting of the General Assembly of the Union of Arab Awqaf, using the occasion to reaffirm Egypt's rejection of the forced displacement of Palestinians and calling for a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. He has also been recognised for strengthening ties with Muslim communities abroad and was awarded the Medal of Pride by the Mufti of Russia.

Sheikh Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi

Scholar and Spiritual Guide
Country: Syria
Born: 7 May 1963 (age 63)
Influence: Scholarly
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni



Rank (2026): 33
Rank (2025): 33
Rank (2024): 35

28

Sheikh Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi is one of the most influential Muslim scholars of the modern age, known for his intellectual depth, spiritual authority, and global reach. A descendant of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through Moulay Idriss II, he carries a prestigious Damascene scholarly lineage.

Background: Sheikh Al-Yaqoubi was born in Damascus and was trained in Islamic sciences by his father who was an imam and instructor at the Grand Umayyad Mosque. Sheikh Al-Yaqoubi followed in his father's footsteps and was appointed as a Friday Speaker at the age of 18, and an Instructor at the Fatwa directorate at the age of 23.

Against Extremism: His book *Refuting ISIS* has become essential reading, providing theological arguments against extremists. His criticism of the Syrian government made his stay in Syria untenable, so he had to flee the country in 2011, eventually seeking refuge in Morocco.

Educator: As a spiritual master in the Shādhilī order, Sheikh Al-Yaqoubi guides thousands of imams, scholars, and students. Through his international *Sacred Knowledge* initiative, he delivers intensive text-based recitations of foundational Sunni scriptures—including the historic 2026 completion of *Sunan Abi Dawud* and *Jami' al-Tirmidhi*. He also spearheaded a major *Towards Ihsan* tour across the United Kingdom.

Scholar: Sheikh Al-Yaqoubi is a recognised authority on theology, jurisprudence, Hadith, literature, and spirituality, and has authored books on these subjects. He is also an eloquent poet, dedicating much of his poetry to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, with seven published works in this field. He is currently a senior fellow of the Royal Aal Al-Bayt Academy for Islamic Thought, and a visiting lecturer at Al-Quaraouiyine University.

HE Captain Ibrahim Traoré

Interim President of Burkina Faso
Country: Burkina Faso
Born: 14 March 1988 (age 38)
Influence: Political Leader of 24 million citizens
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni



Rank (2026): 29

29

Captain Ibrahim Traoré rose to power in September 2022 after leading a coup that ousted Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba. Sworn in as transitional President, he became the youngest leader in Burkina Faso's history.

New Hope and Economic Shift: Traoré has advanced a radical pan-African, sovereignty-focused agenda, nationalizing gold assets and prioritizing agricultural self-sufficiency. Evoking the anti-imperialist legacy of Thomas Sankara, his policies resonate deeply with youth. Under his governance, Burkina Faso's economy grew by 5.3% in 2025, according to the IMF, propelled by a gold-sector boom and expanded mining activity.

Sahel Leadership and Security: Traoré has significantly expanded his regional authority, succeeding Mali's Assimi Goïta as the President/Chair of the Confederation of Sahel States (AES) for a one-year term. Following their formal withdrawal from ECOWAS, the AES military-led nations (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) have integrated their defense, economic, and energy policies. At the AES summit in Bamako, the bloc launched a 5,000-strong joint military force for large-scale operations against armed extremist groups. However, domestic insecurity led Traoré to extend Burkina Faso's transitional mandate by 60 months, delaying a civilian transition to 2029.

Geopolitical Rupture: In a major bilateral escalation, Burkina Faso formally severed diplomatic relations with France in June 2026, accusing Paris of interference and destabilization efforts. Traoré has decisively pivoted his foreign policy away from the West, expelling French forces while solidifying strong military and economic alliances with Russia, Turkey, and China.



Sheikh Mustafa Hosny

Televangelist
Country: Egypt
Born: 28 August 1978 (age 48)
Influence: Preacher reaching nearly 100 million social media followers
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni

30

Rank (2026): 28
Rank (2025): 28
Rank (2024): 27

Sheikh Mustafa Hosny is an immensely popular Egyptian televangelist and Islamic preacher who launched his media career in 2004, quickly growing into a globally recognized household name.

Career Shift and Preaching: Hosny initially earned a Bachelor's degree in Business from Ain Shams University and began his career in sales. Driven by a religious calling, he pivoted to full-time ministry after earning formal certification from the Institute of Training Preachers, an affiliate of Egypt's Ministry of Awqaf. He has since hosted more than 53 popular television and radio programmes. He also delivers weekly lessons at Cairo's Yousef El-Sahaby and El-Hosary mosques, alongside regular Friday sermons at the Al-Bilal Mosque compound. In 2023, he launched *Noor: A Journey Through the Life of the Messenger of God*, a highly successful series making classical prophetic biography (*Seerah*) relevant to contemporary youth.

Humanitarian Efforts: Beyond media, Hosny utilizes his public platform for targeted social campaigns. His humanitarian work focuses heavily on combating drug addiction and smoking among adolescents. He is a primary promotional partner for the Children's Cancer Hospital Egypt (C57357) and frequently anchors national blood donation drives.

Digital Reach: Hosny commands a massive digital following, with nearly 97 million total followers across global platforms, including over 40 million on Facebook, 25 million on Instagram, and 7.3 million subscribers on YouTube alone, where his structured lectures have surpassed 850 million views. His weekly interactive live broadcasts break down classical text-based theology into everyday practical guidance. His compassionate, softly spoken demeanor remains uniquely successful in endearing him to millions of young Muslims worldwide.



Al-Habib Muhammad Luthfi bin Yahya

Preacher
Country: Indonesia
Born: 10 November 1947 (age 79)
Influence: Scholarly, Spiritual Guide
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni

31

Rank (2026): 31
Rank (2025): 31
Rank (2024): 33

Habib Luthfi served as *Ra'is 'Amm Jam'iyyah Ahli Thariqah Al-Mu'tabarah Al-Nahdliyah* (Head of the Association of Recognised Sufi Orders) for multiple terms until 2025. He is 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 organisation in the world with over 90 million members. He was appointed to Indonesia's Presidential Advisory Council in December 2019.

Ba Alawi: The Ba Alawi are descendants of the Prophet ﷺ who migrated to Hadramaut in Yemen early 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 first studied under the tutelage of Ba Alawi teachers in Indonesia and then travelled to Makkah and Madinah for further education, receiving authorisation (*ijazaat*) in all the traditional fields of learning including hadith and sufism (*tasawwuf).* His authorisation to be a spiritual guide comes from more than one *tariqah*.

Preacher and Spiritual Guide: Habib Luthfi 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 also 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 Jamil

Scholar and Preacher
Country: Pakistan
Born: 1953 (age 73)
Influence: Scholarly, Preacher
School of Thought: Sunni, Tabligh Jamaat



Rank (2026): 32
Rank (2025): 32
Rank (2024): 34

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 following the sunnah 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.

Tablighi Jamaat: Founded in 1927 by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi in India as an apolitical revivalist movement, Tablighi Jamaat urges Muslims to revive basic faith practices through 3-day and 40-day tours. Affiliated loosely with Deobandi thought, it targets broad audiences, eschewing politics for personal reform. Spread by South Asian diaspora, it claims 80–100 million adherents globally. Annual *ijtemas* (gatherings) in Raiwind, Pakistan (1.5–2 million attendees) and Tongi, Bangladesh (3–5 million), reflect its mass appeal.

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, and his social media videos garner billions of views. In recognition of his vast contributions to religious outreach and social welfare, he received Pakistan's presidential Pride of Performance award in 2020 and an honorary doctorate in 2026.

Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Philosopher and Professor
Country: USA
Born: 7 April 1933 (age 93)
Influence: Scholarly
School of Thought: Traditional Shia



Rank (2026): 34
Rank (2025): 34
Rank (2024): 36

33

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.

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 *scientia sacra*—sacred knowledge that liberates human consciousness from earthly limitations—remains the driving force of his intellectual life. His monumental works, including chief editorship of *The Study Quran* (2015), continue to shape global understanding of the depth, history, and spiritual core of the Islamic tradition.



Dr Timothy Winter (Sheikh Abdal Hakim Murad)

Scholar
Country: UK
Born: 1960 (age 66)
Influence: Scholarly
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni

34

Rank (2026): 35
Rank (2025): 42
Rank (2024): 44

Professor Timothy Winter, better known as Sheikh Abdal Hakim Murad, is one of the most respected Muslim intellectuals of the contemporary age. Born in London in 1960, he converted to Islam in 1979 and has since combined deep traditional learning, studying at Al-Azhar University and under prominent scholars in the Muslim world, with an academic career and community engagement that has influenced Muslims worldwide.

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 including translations from Imam Al-Ghazali's *Ihya'*, a series of aphorisms (*Commentary on the Eleventh Contentions*) and his recent books, *Travelling Home: Essays on Islam in Europe* and *Piper at the Gates: A Theology of the Embodied Muslim Subject* (published by CMC Press). He is also editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*. His writings emphasise Islamic orthodoxy, spirituality, and the challenges of modernity.

Community: Sheikh Abdal Hakim is also the founder and Dean of the Cambridge Muslim College, which trains imams and scholars to engage with contemporary issues while rooted in traditional learning. He was a driving force behind the creation of Cambridge Central Mosque, Europe's first eco-mosque, which opened in 2019 as a model of sustainable architecture and community engagement.

Educator: He has inspired a generation of English-speaking Muslims and is widely sought after in interfaith dialogue. He continues to play a pivotal role in bridging Islamic scholarship with the modern world, offering a vision of faith rooted in tradition yet responsive to the challenges of today.



HE Samia Suluhu Hassan

President of Tanzania
Country: Tanzania
Born: 27 January 1960 (age 66)
Influence: Head of State ruling over 68 million citizens
School of Thought: Sunni

35

Rank (2026): 36
Rank (2025): 35
Rank (2024): 37

Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan is Tanzania's sixth and first female president, sworn in on 19 March 2021 following the death of John Pombe Magufuli.

Background: Born in the Sultanate of Zanzibar, she entered public office in 2000, serving in the Zanzibar House of Representatives and as the Minister of State for Union Affairs before becoming vice-president in 2015.

Economic Reforms: Upon assuming the presidency, Hassan reversed her predecessor's isolationist policies and COVID-19 denialism, opening Tanzania up to global trade and modern public health strategies. Her signature economic governance, framed around her "Four R's"—Reconciliation, Resilience, Reforms, and Rebuilding—has successfully driven an average GDP growth rate of 6% annually, lowered inflation, and elevated tourism to record-breaking highs.

Infrastructure Achievements: Her administration achieved major infrastructure milestones under her vision to transform Tanzania into a regional trade hub. These include completing the massive Kwala Dry Port and constructing the historic Kigongo-Busisi Bridge—the longest bridge in East Africa. Furthermore, under her tenure, Tanzania's economy hit a robust 5.3% growth rate in 2025 according to the IMF, propelled by a major gold-sector boom and expanded mining activity.

Electoral Victory and Consolidated Mandate: In the October 2025 general election, President Hassan secured a commanding five-year mandate, with the National Electoral Commission declaring her the winner with 97.66% of the popular vote. Her second term focuses heavily on finalizing the ambitious *Tanzania Development Vision 2050* to transition the nation into an upper-middle-income economy.

HE Sheikh Muqtada Sadr

Scholar and Politician
Country: Iraq
Born: 4 August 1974 (age 52)
Influence: Political, Social Issues
School of Thought: Shia



Rank (2026): 40
Rank (2025): 40
Rank (2024): 42

36

Muqtada al-Sadr is the son of the late Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Sadiq al-Sadr and son-in-law of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. He inherited a vast network of religious, educational, and social welfare institutions serving millions of urban poor. He maintains a solid nationalist support base primarily concentrated in Sadr City, Najaf, and Basra.

Extra-Parliamentary Power Broker: Al-Sadr's influence has never depended on holding official public office. Despite his movement winning a commanding 73 seats in the 2021 elections, paralyzing political deadlocks with rival factions caused him to pull his MPs out of parliament. His strategic absence and ability to dictate turnout in Sadrist strongholds during the vote demonstrated that his grassroots network remains unmatched, allowing him to avoid blame for state corruption while acting as a powerful extra-parliamentary check on the government.

State Integration and Armed Disarmament: In anticipation of the shifting regional landscape and the planned drawdown of US-led Coalition forces, al-Sadr took a historic step to institutionalize his power. On 27 May 2026, he announced the complete separation of his armed wing, *Saraya al-Salam* (the Peace Brigades), from the National Shia Movement, ordering their absolute integration into official Iraqi state military structures. Furthermore, he commanded all affiliated civilian entities to transition into a civic structure, completely relinquishing weapons, uniforms, and military titles.

Nationalist Geopolitics: With the drawdown of Western military forces, al-Sadr's geopolitical influence has transitioned from an armed anti-occupation stance to a fierce defense of Iraqi sovereignty. By disarming his independent paramilitaries, he has positioned himself as a legitimate state-aligned actor.

HE Sheikh Uthman Taha

Calligrapher
Country: Syria
Born: 1934 (age 92)
Influence: Calligrapher
School of Thought: Sunni



Rank (2026): 37
Rank (2025): 37
Rank (2024): 38

37

Sheikh Uthman Taha is an internationally acclaimed Arabic master calligrapher. He is universally renowned for hand-scribing the *Mushaf Al-Madinah*—the official version of the Qur'an issued by the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an in Medina. Scribed over decades, his easily legible and precise script has become the most widely circulated textual copy of the Qur'an globally, exceeding 200 million copies distributed to pilgrims, mosques, and homes worldwide.

Background and Rigorous Training: Born in a rural area near Aleppo, Syria, Taha discovered his affinity for Arabic scripts in early childhood under his father, who taught him the fundamentals of the *Ruq'ah* script. He moved to Damascus for his higher education, completing a Bachelor of Arts in Sharia from the University of Damascus. Alongside his religious degrees, he rigorously mastered classical calligraphic arts under legendary masters, including Muhammad Badawi Al-Deryani and the Iraqi master Hashim Al-Baghdadi. He earned his ultimate formal certification (*ijaazah*) in 1973 from the globally respected Turkish master Hamid Al-Amidi in Istanbul.

Scribing the Holy Qur'an: Taha hand-wrote his first complete copy of the Qur'an in 1970. His career peaked in 1988 when he relocated to Saudi Arabia to become the leading calligrapher for the King Fahd Complex. Over his lifetime, he has calligraphed the text of the Holy Qur'an at least 12 times across 6 distinct textual variations (*Qira'at*), including *Hafs* (used globally), *Warsh* (North Africa), *Duri* (East Africa and Sudan), and *Qalun* (Libya). His life, methodology, and unique stories—such as his strict practice of never putting pen to parchment without fresh ritual ablution (*wudu*)—are documented in *The Calligrapher of the Revelation*, an interactive biographical tribute published by the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra).



Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi

President of Ennahda Party
Country: Tunisia
Born: 1941 (age 85)
Influence: Political, Scholarly
School of Thought: Sunni

38

Rank (2026): 38
Rank (2025): 38
Rank (2024): 40

Rached Ghannouchi is one of the world's leading contemporary Islamic democratic thinkers and one of the most influential Arab politicians in the post-Arab Spring era. The author of over 20 books, his long career spans decades of intense political activism, exile, state leadership, and systemic judicial targeting.

Political Genesis and Post-Arab Spring Transition: Ghannouchi co-founded the Ennahda Movement ("Renaissance") in the late 1970s, presenting a progressive model that synthesizes Islamic values with multi-party democracy. After spending 20 years in exile in the United Kingdom, he returned to Tunisia in January 2011 following the ouster of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. He led Ennahda to victory in the October 2011 national elections.

Imprisonment and Judicial Escalation: Following President Kais Saied's suspension of parliament and consolidation of power in July 2021, Ghannouchi became a primary target of the state apparatus. Arrested in April 2023, he has faced a relentless series of politically motivated trials and is currently held in Mornaguia Prison. His health has become a critical focal point, as the 85-year-old leader has suffered a series of medical emergencies compounded by severe heatwaves in unventilated cells. He was rushed to a military hospital multiple times between April and August 2026 after temporarily losing consciousness.

Shifting Influence and Status: Despite his isolation behind bars and Ennahda's institutional marginalisation, Ghannouchi's global influence persists. Ghannouchi retains symbolic significance among supporters of Tunisia's democratic opposition. His transformation from an active political leader into a symbol of resistance to authoritarianism has become central to how many of his supporters view his legacy.



Mohamed Salah

Footballer
Country: Egypt
Born: 15 June 1992 (age 34)
Influence: Influencers and Sports
School of Thought: Sunni

39

Rank (2026): 39
Rank (2025): 39
Rank (2024): 41

Mohamed Salah is a globally celebrated Egyptian professional footballer, widely recognized as one of the most culturally influential Muslim athletes of the modern era.

European Club Career and Move to Türkiye: Salah played for various clubs in Europe and England before he signed with Liverpool FC in 2017 and established himself as an all-time great by scoring 257 goals, winning seven major trophies, and claiming Premier League titles in 2020 and 2025. After a legendary nine-year stay at Anfield, Salah completed a high-profile free transfer to Turkish Süper Lig club Trabzonspor in August 2026, making history by netting seven goals in his first six league matches. At the 2026 FIFA World Cup, Salah helped Egypt reach the round of 16 for the first time in its history, scoring once and providing two assists before the team was eliminated by Argentina in a 3–2 defeat.

Global Popularity and Cultural Impact: Salah's humility, philanthropy, and open expression of his faith—such as performing prostration (*sujud*) after scoring—have uniquely countered Islamophobia across the West. During his time in England, his exploits inspired fans to famously chant, *"If he scores another few, then I'll be Muslim too."* In his native Egypt, he is a revered public figure; in the 2018 presidential elections, over a million citizens symbolically wrote his name on their ballots. He maintains a massive digital following, including nearly 68 million followers on Instagram alone.

Humanitarian Advocacy: Salah frequently leverages his platform for ethical stances. In August 2025, he publicly challenged UEFA's social media tribute to the late Palestinian footballer Suleiman al-Obeid, who was killed by military forces in Gaza. Confronting the organization's omission of the circumstances of his death, Salah pointedly responded: *"Can you tell us how he died, where, and why?"*

HE President Shavkat Mirziyoyev

President of Uzbekistan
Country: Uzbekistan
Born: 24 July 1957 (age 69)
Influence: Political leader of 36 million citizens
School of Thought: Sunni



Rank (2026): 450 lists
Rank (2025): 450 lists
Rank (2024): 450 lists

40

Shavkat Mirziyoyev has served as President of Uzbekistan since 2016, leading an ambitious 'New Uzbekistan' reform agenda. Previously Prime Minister from 2003 to 2016, he succeeded Islam Karimov after his 25-year rule.

Political & Economic Reform: Mirziyoyev has overseen economic liberalisation, including currency reforms, opening Uzbekistan to foreign investment, expanding international trade and modernising agriculture. His administration has pursued improvements in education, healthcare and public services, while introducing reforms to public administration. A major achievement has been the elimination of systematic forced labour in the cotton industry.

Regional Diplomacy & International Relations: He has transformed Uzbekistan's regional relationships, rebuilding ties with neighbouring Central Asian countries and strengthening regional trade and cooperation. His more open foreign policy has helped establish Uzbekistan as an increasingly important diplomatic and economic partner.

Islamic Heritage & Scholarship: Mirziyoyev has also championed Uzbekistan's historic Islamic heritage. His government has supported the construction and renovation of mosques, expanded opportunities for Hajj and Umrah, and restored important sacred sites and *maqams*. Major projects include the Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Maturidi memorial complexes. He has further promoted traditional Islamic learning through the Imam Bukhari, Imam Termizi and Imam Maturidi research centres, alongside investment in historic madrasas and the Centre for Islamic Civilisation in Tashkent.

Cultural Heritage: Through investment in historic monuments, museums and educational institutions, Mirziyoyev has sought to strengthen Uzbekistan's national identity and restore its international reputation as a historic centre of Islamic scholarship and civilisation.

Maulana Nazar ur-Rehman

Amir of Tablighi Jamaat
Country: Pakistan
Born: 1929 (age 97)
Influence: Preacher, Administration of Religious Affairs
School of Thought: Sunni, Tabligh Jamaat



Rank (2026): 41
Rank (2025): 41
Rank (2024): 43

41

Maulana Nazar ur-Rehman is the 4th Amir of the Pakistani Tablighi Jamaat. He officially assumed the leadership of the Raiwind-based missionary network in November 2018, succeeding Hajji Abdul-Wahhab following his passing at age 96. Having previously served as the Deputy Amir, ur-Rehman was one of three senior leaders explicitly designated by his predecessor as a potential successor.

Global Dawah and Deoband Roots: The Tablighi Jamaat operates as an international network active in over 150 countries. It organises *jamaats*—small, voluntary teams of travelers who visit Muslim communities to encourage the fulfillment of religious duties. The group maintains deep historic and ideological connections to Darul Uloom Deoband, where its original founder, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi, was educated.

Mass Appeal and Apolitical Ethos: The movement enjoys grassroots popularity across Pakistan, the global South Asian diaspora, and international communities. It is strictly apolitical, focusing entirely on personal spiritual reform while explicitly condemning violence. Under ur-Rehman's spiritual stewardship, the group's annual congregations—the *ijtemas*—continue to showcase immense mobilization power, routinely drawing up to 2 million attendees to Raiwind, Pakistan, and over 3 million to the *Bishwa Ijtema* in Tongi, Bangladesh.

Split: In 2016 a global administrative split within the movement led to a separate faction centered in Nizamuddin, India, headed by Maulana Saad Kandhlawi. Backed by fatwas from Darul Uloom Deoband over ideological deviations, the Raiwind faction remains completely separated from Nizamuddin, resulting in parallel global networks, separate mosque administrations, and divided national congregations.



HE Ibrahim Saleh Al-Hussaini

Scholar
Country: Nigeria
Born: 12 May 1938 (age 88)
Influence: Scholarly, Administration of Religious Affairs
School of Thought: Sunni

42

Rank (2026): 42
Rank (2025): 43
Rank (2024): 45

Sheikh Dr Ibrahim Saleh Al-Hussaini is the preeminent Islamic legal authority in West Africa. He currently serves as the Head of the Supreme Council for Fatwa and Islamic Affairs in Nigeria and is a founding member of the Abu Dhabi-based Muslim Council of Elders.

Early Studies and Vast Education: Born in Borno State, Nigeria, Al-Hussaini began his religious education under the guidance of his father, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Salih bin Yunus Al-Nawwy. Following his father's passing when he was seven, he completed his foundational training at the Supreme Islamic Institute in Nigeria. Dedicated to global learning, he traveled extensively across Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, India, Pakistan, Senegal, Niger, and Sudan to master classical Islamic sciences under dozens of globally renowned jurists.

Scholarly and Executive Impact: Al-Hussaini is a widely respected expert in *Tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), Hadith sciences, Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), and spiritual ethics. Over a prolific career, he has authored more than 100 books and research pamphlets addressing contemporary social challenges. Since 1992, he has served as the chief Advisor on Islamic Affairs to the Federal Government of Nigeria. He previously held the role of Assistant Secretary-General for African Affairs within the World Islamic People's Leadership framework, consistently utilizing his administrative power to counter extremist ideologies in the Sahel.

Educational Legacy: To secure a permanent legacy for traditional moderation, he established the Sheikh Sharif Ibrahim Saleh Islamic Centre. The institute operates as a premier regional academy focusing on high-level research and teaching, aimed directly at equipping modern African imams with the tools needed to handle structural contemporary challenges.



HE Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada

Leader of the Taliban
Country: Afghanistan
Born: 1 January 1966 (age 60)
Influence: Leader of Taliban which governs 45 million
School of Thought: Deobandi/ Taliban

43

Rank (2026): 43
Rank (2025): 44
Rank (2024): 46

Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada was named the supreme commander of the Taliban in May 2016 following the assassination of his predecessor, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, in a US drone strike. Known as a reclusive religious legal scholar, he continues to govern the country with absolute authority, rarely making public appearances.

Mujahideen and De Facto Judiciary: During the 1980s Soviet-Afghan War, Akhundzada participated in the resistance forces, primarily serving as a religious counselor. He rose through the ranks and was appointed head of the military courts in Farah province, and later served as deputy head of the Supreme Court under the first Taliban regime. After the 2001 US-led invasion, he led the group's shadow justice system in exile from Quetta, Pakistan.

State Consolidation & Socio-Economic Realities: Since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan in August 2021, Akhundzada has consolidated absolute executive and religious power over the state. His governance has reduced domestic corruption, repaired vital economic infrastructure, and slashed regional opium production. The rapid return of approximately 3.7 million Afghan refugees has outpaced economic expansion, contributing to a 5.6 percent decline in GDP per capita, while inflation is 7.6 percent. Concurrently, his administration maintains sweeping totalitarian restrictions on human rights, including absolute bans on secondary and university education for women.

International Diplomacy: Russia became the first country to formally recognize the Taliban government in July 2025. While Western nations maintain strict banking sanctions and asset freezes, various other regional governments continue to expand direct diplomatic engagement and trade relations with Kabul without granting formal political recognition.

Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas Attar Qadiri

Preachers & Spiritual Guides
Country: Pakistan
Born: 12 July 1950 (age 76)
Influence: Spiritual Guide and Preacher
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni Barelvi



Rank (2026): 44
Rank (2025): 45
Rank (2024): 47

44

Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas Attar Qadiri is a prominent Pakistani Sunni scholar, spiritual guide, and the founding leader of Dawat-e-Islami. Qadiri spent 22 years studying classical theology directly under the mentorship of the former Grand Mufti of Pakistan, Sheikh Mufti Waqar ud-Din Qadri Razavi. He has penned more than 30 books, including *Faizan-e-Sunnat* (*Blessings of the Sunnah*), which focuses on the spiritual merits of everyday good deeds.

The Barelvi Framework: Dawat-e-Islami follows the traditionalist, text-based revivals of Imam Ahmed Raza Khan (1856–1921), a highly revered polymath known colloquially as *Ala Hazrat*. One of its core messages is ensuring profound veneration and love for the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Historically, Barelvi scholars have criticised literalist movements like the Tablighi Jamaat and Deobandi currents for a perceived deficit in this devotion.

Genesis and Expansion of Dawat-e-Islami: Qadiri was originally serving as the head of the youth division of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) political party when he was chosen by a council of elders to spearhead the newly established Dawat-e-Islami in 1981 in Karachi. Organized as a strictly apolitical, peaceful missionary movement focused on moral correction, the group rapidly spread out of Sindh to encompass all provinces of Pakistan before achieving massive international reach.

Global Following and Modern Infrastructure: Propelled heavily by the global South Asian diaspora, the movement has expanded its operations into more than 195 countries, cultivating an estimated following of 200 million practitioners. The group manages the *Jamiat-ul-Madina* chain of classical Islamic seminaries and the non-commercial global broadcasting asset *Madani Channel*.

HE President Mahmoud Abbas

President of Palestine
Country: Palestine
Born: 15 November 1935 (age 91)
Influence: Political
School of Thought: Sunni



Rank (2026): 45
Rank (2025): Hon Men
Rank (2024): Hon Men

45

President Mahmoud Abbas, known as Abu Mazen, is the President of the PNA and Chairman of the PLO. A co-founder of Fatah, he was a key architect of the 1993 Oslo Accords and was unanimously re-elected as the leader of Fatah on 14 May 2026.

West Bank Crises: The PNA faces crippling financial and operational limits in the occupied West Bank amid ongoing settlement expansion and settler violence. Abbas's deputy, Hussein al-Sheikh, condemned Israel's transfer of West Bank policing powers from the military to civilian police, calling it a step toward de facto land annexation.

Response to the Gaza Genocide and Unification: Abbas strongly maintains that "there can be no Palestinian state without Gaza". Following Hamas's decision to dissolve its local governing authority, Abbas has engaged in high-level diplomacy—including talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan—to secure Gaza's integration into a unified state.

Virtual UNGA Address: During the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September 2026, Abbas delivered a historic address via a pre-recorded video link from Ramallah after the United States government had denied entry visas to the Palestinian delegation for the second consecutive year. In his speech, he warned that current occupation policies threaten the very existence of the Palestinian people in their homeland.

Global Recognition: The State of Palestine is now formally recognized by 157 of the 193 UN member states (around 81%). This follows a significant shift in international consensus marked by coordinated, formal recognitions from several major Western countries.



HE Ahmed Al-Sharaa

Interim President of Syria
Country: Syria
Born: 29 October 1982 (age 44)
Influence: Political
School of Thought: Sunni

46

Rank (2026): 47
Rank (2025): 450 lists
Rank (2024): 450 lists

Ahmed al-Sharaa, known formerly by his militant *nom de guerre* Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, is the interim President of Syria. He assumed executive power on 29 January 2025 following the historic December 2024 collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime, which was toppled by a swift opposition offensive led by al-Sharaa's faction.

Rise to Power and Territorial Integration: Al-Sharaa initially gained notoriety during the Iraq War before returning to found the al-Nusra Front in 2012. He formally severed all ties with al-Qaeda in 2016 and rebranded his movement as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). Following the fall of Damascus, his government reached a key agreement integrating the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Consequently, in February 2026, the transitional government regained control of key oil and gas areas, dramatically raising its share of national oil production from around 20% to 88%.

Geopolitical Rapprochement and Diplomacy: Al-Sharaa has swiftly re-engineered Syrian foreign policy. On 10 November 2025, he became the first Syrian president to visit the White House, holding landmark talks with U.S. President Donald Trump. In July 2026, he announced Syria was actively pursuing a security deal with Israel. In August 2026, his administration recalibrated its relationship with Russia, reaching an agreement to transform Russian bases at Hmeimim and Tartous into joint training centres.

Economic Stabilization and Persistent Challenges: Syria shows steady signs of economic recovery as sanction relief, public-private investment, and improved electricity supply lift growth. The stabilization has accelerated the return of displaced peoples; by mid-2026, around 1.5 million refugees had returned from neighbouring countries alongside 1.7 million internally displaced persons.



Professor Mustafa Abu Sway

Scholar
Country: Palestine
Born: 1958 (age 67)
Influence: Scholarly
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni

47

Rank (2026): 49
Rank (2025): 49
Rank (2024): 50

Professor Mustafa Abu Sway is an internationally esteemed Palestinian scholar, academic, and a central religious authority based in the heart of Jerusalem, Palestine. He lectures globally and regularly teaches at Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, where he delivers open lessons in English from Imam al-Ghazali's *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*).

Scholarship and Academic Appointments: Abu Sway has authored landmark books including *Islamic Epistemology: The Case of Al-Ghazali*, *Fatawa Al-Ghazali*, and *A Treasury of Al-Ghazali*. In 2012, he was appointed as the historic first holder of the King Abdullah II Integral Professorial Chair for the Study of Imam Ghazali's Work at both Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa and Al-Quds University. He was a full Professor of Philosophy and Islamic Studies at Al-Quds University for nearly three decades (1996–2023) and served as the Dean of the College of Dawah and Usul Al-Din and the College of the Qur'an and Islamic Studies from 2014 to 2020. His past international posts include lecturing at the International Islamic University in Malaysia, serving as a visiting Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence at Florida Atlantic University, and holding a visiting professorship at Bard College, New York.

Defending Al-Aqsa and the Status Quo: Abu Sway serves as the Deputy Chairman of the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf Council. In March 2026, when Israeli authorities closed Al-Aqsa Mosque to Muslim worshippers during Ramadan, Abu Sway publicly condemned the closure as explicitly violating the historic status quo governing the holy site. Following this escalation, he urged Western governments to exert pressure on Israel to respect Jerusalem's sanctuaries, warning that interference with Al-Aqsa Mosque and its established arrangements could trigger severe, wider repercussions across the region.

Sheikh Dr Hatim Al-Awni

General Supervisor of the ICSFP and Scholar
Country: Saudi Arabia
Born: 1966 (age 60)
Influence: Scholarly
School of Thought: Sunni (Salafi Reformist)



Rank (2026): 450 list
Rank (2025): 450 list
Rank (2024): 450 list

48

Sheikh Dr Hatim bin Arif Al-Awni is a prominent Saudi Islamic scholar, academic, and a critical voice for theological reform within contemporary Salafism. He serves as the General Supervisor of the International Committee for the Support of the Final Prophet (ICSFP), directing global educational campaigns to present the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ life and teachings.

Academic and Political Capacities: Al-Awni holds a PhD in Islamic Hadith sciences from Umm al-Qura University in Mecca, where he served as an associate professor for decades. He served in the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia (Shura Council) for two full separate terms.

Salafi Introspection and Counter-Extremism: Al-Awni's most defining contribution to modern Islamic thought is his awakening of Salafi introspection in Saudi Arabia. His widely read articles and books have taken the step of pointing out the explicit ideological connections between modern militant extremism and specific literalist interpretations within core Salafi texts. Rather than discarding the tradition, he argues for a rigorous, classical contextualization of these writings to strip radical movements of their theological justification.

Intra-Muslim Rapprochement: Al-Awni is an outspoken advocate for reconciliation across the Islamic world. His extensive writings focus heavily on fostering bridges and intellectual rapprochement between conflicting schools of thought—particularly striving to harmonize the modern Salafi methodology with the classical Traditionalist frameworks of the Ash'ari and Maturidi schools. His measured, text-grounded approach has made him an essential figure in modern efforts to de-escalate sectarian polarization.

HE Zohran Mamdani

Mayor of New York City
Country: United States
Born: 18 October 1991 (age 35)
Influence: Political
School of Thought: Traditional Shi'a (Twelver Khoja / Dawoodi Bohra heritage)



Rank (2026): 450 lists
Rank (2025): 450 lists

49

Zohran Kwame Mamdani made history on 1 January 2026 by being sworn in as the 112th Mayor of New York City, standing as the first Muslim and first Asian American to lead the metropolis. Born in Kampala, Uganda, to prominent public intellectuals Mahmood Mamdani and Mira Nair, he worked as a foreclosure prevention counselor and New York State Assembly member before securing a historic, grassroots mayoral victory.

Mayoral Governance: Mamdani's progressive administration focuses heavily on economic dignity, affordable housing, and worker protections. Key early achievements include securing a landmark $131 million court settlement for underpaid delivery workers and implementing aggressive housing affordability initiatives across the five boroughs.

Global Inspiration and Muslim Leadership: Mamdani has become a powerful source of inspiration for Muslims worldwide, redefining how minority faith communities engage in Western governance. Moving past traditional "apology politics," he has brought his Muslim identity to the center of civic life, anchoring his platform in Islamic ethical values of redistributive social justice, poverty relief, and human dignity.

During Ramadan, he hosted public prayers across New York, including breaking fast with incarcerated men at Rikers Island. His use of historical Islamic references—such as invoking the *Hijrah* to advocate for compassionate immigrant protections—has shown global Muslim youth that classical religious ethics can directly enrich modern democratic policies. Internationally, his steadfast defense of Palestinian civil rights and his rejection of sectarianism have cemented his status as a globally recognized champion for universal human rights.



HE Dr Hussam Abu Safiya
Former Director of Kamal Adwan Hospital and Paediatrician
Country: Palestine
Born: 21 November 1973 (age 52)
Influence: Global symbol of resilience
School of Thought: Traditional Sunni

50

Dr Hussam Abu Safiya is a renowned Palestinian consultant paediatrician, neonatologist, and the former Director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza. During the ongoing Gaza genocide he emerged as a global symbol of medical resistance and humanitarian defense. Throughout intense military sieges, he steadfastly refused evacuation orders to safeguard critical neonatology patients, continuing to provide essential care even after his own son was murdered by an Israeli drone.

Abduction and Legal Status: On 27 December 2024, Israeli forces stormed Kamal Adwan Hospital—then the last functioning major medical facility in North Gaza—forcibly removing and arresting Dr Abu Safiya along with other healthcare workers. He has since been held without formal charge or trial under Israel's Unlawful Combatants Law, which allows for prolonged administrative detention. Despite appeals seeking his release, Israel's Supreme Court upheld orders extending his detention.

International Outcry and Prison Conditions: The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry has formally demanded his immediate, unconditional release, warning that the severe abuse of medical personnel constitutes clear war crimes. Concurrently, global organizations have mobilized campaigns, including an active Amnesty International Petition. His legal team from Physicians for Human Rights Israel reported severe physical deterioration following his transfer to the notorious Rakefet interrogation facility, noting that extensive beatings left him almost unrecognizable and struggling to remain conscious. In recognition of his profound moral courage, the European Parliament jointly nominated Dr Abu Safiya for the prestigious 2026 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

Top 50

PASSED AWAY

- HE Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
- Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, Malaysia

OUTS

- HE President Ilham Aliyev, Politician, Azerbaijan
- HE Khaled Mashal, Politician, Palestine
- HE Muhammad Yunus, Interim Prime Minister of Bangladesh

INS

- HE Ayatollah Sayyid Mojtaba Khamenei, Iran
- Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Pakistan
- HE Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan
- HE President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan
- Sheikh Dr Hatim Al-Awni, Saudi Arabia
- HE Zohran Mamdani, United States of America
- HE Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, Palestine

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Grand Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi Amoli



Iran
Scholarly
Born: 1933 (age 93)

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 former USSR, and continues to speak publicly on current affairs especially against corruption in government.

Dr Aref Ali Nayed



Libya
Scholarly
Born: 31 December 1962 (age 64)

Dr Aref Ali Nayed is a Libyan public figure, a renowned scholar in the field of Islamic Theology (*kalam*) 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 revitalisation 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 Senior Advisor to the Cambridge Interfaith Programme at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Divinity, and a member of the High Academic Council of the Muhammad bin Zayed University for the Humanities in Abu Dhabi UAE. 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).

HE Sheikh Salih Al-Fawzan



Saudi Arabia
Scholarly
Born: 1933 (age 93)

Sheikh Salih al-Fawzan was appointed Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia in October 2025. He presides over both the Council of Senior Scholars and the Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Ifta, directing the formulation and issuance of official legal rulings (*fatwas*). He is a major transnational doctrinal anchor for conservative Sunni and Salafi Muslims. His extensive written works, including *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, serve as foundational curricula in Islamic educational institutions globally. He has also maintained a prominent media footprint for decades through the *Nūr ʿAlā al-Darb* radio network.

Al-Fawzan champions a traditionalist Athari creed and Hanbali jurisprudence. His rulings enforce strict social conservatism and he advocates for absolute civic obedience to the political ruler (*Wali al-Amr*) to prevent civil strife, so he actively denounces jihadist organizations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030, the boundaries of domestic clerical authority have been recalibrated.

Professor Akbar Ahmed



Pakistan
Scholarly
Born: 15 January 1944 (age 82)

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. A Distinguished Professor and Trustee of the Parliament of the World's Religions, Ahmed has dedicated his career to building cross-cultural bridges. Beyond global diplomacy and academia, he is a prolific author and filmmaker, widely known for producing the historic Jinnah Quartet and directing the acclaimed biographical feature film *Jinnah* (1998). His stage play, *Gandhi and Jinnah Return Home*, has been performed globally to promote intercultural dialogue. Ahmed also wrote and presented the seminal six-part BBC television series *Living Islam*, a landmark documentary for which the government of Pakistan awarded him the prestigious Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Star of Pakistan). His highly anticipated book, *America at the Crossroads*, was published in late summer 2025. He continues to speak out extensively on dynamic international affairs and religious coexistence.

Dr Ingrid Mattson

Canada
Scholarly
Born: 24 August 1963 (age 63)



Dr Ingrid Mattson is the London and Windsor Community Chair in Islamic Studies and the Founder-Director of the Centre for Islamic Theology, Ethics and Spirituality (CITES) at Huron University College at Western University, Canada. A groundbreaking academic, she previously spent 14 years at the Hartford Seminary directing the Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations. She made history in 2001 when she was elected vice president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), subsequently serving as its first female president from 2006 to 2010. She is the author of the internationally acclaimed text, *The Story of the Qur'an*. Beyond theology, Dr Mattson pioneered The Hurma Project, a vital initiative established to uphold the sacred inviolability (*hurma*) of individuals in Muslim spaces. The project actively combats exploitation and spiritual abuse by religious authorities, creating comprehensive institutional oversight for imams, chaplains, and mosque boards worldwide.

Khalil Al-Hayya (new)

Palestine
Political
Born: 5 November 1960 (age 66)



Khalil al-Hayya is the overall leader of Hamas, elected chairman of its political bureau on 20 July 2026 following a close run-off vote. Born in Gaza in 1960, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1980s and became a founding member of Hamas in 1987. Holding a PhD in Islamic Studies, he previously served as deputy leader in Gaza. Based in Qatar, al-Hayya served as the movement's chief negotiator during the Gaza war. In September 2025, he survived a targeted Israeli airstrike in Doha, which claimed the life of his son. Following the tragedy, he played a central role in securing the October 2025 ceasefire, heavily consolidating his administrative authority. Leading a profound transition, he steered Hamas toward relinquishing civilian administration over Gaza to a technocratic authority while maintaining a prominent role in active regional security negotiations with Egyptian and Turkish officials.

HE Imran Khan

Pakistan
Political
Born: 5 October 1952 (age 74)



Imran Khan, the international cricketer-turned-statesman, served as Pakistan's Prime Minister from 2018 until April 2022, when he was removed via a historic parliamentary no-confidence vote. Khan has consistently maintained that his ouster was orchestrated by foreign intervention and Pakistan's powerful military establishment, fiercely critiquing the country's hybrid civil-military governance system. Arrested in August 2023, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has faced a barrage of legal convictions. Though Pakistan's Supreme Court granted him bail in multiple cases stemming from the 9 May 2023 riots, he remains detained under other convictions. Following persistent complaints regarding his health in custody, the Supreme Court ordered his temporary transfer to a hospital for diagnostic evaluation in late 2026. Despite his prolonged imprisonment, Khan retains a massive base of popular support. His party defied institutional crackdowns to secure the most seats in the 2024 general election, backed heavily by a highly mobilised global Pakistani diaspora.

Sir Sadiq Khan

United Kingdom
Political
Born: 8 October 1970 (age 56)



Sir Sadiq Khan has served as the Mayor of London since 2016, securing a historic third consecutive term following his landslide re-election victory. The son of a Pakistani bus driver, his journey spans a successful career as a human rights solicitor, Chair of Liberty, Wandsworth Councillor, and Labour Member of Parliament for Tooting (2005–2016). As mayor, Khan has pioneered signature social policies, including universal free school meals that delivered over 43 million meals to London children. A global champion for environmental equity, he expanded the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) to the boundaries of Greater London and committed the city to net-zero carbon emissions by 2030, forcefully asserting that clean air is a human right. In recognition of his decades of public service, he was knighted in the 2025 New Year Honours, and in September 2026, he formally took his place in the House of Lords as Lord Khan of Tooting. He re-

mains a steadfast voice against far-right polarisation.

Dr Abdulrahman Mohamed El-Sayed (new)



United States of America
Political
Born: 31 October 1984 (age 42)

Dr Abdulrahman Mohamed El-Sayed (also known as Abdul El-Sayed) made history on 3 November 2026 by winning Michigan's US Senate election, becoming the first Muslim American ever elected to the United States Senate. Representing the Democratic Party in Michigan, El-Sayed consistently faced intense, bad-faith Islamophobic attacks from political opponents and right-wing figures, including highly publicized rhetoric from President Donald Trump. Responding with dignity and resilience, El-Sayed consistently re-focused public attention onto practical issues impacting ordinary citizens like healthcare equity, environmental justice, and systemic political reform.

El-Sayed is a Rhodes Scholar who holds a doctorate in public health from the University of Oxford and a medical degree from Columbia University. He was an assistant professor of epidemiology and the public health director for the City of Detroit before entering politics. A prominent advocate for vulnerable populations, his courageous path and historic legislative victory serve as an inspiration for a new generation of Western Muslims seeking high public office.

Alhaji Dr Sanusi Lamido Sanusi



Nigeria
Administration of Religious Affairs
Born: 31 July 1961 (age 65)

Muhammadu Sanusi II is the 16th Fulani Emir of Kano, which is the second-highest Muslim authority in Nigeria. He is also the khalifah (spiritual leader) of the Tijaniyyah Sufi order and previously served as the 14th Emir before being dethroned amid political friction by the state governor in 2020. Prior to his royal ascension, Sanusi earned global acclaim as the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (2009–2014), winning numerous international awards for cleaning up the banking sector and aggressively exposing state-level financial corruption. In May 2024, following a change of state administration and the repeal of the legislation that had divided the Kano Emirate into five separate jurisdictions, Sanusi was reinstated as the 16th Emir. Throughout his public life, Sanusi has championed progressive social reforms, forcefully advocating against child marriage and expanding modern education.

Mufti Abul Qasim Nomani



India
Administration of Religious Affairs
Born: 14 January 1947 (age 79)

Maulana Mufti Abul Qasim Nomani is the *Mohtamim* (Vice-Chancellor) and Shaikh al-Hadith of Darul Uloom Deoband in India, having been elected to lead the institution in July 2011. Darul Uloom Deoband stands as the historical and foundational centre of the Deobandi school of thought, serving as a global anchor for traditional Islamic jurisprudence and education, and currently training over 5,000 students. Mufti Abul Qasim Nomani graduated from the seminary in 1967 and was appointed to its powerful Majlis-e-Shura (Governing Body) in 1992. He is the authorised spiritual successor (*khalifah*) of the eminent Islamic scholar Hadhrat Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi. Highly revered across the Indian subcontinent and globally, Nomani is renowned for his profound erudition in Hadith methodology, text-based Islamic spirituality, and his stable, dedicated stewardship of one of the Islamic world's most influential and historically significant seminaries.

Dr Mohamed Bechari



France
Administration of Religious Affairs
Born: 16 April 1967 (age 59)

Dr Mohamed Bechari is a prominent intellectual and a leading figure in the landscape of European Islam. He dedicates his career to managing a complex web of organisations designed to represent Muslim communities within mainstream European civic structures while driving institutional empowerment from within. Bechari serves as the Secretary-General of the UAE-based World Muslim Communities Council and President of the French National Federation of Muslims, one of the primary state-recognised interlocutors organizing Islamic affairs in France. Additionally, he is the Secretary-General of the Islamic European Conference, an umbrella body that seeks to provide a unified political and social voice for European Muslims at the European Union level. Bechari

founded the Avicenna Institute in Lille, France, to train European imams, and serves as a long-standing board member of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), actively advising states on religious pluralism.

HH Prince Rahim Aga Khan V

United Kingdom
Administration of Religious Affairs
Born: 12 October 1971 (age 55)



His Highness Prince Rahim al-Hussaini Aga Khan V ascended as the 50th hereditary Imam of the Shia Nizari Ismaili Muslims in February 2025, following the passing of his celebrated father, Prince Karim Aga Khan IV. He provides spiritual guidance to an estimated 15 million followers scattered across 25 countries. He also serves as the operational steward of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a global powerhouse comprising over 200 humanitarian and development agencies. In late 2026, Prince Rahim embarked on his landmark first official tour of India and Canada as Imam, meeting senior world leaders to solidify long-term developmental partnerships. Under his leadership, the AKDN continues to direct massive capital investments toward health care capacity, rural economic self-reliance, and world-class educational infrastructure. The network remains globally renowned for its signature architectural and urban heritage renewal programmes.

Dr Amr Khaled

Egypt
Preachers & Spiritual Guides
Born: 5 September 1967 (age 59)



Since launching his broadcast career in 1998, Dr Amr Khaled has established himself as one of the most popular, pioneering, and globally influential televangelists in the Islamic world. Moving away from traditional scholarly lecturing, Khaled utilizes modern media, highly produced television programmes, and digital campaigns to champion community development, youth empowerment, tolerance, and interfaith harmony. He holds a degree in accounting from Cairo University and earned a PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of Wales in 2010.

A pioneer in religious broadcasting, Khaled is widely credited with creating *Mujaddidun* (The Reformers), the world's first Muslim reality television show, which challenged young groups to execute civic service projects. His non-sectarian approach transforms personal religious devotion into tangible social action through initiatives like the Life Makers foundation. Today, his extensive multimedia network is translated into nearly 20 languages. Commanding a massive digital following of over 46 million social media subscribers and hundreds of millions of video views, he remains an enduring household name for millions of young Muslims globally.

Sheikh Nuh Keller

Jordan
Preachers & Spiritual Guides
Born: 1954 (age 72)



Sheikh Nuh Ha Mim Keller is a scholar of traditional Islamic sciences who has produced several seminal works. These include: a translation of *Reliance of the Traveller*, a classic manual of Islamic Sacred Law that was the first Islamic legal work translated into a European language to receive certification from Al-Azhar University; *Sea Without Shore*, a manual of Islamic mysticism (Sufism); the Chain of Gold edition of *Dala'il al-Khayrat*, the most famous and celebrated book of praise and blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace); and, recently, a new translation of the Qur'an, entitled *The Quran Beheld.* His latest publication is *With Allah (vol. 1): Letters on the Quest of Hearts* (Stanchion Press, 2026). This short book consists of 12 letters, with each letter taking a single and foundational verse of the Qur'an to show readers how they can further their journey to Allah and navigate the problems of modern life.

Dr Muhammad Al-Arifi

Saudi Arabia
Preachers & Spiritual Guides
Born: 16 July 1970 (age 56)



Dr Muhammad Al-Arifi is a highly popular theologian, author, and public speaker from Saudi Arabia. A specialist in Islamic theology and contemporary dawah, he serves as Professor at King Saud University in Riyadh. Al-Arifi has dedicated much of his academic career to classical Islamic texts, taking a distinct research interest in Hadith literature. Beyond the classroom, Al-Arifi is a founding and honorary member of numerous international *da'wah* organisations and serves on their executive

advisory committees to guide global outreach. He has a massive digital following, commanding a cross-platform social media following of over 42 million users, making him one of the most widely heard religious broadcasters in the Arab world. His lectures balance traditional theological frameworks with practical moral guidance for contemporary audiences.

Dr Zakir Abdul Karim Naik



India
Preachers & Spiritual Guides
Born: 18 October 1965 (age 61)

Dr Zakir Abdul Karim Naik is an internationally renowned Indian preacher and comparative religion specialist, frequently regarded as a modern successor to the legendary Ahmed Deedat. Naik is the co-founder of Peace TV, a global satellite network that broadcasts his high-profile public debates and lectures to millions globally. In recognition of his international *da'wah* efforts, he was awarded the prestigious King Faisal International Prize for Services to Islam in 2015. Since 2016, Naik has resided in Malaysia as a permanent resident under continuous political asylum. He remains the subject of ongoing investigations by India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) over allegations of money laundering and incitement, prompting standing extradition requests which he strongly contests. Expanding his digital reach, Naik launched Al Hidaayah, a major educational streaming platform featuring lectures from prominent Islamic scholars worldwide. He maintains an immense digital reach, commanding over 24 million Facebook followers and a YouTube channel that has generated hundreds of millions of views.

HM Queen Rania Al-Abdullah



Jordan
Social Issues
Born: 31 August 1970 (age 56)

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of Jordan is an internationally acclaimed humanitarian, education activist, and global advocate. Alongside her royal duties as the wife of HM King Abdullah II, she has leveraged her massive public platform, over 38 million virtual followers, to humanise Arab causes and challenge deeply rooted anti-Muslim misconceptions within Western discourse. Queen Rania is the driving force behind several transformative educational institutions, most notably launching the *Madrasati* ("My School") initiative to comprehensively revitalise Jordan's public school infrastructure. Her humanitarian efforts for youth in crisis zones earned her the Global Trailblazer Award and the Fashion for Relief Fellowship Award. Since the escalation of the Gaza conflict, Her Majesty has played a pivotal international role. Through rigorous media appearances and high-profile global speeches, she has forcefully challenged the misrepresentation of Palestinians in Western media, demanding immediate humanitarian intervention, legal accountability, and an end to systemic displacement.

Sami Yusuf



United Kingdom
Arts & Culture
Born: 19 July 1980 (age 46)

Sami Yusuf is an internationally acclaimed British composer, producer, multi-instrumentalist, and vocalist who revolutionised the global Islamic music industry. His expansive body of work is profoundly anchored in classical musical systems and sacred mystical poetry designed to foster spiritual reflection. For the past several years, Yusuf has focused his artistic career on revivifying, recording, and promoting endangered musical heritage traditions, successfully engaging contemporary global audiences through dramatically staged, orchestral performances. He has performed to sold-out arenas across six continents, appealing to diverse demographics regardless of ethnicity or belief. With digital downloads exceeding one billion, Yusuf has released nine studio albums, sold over 45 million albums worldwide and has a following of 20 million people. He is equally celebrated for his global humanitarian relief campaigns and United Nations peace initiatives.

Sheikh Abdul-Rahman Al-Sudais



Saudi Arabia
Qur'an Reciters
Born: 10 February 1960 (age 66)

Sheikh Abdul-Rahman Al-Sudais is the General President for the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, serving as the chief of the Imams at al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah. Having memorised the Holy Qur'an by age 12, he completed advanced Shariah studies at Riyadh University, Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, and Umm

al-Qura University, developing a globally recognised, distinct Qur'anic recitation style. Al-Sudais is widely celebrated for his sermon delivery and his public advocacy for peaceful conflict resolution, interfaith dialogue, and Islamic moderation. The Dubai International Holy Qur'an Award honoured him as the "Islamic Personality of the Year" for his lifelong devotion to Islamic propagation. Expanding into cultural preservation, Al-Sudais supervised the production of the documentary feature film *One Day in the Haram*, which provided an intimate, unprecedented look at the daily operations of the Makkah sanctuary through the lived experiences of its staff and workers.

Bisan Owda



Palestine
Media
Born: 11 February 1997 (age 29)

Bisan Owda is a Palestinian journalist, activist, and filmmaker who has become a defining global voice documenting the humanitarian realities of the Gaza Strip. Prior to the conflict, her diverse media portfolio spanned gender equity projects alongside the United Nations and climate resilience campaigns with the European Union. Following the destruction of her home and her subsequent displacement, Owda began producing relentless, raw social media dispatches to capture the daily survival of Gazans, including broadcasting the devastating aftermath of the Al-Shifa Hospital attacks. Her short-form documentary series for AJ+, "It's Bisan from Gaza and I'm Still Alive", won a 2024 Peabody Award and an Edward R. Murrow Award. In September 2024, the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences staunchly defended her work against intense political opposition, formally awarding her the News Emmy Award for Outstanding Hard News Feature Story. She remains inside Gaza, utilising her platform to record history in real time.

Mehdi Hasan



United Kingdom
Media
Born: 10 July 1979 (age 47)

Mehdi Hasan is an award-winning British-American journalist, author, and broadcaster widely celebrated for his incisive political commentary and aggressive, uncompromising interview style. Following prominent tenures as Political Editor of HuffPost UK and host of Al Jazeera English's *Head to Head*, Hasan rose to American prominence hosting *The Mehdi Hasan Show* on MSNBC and Peacock. Following the cancellation of his MSNBC programme in early 2024, Hasan launched Zeteo, a highly successful, independent progressive media enterprise that grew to over 700,000 subscribers, alongside a YouTube following of approximately 2.3 million. Throughout 2025 and late 2026, Hasan spearheaded a massive expansion of the network, officially launching Zeteo UK in London alongside an elite team of British political journalists. His uncompromising reporting on the Gaza crisis, rigorous legal deconstructions of war crimes, and fearless critiques of Western corporate media bias have cemented his reputation as one of the most vital, independent voices defending Palestinian human rights on the global stage.

Bassem Youssef



United States of America
Media
Born: 22 March 1974 (age 52)

Bassem Youssef is a world-renowned Egyptian-American comedian, political satirist, and former cardiothoracic surgeon who rose to international fame during Egypt's 2011 Arab Spring. As the creator and host of the groundbreaking satirical news show 'Al-Bernameg', Youssef shattered broadcast records across the Arab world, earning the moniker "the Jon Stewart of the Middle East" and receiving the International Press Freedom Award for his fearless media critique. In recent years, Youssef has transformed into a dominant global voice advocating for justice for the Palestinians. His viral, satirical interview on 'Piers Morgan Uncensored' shattered viewership records, garnering over 17 million views and marking a definitive paradigm shift in Western media coverage of the Gaza conflict. In recognition of his profound impact on media accountability, Trinity College Dublin awarded Youssef the prestigious Gold Medal for Outstanding Contribution to Public Discourse. Backed by a cross-platform following of 26 million users, he continues to perform globally, utilising dark satire to expose geopolitical double standards.

Sadio Mané

Senegal
Celebrities & Sports
Born: 10 April 1992 (age 34)



Sadio Mané is a world-class Senegalese professional footballer globally recognised as one of the finest forwards of his generation and a deeply devout Muslim. A cornerstone of Liverpool FC's historic modern era, he guided the club to a UEFA Champions League trophy in 2019 and ended a three-decade drought to capture the English Premier League title in 2020. Internationally, he led the Senegal national team to a historic triumph at the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations. Mané plays as a star forward for Saudi Pro League club Al-Nassr alongside Cristiano Ronaldo. Off the pitch, Mané is revered for his massive, philanthropic projects in his native Senegal, quietly financing the construction of hospitals, schools, mosques, and digital infrastructure in his home village of Bambali.

Khabib Nurmagomedov

Russia
Celebrities & Sports
Born: 20 September 1988 (age 38)



Khabib Nurmagomedov is an iconic former mixed martial artist from the Russian republic of Dagestan. As the first Russian and Muslim to win a UFC title, he dominated the sport as the Lightweight Champion, retiring in March 2021 with an unblemished, historic record of 29 wins and zero losses. Known as "The Eagle", his nickname pays homage to his Dagestani heritage and his signature fighting style. Nurmagomedov's unprecedented success and unapologetic embrace of his Islamic faith have won him massive adoration among Muslim youth globally, transcending ethnic complexities across Chechnya, ex-Soviet Muslim-majority nations, and the broader Middle East. Following his retirement, he successfully transitioned into coaching and business, managing Eagle FC and expanding his entrepreneurial ventures. With a massive social media presence commanding over 43 million followers, he remains an enduring icon of athletic discipline and religious devotion worldwide.



Al-Tahrim 66, 11

My Lord, build for me a home near You in Paradise

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THE 450 LISTS

The Lists

Scholarly
page 145
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 155
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 166
These agents of change are responsible for founding and/or directing institutions that influence the religious affairs of Muslims.

Preachers & Spiritual Guides
page 174
Preachers rely on charisma to inspire millions through multimedia while spiritual guides traditionally teach through live study circles and individualised directives to their disciples. 144

Philanthropy, Charity & Development
page 181
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 186
These individuals address various social issues such as health, education, women's rights, the environment, human rights and conflict resolution.

Business
page 196
These entrepreneurs head and direct key organisations in the business world pushing innovation and financial development forward.

Science & Technology
page 201
These are the main figures from the world of science and technology.

Arts & Culture
page 207
These are artists and cultural ambassadors whose work has become part of people's daily lives.

Qur'an Reciters
page 218
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 220
In an age of impulsive news and innovative media, these personalities have garnered influence from their activity in the media world.

Influencers & Sports
page 224
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 Professor of Philosophy and Islamic Studies, specialising in international relations and dialogue between cultures. Cherif has written numerous works on religion, civilisation 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 trained in the Islamic sciences in Bahrain and Makkah, studying under some eminent sheikhs, before going on to study at McGill University and then complete a PhD. 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 Abdollah Javadi

see Honourable Mentions on Page 136

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. His vocal opposition to U.S. foreign policy, Zionism, and Western geopolitics has frequently drawn immense public debate and criticism.

Damad, Ayatollah Dr Seyyed Mostafa Mohaghegh

Ayatollah 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 Makarem

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. Ayatollah Shirazi issued a major fatwa declaring jihad and stating that avenging Khamenei's death is a religious duty.

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

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. He is the patron of the Al Anwar Al Najafyia Foundation.

Al-Qaradaghi, Professor Ali Muhiddin

Professor Al-Qaradaghi is the President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) and Professor of Jurisprudence at Qatar University. He holds key positions in various Islamic Fiqh organisations as well as being on Shari'ah 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 100 works, including his multi-volume autobiography documenting over 70 years of his scholarly journey.

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 and heads the Ayatollah Seyyed Hussein Ismail Al-Sadr Foundation Trust, which runs humanitarian, development, and peace and reconciliation projects across the country. Over the years, his role as a prominent social leader and civil advocate has expanded beyond immediate postwar hostilities to focus heavily on long-term national stability and civic education. The issue of cross-community dialogue features heavily in his landmark academic outputs, which include a 12-volume project on citizenship and nationalism alongside his comprehensive *Encyclopedia of Peaceful Coexistence.*

LEBANON

Derian, Grand Mufti Abdul Latif

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.

LIBYA

Nayed, Dr Aref Ali

see Honourable Mentions on Page 136

MOROCCO

Abdurrahman, Professor Taha

Professor 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. Spanning a decades-long academic career, his work across logic, moral philosophy, and contractarian ethics serves as a vital decolonial critique of secular Western paradigms. 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 and also serves as the long-standing Vice President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS). 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. He has been a vocal supporter of Yemen and Iran's response to Israeli attacks.

PALESTINE

Nusseibeh, Professor Sari

Professor Sari Nusseibeh comes from one of Jerusalem's oldest and most prominent families, having a 1300-year presence in the city. He earned his degrees at Oxford and Harvard (PhD '78) and is a retired professor of philosophy. He served as president of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem for nearly 20 years (1995–2014), and is now associated with Notre Dame University's academic campus in Jerusalem. He has published widely, including *Once Upon a Country, The Story of Reason in Islam,* and *The Scout (2025)* and holds several honorary doctorates and awards, including the Roosevelt Four Freedoms Award for Freedom of Worship. His writings can be accessed at: sarinusseibeh.com.

SAUDI ARABIA

Al-Fawzan, HE Sheikh Salih Bin Fawzan

see Honourable Mentions on Page 136

Al-Saffar, Sheikh Hassan Musa

Sheikh Hassan Musa Al-Saffar is a premier Saudi Shia scholar and reformist leader from Qatif who pioneered the Shia Islamic Reform Movement. He has made significant progress in establishing a direct, constructive dialogue with Salafi leaders and senior royal officials to advocate for national unity and civic rights. This work is critical in mitigating sectarian friction and countering extremist narratives that seek to exploit communal differences to foster hostility. Operating out of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, he continuously utilises his weekly sermons and extensive literary catalogue to promote pluralism, legal equality, and peaceful cross-doctrinal coexistence.

SYRIA

Al-Nabulsi, Dr Mohammed Rateb

Dr Mohammed Rateb Al-Nabulsi is a renowned Islamic scholar and author who returned to Syria in late 2024 following the fall of the Assad regime. He previously served as a professor at Damascus University until he was forced into exile in 2011. He has represented Syria globally in numerous Islamic conferences and co-founded the highly visited Nabulsi Encyclopedia of Islamic Science. Millions of Muslims globally recognise him through his lessons and television broadcasts. He has written dozens of Islamic books and holds advanced degrees from institutions in Syria, Ireland, and France. Following his return to Damascus, he has actively used his platform to advocate for national reconciliation, tolerance, and unity.

Sub-Saharan Africa

ERITREA

Said, Sheikh Faid Mohammed

Professor Sheikh Faid Mohammed Said was raised in Eritrea, where he was taught by Sheikh Hamid, the Senior Judge of the Shariah Court in Asmara. He later moved to Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah to study under Sheikh Atiyyah Mohammed Salim before earning his PhD in Islamic Studies from the Islamic University of Minnesota (USA). He authored *The Meaning of Muhammad and Our Cultural Memory,* and has contributed to the journals of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy and to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) *Encyclopedia of Moderation*. Additionally, he is a regular columnist for *Makka Newspaper* (Saudi Arabia) and Business Press UAE. He currently serves as a university professor, Chairman of AMAN Foundation UK, and Secretary-General of the Fatwa and Sharia Affairs Commission. He is also the Imam and Khateeb of the London Central Mosque, and an active member of the Executive Committee and Chair of the Religious Board at AMMALE (Alliance of Mosques, Associations, and Muslim Leaders in Europe).

GAMBIA, THE

Jah, Ambassador Professor Omar

Professor Dr Omar Jah (Sr.) is an eminent Gambian religious scholar, diplomat, and pioneer of modern Islamic thought in West Africa. He has taught in various educational institutions around the world, including in Canada, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia. He has also served as an ambassador for the Gambia, and held senior positions in the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in Jeddah and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). He serves as President of the Shaykh Abdallah Jah Charitable Foundation (SAJCF) and 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. A highly prolific author on Islam in Africa, he formally launched two monumental

publications detailing his research and life's work: *Sufism and the 19th Century Reform Movement in West Africa* and his personal memoir, *The Footprints of a Soldier of Islam.*

MAURITANIA

Al-Shanqiti, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hasan bin Al-Diddu

Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hasan bin Al-Diddu Al-Shanqiti is an eminent Mauritanian polymath, jurist, author, and poet. He serves as the President of the O'lama Information Centre, the President of Abdallah ibn Yasin University, and the head of Mauritania's world-renowned Center for the Development of Scholars (Markaz Takwīn al-Ulamā). Renowned for his exceptional memory, he holds prestigious traditional licenses (*ijazaat*) authorising him to teach all major prophetic traditions (Hadith) collections. His expansive digital media footprint and modern video lectures on Islamic sciences continue to attract massive traction across global Muslim communities.

NIGERIA

El-Zakzaky, Sheikh Ibraheem

Sheikh Ibraheem Yaqoub El-Zakzaky is the founder and leading force behind the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), one of the country's most influential socio-religious movements. IMN focuses extensively on providing parallel social services, educational systems, healthcare, and charity to millions of followers across West Africa. El-Zakzaky has faced prolonged state persecution over decades, culminating in a December 2015 military raid on his residence that resulted in the massacre of over 300 followers and the killing of three of his sons. Following years of state detention and a subsequent acquittal of all charges, he traveled internationally for extensive medical treatments. After spending several months in Iran, where he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Tehran, he returned to Nigeria in early 2024 to resume active leadership of the movement from Abuja.

SOUTH AFRICA

Esack, Professor Farid

Professor Farid Esack is a traditionally trained scholar, an acclaimed academic, and arguably the world's leading Islamic Liberation theologian. He has taught at international universities, including Harvard, Columbia, Hamburg, and Gadjah Mada. Appointed as a Commissioner for Gender Equality by President Nelson Mandela, Esack played a leading role in the struggle against apartheid through the organisation The Call of Islam. He remains a prominent advocate of interreligious solidarity against all forms of injustice, and serves as a major voice for pro-Palestinian advocacy in South Africa. In 2018, he was awarded the Order of Luthuli (Silver), South Africa's highest civilian order, for his immense contributions to academic scholarship and his lifelong work for social justice. He currently continues his work as a Professor Emeritus in the Study of Islam at the University of Johannesburg.

Moosa, Professor Ebrahim

Dr Ebrahim Moosa is the Mirza Family Professor of Islamic Thought and Muslim Societies in the Keough School of Global Affairs and the Department of History at the University of Notre Dame. He also serves as the director of the Contending Modernities program, which is affiliated with the Ansari Institute for Global Engagement with Religion. His diverse body of work includes several monographs, edited volumes, and co-edited books. Among these are his prize-winning book, *Ghazali and the Poetics of Imagination*, and the widely acclaimed *What is a Madrasa?* (2015). His most recent publications include, *Muslim Theological Encounters with Science* (2026), and the major edited volume, *Engaging the Madrasa*. Due to their critical impact on contemporary Islamic scholarship, his publications enjoy robust global reception and engagement. Moosa is also regarded as a prominent public intellectual. In 2007, he was invited to deliver the prestigious King Hasan Lecture (Durus Hasaniyyah) to HM King Mohammed VI of Morocco in Arabic. He continues with initiatives dedicated to advancing scientific and theological literacy among young theologians and madrasah graduates around the world given his successful Madrasah Discourse project.

UGANDA

Mamdani, Professor Mahmood

Dr Mahmood Mamdani is the Herbert Lehman Professor of Government in the Departments of Anthropology and Political Science at Columbia University in the United States and a leading global public intellectual. He previously served as the Executive Director of the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) in Kampala, Uganda, from 2010 to

2022, and is the former President of the Council for Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in Dakar, Senegal. Mamdani is internationally renowned for his book *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, The Cold War and The Roots of Terror*. An outspoken advocate for student speech, he heavily criticised Columbia University's rigid approach towards students protesting the war in Gaza. His latest book is *Slow Poison: Idi Amin, Yoweri Museveni, and the Making of the Ugandan State*, (2025). He went on medical leave from Columbia University in late 2025, coinciding with his son, democratic socialist Zohran Mamdani, being elected as the mayor of New York City.

Asia

AZERBAIJAN

Pashazade, Sheikh ul-Islam Haji Allahshukur Hummat

Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshukur Hummat Pashazade is the Grand Mufti of Azerbaijan, the elected Mufti of the Caucasus region, and Chairman of the Caucasus Muslims' Board (CMB). He is uniquely recognised globally as the world's only joint Sunni-Shia Grand Mufti, issuing religious edicts (fatwas) to each group according to their respective legal methodologies (*madhhabs*) to reflect Azerbaijan's dual Muslim landscape. A lifelong pioneer of cross-doctrinal cohesion, he co-chaired the historic 2010 World Summit of Religious Leaders and spearheads Azerbaijan's global faith initiatives. In addition to playing a pivotal role in securing formal recognition for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Azerbaijan, his expanding diplomatic leadership includes holding the rotating chairmanship of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) Council of Heads of Muslim Religious Boards.

INDIA

Nadwi, Dr Bahauddeen Muhammed Jamaluddeen

Professor Bahauddeen Muhammed Jamaluddeen Nadwi is the founding Vice-Chancellor of Darul Huda Islamic University (DHIU) in Kerala, India. He has authored or translated a vast library of books including a landmark Malayalam translation and exegesis of the Qur'an. He serves as the Editor-in-Chief of 'Islamic Insight', an international journal of Islamic studies. A high-profile global representative for Indian Muslim academia, he is a central council member of the *Samastha Kerala Jem-iyyathul Ulama*, President of the *Samastha Kerala Jam'iyyathul Mu'allimeen* Central Council. Under his leadership over the last four decades, Darul Huda has scaled into a global network expanding across five continents.

INDONESIA

Bisri, Kyai Haji Achmad Mustofa

Kyai Haji Achmad Mustofa Bisri (known as 'Gus Mus') is widely revered as a preeminent Indonesian religious scholar, poet, novelist, painter, and Muslim intellectual. A graduate of Al-Azhar University, he is a former Chairman (Rais 'Aam) of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council and has strongly influenced the NU's social, cultural, and political trajectory over the past 40 years. He serves as the Chairman of the Center for Shared Civilizational Values (CSCV), utilising his global platform to advise on geopolitical peace frameworks, such as the Road Not Yet Taken initiative for Middle East peace. Gus Mus's unique fusion of deep Islamic jurisprudence, traditional Tafsir Al-Ibriz lectures, and artistic expression makes him a monumental cultural icon who is routinely celebrated as the 'President of Poets' for his fearless defense of interfaith solidarity, pluralism, and human rights against extremist rhetoric.

MALAYSIA

Al-Akiti, Dato Dr Muhammad Afifi

Dato' Dr Afifi Al-Akiti, FRSA, is a Shafi'i jurist, trained theologian, and philologist. He is a Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, and teaches Islam at the Faculty of Theology and Religion, 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. Dr 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. In 2024, he was appointed by the Conference of Rulers in Malaysia to join the National Islamic Council (MKI). In that same year, he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in the United Kingdom. He was awarded a Datukship by HRH The Sultan of Perak in 2012.

Bakar, Professor Osman

Professor Osman Bakar is currently Rector and Al-Ghazali Chair of Epistemology and Civilizational Studies and Renewal at the International Islamic University Malaysia and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Science at the University of Malaya. He is also the President of Islam-Confucianism Dialogue Society. 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 civilisation. Several of his writings, especially his best-selling work, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam*, have been translated into a dozen languages. In 2026, Professor Osman Bakar was conferred the National Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah award, one of Malaysia's highest Islamic honors, celebrating his lifelong contributions to the global Muslim Ummah and scholarship.

Kamali, Professor Mohammad Hashim

Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali is an Islamic jurist and a globally renowned authority on Shariah and comparative legal studies. He served as Dean and Professor at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) and the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). He went on to serve as the Founding CEO of the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia from 2008 to 2022 and currently holds the rank of Very Distinguished Fellow at the institute. Widely recognised as the world's leading expert on comparative studies between traditional Islamic jurisprudence and modern constitutional law, Dr Kamali has received numerous international accolades and, in 2020, he was officially conferred the title of "Dato'". His international state advisory work includes shaping the modern national constitutions of Afghanistan (2003), the Maldives (2004), and Somalia (2010). A highly prolific author with over 20 landmark books and 160 academic articles, his publications include *Crime and Punishment in Islamic Law: A Fresh Interpretation* (2019) and *Goals and Purposes of Shariah: Maqasid in Theory and Practice (2025).*

PAKISTAN

Ahmed, Professor Akbar

see Honourable Mentions on Page 136

Hashmi, Dr Farhat

Dr Farhat Hashmi is an influential Islamic teacher, and public speaker recognised for her pioneering work in women's religious education. She holds a PhD in Hadith Sciences from the University of Glasgow and previously served as a faculty member at the International Islamic University, Islamabad. In 1994, she founded the Al-Huda International Welfare Foundation, a prominent non-profit network of Islamic schools, seminaries, and social welfare programmes. Under her guidance, Al-Huda has expanded from Pakistan to establish branches across North America, Europe, and online, making structured Qur'anic learning accessible to millions of women. Through high-impact international educational initiatives, including regular global lecture tours and digital broadcasts to hundreds of thousands of subscribers, Dr Hashmi continues to promote an accessible, scripture-based understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Tahir-ul-Qadri, Sheikh Dr Muhammad

Sheikh Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri is a prominent Pakistani-Canadian Islamic scholar, former professor of law, and a globally recognised authority on counter-terrorism and classical Islamic sciences. He is the founder and patron-in-chief of Minhaj-ul-Quran International (MQI), a widespread non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting religious moderation, education, and human rights as well as its humanitarian arm, the Minhaj Welfare Foundation. He has written over 1,000 books in Urdu, English, and Arabic, with approximately 650 works officially published to date. His extensive bibliography spans theology, constitutional law, economics, and spirituality. A highly active orator, he has delivered more than 6,000 lectures worldwide. His addresses are broadcast frequently on international satellite channels and digital streaming platforms. Across his official platforms, he commands a substantial online presence with a combined following of over five million social media subscribers.

SINGAPORE

Aljunied, Professor Khairudin

Professor Khairudin Aljunied is a globally recognised 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, International Islamic University of Malaysia, 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: *Contemplating Sufism* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2025) and *How to Change Muslim Civilizations* (Polity, 2026).

Europe

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 1993-2012. He taught Islamic Theology at ISTAC, Kuala Lumpur. Dr Cerić is an advocate of cross-cultural engagement as well as a peace activist. He is the co-recipient of the 2003 UNESCO Felix Houphoet Boigny Peace Prize for Contribution to World Peace. In 2006, he issued the 'Declaration of European Muslims' and in 2008, he led the Muslim delegation of the 'A Common Word' initiative to the Vatican. Dr Cerić is currently the President of the Assembly of the Bosniak Academy of Arts and Sciences, a member of the International Scientific Board of the Imam Maturidi International Scientific Research Centre under the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan, as well as an active member of many local and international scholarly organisations and societies.

RUSSIA

Gaynutdin, Mufti Sheikh Ravil

Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin is the Grand Mufti of Russia, and Chairman of both the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation and the Council of Muftis of Russia. He is the single most important figure in the institutional framework of Russian Islam, representing a community of over 25 million Muslims. As a member of the Russian President's Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations, he serves as the primary diplomatic bridge between the Kremlin and the country's domestic Muslim population. In September 2024, he was unanimously re-elected to lead the central spiritual board for another five-year term.

TÜRKIYE

Karaman, Professor Hayrettin

Professor Dr Hayrettin Karaman is widely recognised as the country's pre-eminent authority on Islamic law (Shariah). He continues to write his highly influential weekly column for the daily newspaper *Yeni Şafak* ('New Dawn'), shaping theological and political discourse within the country's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) ecosystem. A highly respected veteran of Turkish academia who has trained thousands of modern theologians, Karaman reached the peak of his formal university career as a department head and dean at the Faculty of Theology at Marmara University. He famously resigned from this post in 2001 at the height of the national headscarf controversy to protest secular state restrictions on religious students. He has authored around 50 published books and serves as a vital senior advisor on national religious affairs and state-aligned Islamic financial institutions.

Şentürk, Dr Recep

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 2017 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 modernisation in the Muslim world. His most recent publication is *Semiotics of Nature: Recharging Nature with Meaning for Environmental Ethics and Action*.

UNITED KINGDOM

Abdel Haleem, Professor Muhammad

Professor Dr Muhammad A. S. Abdel Haleem, OBE, is the King Fahd Professor of Islamic Studies and Director of the Centre of Islamic Studies at SOAS University of London. He also serves as the

Editor-in-Chief of the 'Journal of Qur'anic Studies'. Born in Egypt in 1933, Abdel Haleem memorised the entire Qur'an by age 11, a prerequisite for entering Al-Azhar University, before completing a fellowship at the University of Cambridge. His academic bibliography includes over 50 years of lecturing in the UK, alongside foundational, globally acclaimed texts: *The Qur'an: A New Translation; An Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (with Elsaid Badawi), and *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style*.

Hellyer, Professor Hisham

Professor Hisham A (HA) Hellyer, a scholar of Arab world affairs, geopolitics, and religion, is senior associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (UK), Professorial Research Associate at the SOAS Middle East Institute, and Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress (USA). Appointed as Professor of Islamic Thought at Bayan College, where he teaches in coordination with the Chicago Theological Seminary, he was elected fellow of the Royal Historical Society and Royal Society of Arts. He has held posts at Harvard University, Brookings, Carnegie, Warwick, and the American University in Cairo. Previously, he was fellow at Cambridge University's Centre of Islamic Studies, Azzawia Institute's first senior scholar, and Cambridge Muslim College's first professorial fellow. A prolific media commentator on international media outlets, his ten books include *Muslims of Europe: the 'Other' Europeans*, *A Revolution Undone: Egypt's Road Beyond Revolt*, and *A Sublime Path: the Sufi Way of the Makkan Sages*.

Mangera, Dr Mufti Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf

Dr Mufti Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf Mangera is a British Muslim scholar trained in both the Islamic and Western traditions. After memorising the Qur'an, he completed the traditional 'Ālimiyyah programme in the UK, specialised in iftā' in India, and later earned a PhD in Islamic Studies from SOAS, University of London. He has served as an imam in both the UK and the USA and is the founder and dean of Whitethread Institute, a postgraduate institute dedicated to the advanced training of Islamic scholars. Through White Thread Press, he has authored, translated and edited numerous works, making the Islamic scholarly tradition accessible to English-speaking audiences. He also serves as a mufti on the Shariah boards of several national organisations and delivers lectures and educational programmes internationally through Zamzam Academy and other online platforms, reaching a global audience.

Sardar, Ziauddin

Ziauddin Sardar is considered 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. Currently he is the Director of International Institute of Futures Studies at the International Islamic University Malaysia, edits the quarterly *Critical Muslim*, and works as an advisor to Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

Oceania

NEW ZEALAND

Hayward, Professor Joel

Professor 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, Khalifa University (UAE), where he headed Humanities and Social Sciences, the National Defence College of the UAE, and the Cambridge Muslim College, where he was Chief Executive. 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. He is considered to be one of the world's leading scholars of the *Sira*. His recent books include: *The Leadership of Muhammad ﷺ: A Historical Reconstruction* (2021), which won the illustrious prize of Best International Non-Fiction Book at the 2021 Sharjah International Book Awards; *The Warrior Prophet: Muhammad ﷺ & War* (2023) and *Muhammad ﷺ: Power and Politics* (2026).

North America

CANADA

Mattson, Dr Ingrid

see Honourable Mentions on Page 137

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ahmad, Dr Saiyad Nizamuddin

Dr Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad is The Prophet Muhammad 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 critical edition of the Arabic text of Ibn 'Arabi's *Fusus al-Hikam* is highly regarded. He also was the first to offer a complete course of lectures on René Guénon's *The Reign of Quantity* and the *Signs of the Times* on his acclaimed YouTube channel, which is devoted to a dazzling range of subjects.

Ataie, Dr Ali (new)

Dr Ali Ataie is a distinguished scholar of biblical hermeneutics, comparative theology, and sacred languages who serves as the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and an Associate Professor at Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California. Bridging traditional Islamic sciences with Western academia, he holds an MA in Biblical Studies—becoming the first Muslim seminarian to graduate from his institution with a focus strictly on the New Testament—and a PhD in Cultural and Historical Studies in Religion from the Graduate Theological Union. Fully certified to read and analyze ancient scriptures in classical Arabic, Hebrew, and Biblical Greek, Dr. Ataie has spent over two decades building scholarly respect across faith traditions. As a prominent public intellectual and interfaith bridge-builder, he regularly lectures globally, participates in high-profile theological debates, and leads international dialogues aimed at correcting cross-religious misunderstandings and fostering mutual respect between Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities worldwide.

Bewley, Aisha

Aisha Bewley is an accomplished scholar, author, and one of the most prolific translators of classical Arabic Islamic literature into the English language. Since embracing Islam in 1968, she has dedicated over five decades to mastering the Islamic tradition and making foundational texts accessible to the global English-speaking Muslim community. Much of her career has been defined by close academic collaboration with her husband, Hajji Abdalhaqq Bewley. Born in the United States in 1948, she earned her MA in Near Eastern Languages from the University of California, Berkeley, followed by advanced studies at the American University in Cairo. Her journey through traditional Islamic sciences began in a Dar al-Ulum and matured under the guidance of the eminent Moroccan scholar Sheikh Muhammad ibn al-Habib of Meknes, later continuing under the late spiritual leader Sheikh Abdalqadir al-Murabit. Her vast bibliography includes definitive translations of the *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik, and *Ash-Shifa* of Qadi Iyad.

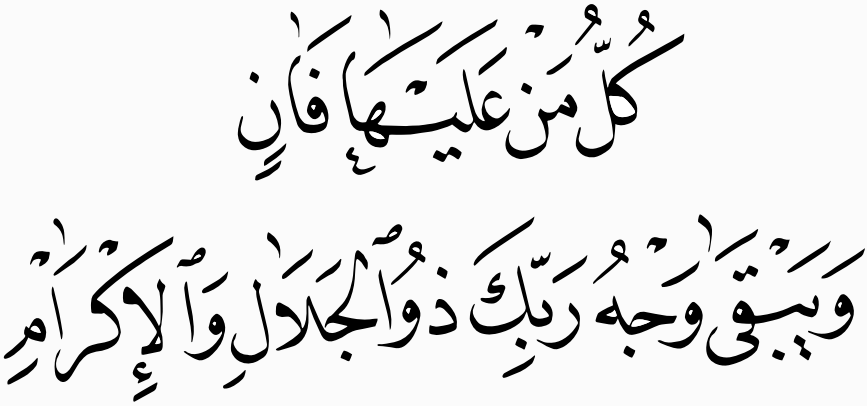
Jackson, Dr Sherman

Dr Sherman A Jackson (Abdul Hakim Jackson) is the King Faisal Chair in Islamic Thought and Culture, a Distinguished Professor, and the Director of the Center for Islamic Thought, Culture and Practice (CITCAP) at the University of Southern California (USC). He is globally recognised as one of the world's most influential contemporary Muslim scholars, focusing on classical Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and the sociopolitical dynamics of the Black American Muslim community. A former member of the Fiqh Council of North America and past Arthur F. Thurnau Professor at the University of Michigan, his expansive intellectual career includes delivering the historic televised eulogy at the funeral of Muhammad Ali. His landmark academic footprint has culminated in the publication of his massive, highly discussed work, *The Islamic Secular: Between Political Theology and Political Philosophy*, which challenges standard Western and Muslim frameworks regarding religion and state authority.

Qadhi, Dr Yasir

Shaykh Dr Yasir Qadhi combines traditional Eastern seminary education with elite Western academic training. He earned a BA in Hadith Sciences and an MA in Islamic Theology from the Islamic University of Madinah, followed by a PhD in Religious Studies from Yale University. He currently serves as the

Chairman of the Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA), Dean of The Islamic Seminary of America (TISA), and Resident Scholar of the East Plano Islamic Center (EPIC) in Texas. Dr Qadhi has built a global reputation for addressing highly sensitive modern and cultural issues with theological nuance. He is highly active in interfaith dialogue, media engagement, and social justice advocacy, leveraging a massive digital following to challenge Muslim stereotypes and provide practical Islamic guidance for Western communities. His latest book is: *Understanding Salafism: Seeking the Path of the Pious Predecessors* (2025).



The Holy Qur'an
Al-Rahman 55:26-27

"Everyone upon the earth will perish,
And there will remain the Face of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honor."
Calligraphy by Hasan Kan'an

© FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com

Middle East and North Africa

IRAN

Araghchi, HE Seyyed Abbas (new)

Seyyed Abbas Araghchi has served as Minister of Foreign Affairs since August 2024 under President Masoud Pezeshkian. A veteran diplomat with more than three decades of experience, he previously served as Iran's ambassador to Finland and Japan and held several senior positions in the Foreign Ministry. Araghchi played a key role in the negotiations that culminated in the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and world powers. Araghchi remained at the forefront of Iranian diplomacy throughout 2026, representing Tehran in renewed negotiations with the United States over Iran's nuclear programme and sanctions relief amid heightened regional tensions. Following the subsequent conflict, he continues to lead Iran's diplomatic engagement with regional governments and mediators.

Pezeshkian, HE President Masoud

President Masoud Pezeshkian is the 9th President of Iran, having taken office in July 2024 following the death of Ebrahim Raisi 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 and was 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. He is seen as a moderate and reformer, seeking a more conciliatory approach. Following the US strikes in February 2026, Pezeshkian formed part of a constitutionally designated three-man interim council to manage the state transition until the new Supreme Leader was chosen. Throughout the conflict, Pezeshkian has pushed firmly for diplomatic avenues to settle the war and resolve the economic crisis, leading to direct clashes with hard-line factions and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

IRAQ

Barzani, Masoud

Masoud Barzani entered the political arena at the young age of 16 under the wing of his late father and has served as the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) since 1979. He played a major role in shaping the new Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. He has been a primary force fighting DA'ISH (ISIS) and remains adamant about establishing an independent Kurdish state. He was President of the Iraqi Kurdish Region from 2005 to 2017, but stepped down due to fierce regional opposition following the September 2017 independence referendum, which saw overwhelming popular support from voters. Today, the global Kurdish population is estimated to be between 35 and 45 million people, including approximately 5.5 to 6 million Kurds living within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 15 to 20 million in Türkiye, 8 to 10 million in Iran, and roughly 2.5 to 3 million in Syria.

Al-Zaidi, HE Ali Faleh (new)

Ali Faleh Al-Zaidi is a businessman and politician who became the Prime Minister of Iraq in May 2026. Nominated by the Shia Coordination Framework as a consensus leader, his rapid transition from private commerce to the nation's highest executive office at the age of 41 made him the youngest prime minister in modern Iraqi history. From a prominent Shia family with roots in Dhi Qar, al-Zaidi holds qualifications in law and finance. Before his premiership, he built an extensive multi-sector career, heading the Al-Watania Holding Group, Al-Shaab University, and Al-Janoob Islamic Bank. As Prime Minister, al-Zaidi prioritises economic diversification, institutional reform, and international investment. In July 2026, he conducted a high-profile visit to Washington to secure American partnerships in energy and infrastructure.

ISRAEL

Salah, Sheikh Raed

Sheikh Raed Salah is the leader of the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel and is widely respected in the Islamic world as a religious leader. From 1989 to 2001, Salah also served as the Mayor of

The Marrakesh Declaration

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

Umm Al-Fahm, an Israeli-Arab city. He is frequently arrested and imprisoned by the Israeli government; in February 2020, an Israeli court sentenced him to 28 months in prison for "inciting to terror", much of which was spent in solitary confinement. Following his December 2021 release after serving 16 months, he has continued to face strict state surveillance and targeted restrictions. In March 2026, he was arbitrarily detained by an Israeli special unit while traveling to a Ramadan *iftar* in Jerusalem. Following his release from interrogation, Israeli authorities formally exiled him and fellow leader Kamal Khatib from entering the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its surrounding courtyards for a period of six months, lasting from 27 April until 27 October 2026.

JORDAN

Abu Rashta, Ata

Sheikh Ata Abu Rashta is the global leader (*Amir*) of Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international pan-Islamist political organisation. Having worked closely with the organisation's founder, Taqiuddin Al-Nabhani, and his successor, Abdul Qadeem Zallum, Abu Rashta gained prominence in Jordan during the First Gulf War as the party's official spokesperson when he critiqued Western military intervention. In 2003, he assumed the global leadership of Hizb ut-Tahrir. The party under his tenure has faced a severe wave of international crackdowns and legal bans. Following the United Kingdom's designation of Hizb ut-Tahrir as a proscribed terrorist organisation in January 2024, Australia formally banned and outlawed the group on 6 March 2026, joining a list of more than a dozen nations, Germany and numerous Muslim-majority countries, that have criminalised the movement's activities.

HRH Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah

Named Crown Prince in 2009, HRH Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II is the eldest son of Their Majesties King Abdullah II and Queen Rania Al Abdullah, making him heir apparent to the Jordanian throne. He holds the rank of Major in the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army (JAF), having graduated from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 2017. He frequently acts as Regent and accompanies his father on prominent local and international military and political missions. His dedicated efforts to develop Jordan's youth community began with the Haqiq (achieve) initiative, expanding under the Crown Prince Foundation (CPF) to encompass global innovation and technical education. In 2015, Crown Prince Al Hussein became the youngest person to chair a UN Security Council meeting and later delivered Jordan's address at the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly. He married Princess Rajwa Al Hussein in June 2023, and they welcomed their first child, Princess Iman bint Al Hussein, in August 2024.

KUWAIT

HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is the Emir of Kuwait, having ascended to the throne in December 2023 following the passing of his half-brother, Sheikh Nawaf. Born in 1940, he spent most of his career in Kuwait's security and intelligence apparatus, culminating in his long-standing role as the 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. Since becoming Emir, he has taken assertive governance measures to break persistent legislative gridlock, notably dissolving the National Assembly, suspending specific constitutional articles, and appointing Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah as his Crown Prince in June 2024 to secure the line of succession.

LIBYA

Haftar, Khalifa

Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA). He rose to prominence following the 2011 uprising against Muammar Gaddafi. Currently, his forces control more than 80% of Libya's territory, including the critical oil-producing central interior, eastern coastlines, and major export terminals. The country remains deeply divided between two competing administrative factions. In the west, the internationally recognised Government of National Unity (GNU) operates out of Tripoli under Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh, with strategic advisory support from Türkiye and Qatar. In the east, Haftar acts as the de facto authority supporting the parallel Government of National Stability (GNS). Historically backed by the UAE, Egypt, and Russia's military apparatus, Haftar's recent geopolitical maneuvering includes a $4 billion defense modernisation agreement with Pakistan and high-level, US-backed AFRICOM mediation to establish a dual

executive, power-sharing pact with Dbeibeh. In August 2026, Haftar officially announced his candidacy for upcoming presidential elections.

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

Barghouti, Mustafa

A physician by profession, Mustafa Barghouti is 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. He has made numerous appearances on various media outlets since the start of the Gaza genocide, continuing to highlight the humanitarian situation in Gaza and calling for a lasting ceasefire and a political resolution to the conflict.

Al-Hayya, Khalil (new)

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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 the December 2022 parliamentary 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. He won a second term by a landslide in the October 2024 Presidential elections, which had an elector turnout of 28%. In 2026, he extended the country's long-standing state of emergency until the end of the year.

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 global charity initiatives under the umbrella of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI). These include his flagship foundation, Dubai Cares, which has massively scaled its operations since its inception in 2007 to reach over 117 million direct and indirect beneficiaries across 60 developing countries. As well as his outstanding political, architectural, and business achievements, he is an accomplished author, a widely read poet, and a world-class horseman.

Al-Qasimi, Sheikha Lubna

Sheikha Lubna bint Khalid bin Sultan Al-Qasimi 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. Her ongoing

leadership portfolio includes serving as the Vice Chairperson of the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC) Board of Directors. She was recently honored as the 2025 ACS Community Leadership Awardee and featured on the July 2026 cover of *T: The New York Times Style Magazine MENA* for her enduring legacy as a pioneer of Arab women in leadership.

Sub-Saharan Africa

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Ouattara, HE Alassane (new)

Alassane Ouattara has served as the President of Côte d'Ivoire since 2010. A member of the Islamic Dioula people, his family lineage traces back to the historic Muslim rulers of the Kong Empire. He previously served as Governor of the BCEAO and Deputy Managing Director of the IMF. His ascent to the presidency brought crucial political representation to Côte d'Ivoire's historically marginalized Muslim-majority north. Since taking office, his administration has driven massive infrastructure projects, elevating Côte d'Ivoire into a premier West African economic powerhouse. He was re-elected to a fourth term in late 2025.

NIGERIA

Tinubu, HE President Chief Bola Ahmed

Chief Bola Ahmed Tinubu is the 16th President of Nigeria, having taken office in May 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 2019 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. In August 2026, amid persistent regional security threats from banditry and terrorism, he approved a sweeping 30% to 80% salary increase for all 250,000 personnel in the Nigerian Armed Forces to boost troop morale.

SENEGAL

Faye, HE President Bassirou Diomaye

Bassirou Diomaye Faye is the 5th President of Senegal, having assumed office in April 2024. Hailing from Ndiaganiao in Western Senegal, Faye's traditional village upbringing deeply influenced his values and leadership style. After studying law in Dakar, he graduated from the National School of Administration (ENA) and embarked on a successful career and co-founded the PASTEF party. As President, Faye has pursued an aggressive reform agenda focused on left-wing Pan-Africanism, battling corruption and reclaiming Senegal's sovereignty over its natural resources. In a major move to fulfill his vow of breaking the "French economic stranglehold" and modernising the country's infrastructure, his administration formalised a landmark €1.5 billion national grid modernisation partnership with France in July 2026. Concurrently, Faye continues to navigate delicate regional diplomacy, utilising his presidential platform to heavily urge the military-led states of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to reconsider their exit from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

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 revitalising 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.

Asia

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.

AZERBAIJAN

Aliyev, HE President Ilham

President Ilham Aliyev has served as Azerbaijan's fourth president since 2003, securing a fifth consecutive term in February 2024 with 92% of the vote. The son of former president Heydar Aliyev, he advocates a moderate cultural Islam for the nation's majority-Shia population. Holding a PhD in history, Aliyev transitioned from business and vice-presidency at the state oil company (SOCAR) into national politics. Utilizing Azerbaijan's vast oil and natural gas wealth, his administration has driven significant economic prosperity, financing widespread infrastructure and public services. His state-directed "Great Return" program allocates billions to rebuild infrastructure and resettle displaced persons. Aliyev maintains a pragmatic, multi-vector foreign policy, balancing relations with Russia, Turkey, and Israel while acting as a crucial energy exporter to the European Union. Notably, Aliyev oversaw military operations that successfully recaptured Nagorno-Karabakh, ending decades of breakaway rule and fully restoring Azerbaijani sovereignty.

BANGLADESH

Rahman, HE Prime Minister Tarique (new)

Tarique Rahman is a Bangladeshi politician serving as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The son of former President Ziaur Rahman and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, he directed the BNP during 17 years in exile in London. Returning in December 2025 after the 2024 uprising, Rahman led the BNP to a sweeping two-thirds parliamentary majority in the February 2026 general election. Sworn in on 17 February 2026, he succeeded Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, ending a transitional interim government and restoring elected BNP leadership.

CHINA

Kadeer, Rebiya

Rebiya Kadeer is the revered "Spiritual Mother of the Uyghur Nation" and a prominent leader advocating for China's 12-to-15-million-strong ethnic Uyghur population. Formerly one of China's most successful businesswomen, she was imprisoned from 1999 to 2005 for allegedly providing state secrets to foreigners. Since being released on medical grounds and entering exile in the United States, she has spearheaded international advocacy against state repression, mass internments, and forced assimilation in Xinjiang. Before her arrest, Kadeer directed the "Thousand Mothers Movement", empowering Uyghur women entrepreneurs. She later served as President of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) until 2017. Today, she operates through the Washington-based Uyghur National Movement, publicising human rights crises to Western governments. Branded an extremist by Beijing, her legacy faces intense domestic erasure, underscored by the complete demolition of her historic trade center in Urumqi.

INDIA

Farooq, Dr Mirwaiz Mohammad Umar

Dr Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the 14th Mirwaiz of Kashmir, inherited his title in 1990 at age 17 after his father's assassination. By 20, he founded and became Chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, a coalition of pro-freedom parties in Jammu and Kashmir. He has persistently raised the Kashmiri plight at the United Nations and European Parliament, advocating dialogue with India and Pakistan. Following an extensive house arrest from August 2019 to September 2023 amid the stripping of Kashmir's autonomy, Dr Farooq remains subjected to sudden, intermittent detentions by authorities. As chief cleric at Srinagar's historic Jama Masjid, he expertly bridges vital traditional religious leadership with ongoing human rights advocacy and repeatedly calls for dialogue between India and Pakistan as the only sustainable path to peace, while continuing to advocate non-violent engagement on regional issues.

INDONESIA

Marsudi, Retno (new)

Retno Marsudi is one of the most respected, visionary,

and accomplished diplomats in the modern Islamic world. She made history as the first female Foreign Minister of Indonesia, serving two highly successful, transformative terms from 2014 to 2024 under President Joko Widodo. Prior to her ministerial career, she honed her world-class credentials across several elite diplomatic postings, including serving as Indonesia's Ambassador to the Netherlands, Iceland, and Norway. In a major milestone for global governance, she transitioned to the absolute peak of international public service as the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Water. This landmark appointment marks the first time an Indonesian diplomat has been chosen to lead a high-profile UN Special Envoy mandate, cementing her global status.

Parawansa, Khofifah Indar

Khofifah Indar Parawansa is serving her second five-year term as the 14th Governor of East Java, having officially resumed office in February 2025 following her landslide re-election victory. A seasoned politician, she previously held the gubernatorial post from 2019 to 2024, after serving as the Deputy Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) and later as the 27th Minister of Social Affairs from 2014 to 2018. Known for her dedicated focus on social reform and inter-faith tolerance, Khofifah has successfully leveraged her long-standing role as the General Chairwoman of Muslimat NU, the prominent women's wing of the 100-million-member Nahdlatul Ulama organisation. During her ministerial tenure, she spearheaded a nationally recognised campaign that effectively closed multiple red-light districts while providing micro-financing and livelihood skills training for affected women. She maintains an extensive digital media campaign and outreach network, utilizing her large following of over 2.6 million social media users.

Sukarnoputri, Megawati

Megawati Sukarnoputri is the daughter of Indonesia's first President, Sukarno. She served as Vice President from 1999 to 2001, then became Indonesia's first female president (2001–2004) and the fourth woman to lead a Muslim-majority nation. Historically a political kingmaker, she mentored former President Jokowi, though their alliance fractured during the 2024 elections. At the August 2025 PDI-P Congress, she was unanimously reappointed as Chairwoman until 2030, remaining Indonesia's longest-serving party leader.

Widodo, HE Joko

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. 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. He continues to heavily influence domestic policy as the Chairman of the presidential advisory board, and is working closely to ensure the seamless execution of his multi-billion dollar capital city transition to Nusantara (IKN).

KAZAKHSTAN

Tokayev, HE President Kassym-Jomart

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev became Kazakhstan's second president in 2019, succeeding Nursultan Nazarbayev after his 28-year rule. In early 2022, widespread protests triggered calls for reform, and Tokayev responded by proposing a "New Kazakhstan" agenda. A constitutional referendum held in June 2022 approved sweeping changes, with roughly 77% voter approval, that curbed presidential powers, bolstered parliamentary authority, banned relatives from government posts, and stripped Nazarbayev of his "Leader of the Nation" status. That same period saw the capital revert from Nur-Sultan back to its original name, Astana. In November 2022, Tokayev won a snap election, securing 81.31% of the vote amid 69% turnout, earning a single seven-year term under the new constitutional rules. The vote has given him a clear mandate to continue his reform path.

MALAYSIA

Mohamad, HE Mahathir

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was Malaysia's Prime Minister from 1981–2003, winning five consecutive elections, overseeing rapid modernisation and economic growth while promoting liberal Muslim values. He established key institutions, including the International Islamic University of Malaysia, which has become a global hub for Islamic scholarship. His

long rule, however, was also marked by criticisms of curtailed civil liberties and the political trials faced by his former deputy, Anwar Ibrahim. Mahathir re-entered politics in 2017, forming a new party and leading the Pakatan Harapan coalition to victory in 2018. At 94, he became the world's oldest serving head of government, holding office until February 2020. Beyond Malaysia, Mahathir has long been a powerful voice for Muslims globally, outspoken on issues of Palestine, Islamophobia, and the need for economic independence in the Muslim world. His calls for Muslim unity and self-reliance continue to resonate internationally. In July 2026, he celebrated his 101st birthday.

Wan Ismail, Datuk Seri Wan Azizah

Datuk Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail made history as Malaysia's first female Deputy Prime Minister (2018–2020), also serving as Minister of Women, Family and Community Development. A medical doctor by training, she worked in public hospitals for 14 years before entering politics in support of her husband, Anwar Ibrahim, when he became Deputy Prime Minister in 1993. Her political journey has been closely intertwined with his, particularly after his dismissal and arrest in 1998. Stepping into the national spotlight, Wan Azizah became the founding president of the People's Justice Party (Parti Keadilan Rakyat), helping to build opposition alliances that reshaped Malaysia's political landscape. Over the years, she has been elected to parliament multiple times and continues to serve actively, representing Bandar Tun Razak since November 2022. She is widely respected for her role in advancing women's leadership and democratic reform in Malaysia.

PAKISTAN

Khan, Imran

see Honourable Mentions on Page 137

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 the 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, organised labour, and representation of Singapore's large Muslim community.

Europe

KOSOVO

Osmani-Sadriu, HE Vjosa

Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu served as the 5th President of Kosovo from April 2021 until the legal conclusion of her five-year term on 4 April 2026. A distinguished jurist holding a Master's and PhD from the University of Pittsburgh (USA), she entered public life early, contributing to the legal framework for Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence. As President, she championed anti-corruption reforms, Euro-Atlantic integration, and navigated complex EU-backed normalisation talks with Serbia. A snap election on 7 June 2026 marked Osmani's return to active party politics as a prominent candidate on the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) legislative ticket.

RUSSIA

Kadyrov, HE President Ramzan

Colonel General Ramzan Akhmadovich Kadyrov is the Head of the Chechen Republic, a federal subject of the Russian Federation, 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 fierce Putin loyalist, he has offered key support in the war on Ukraine. In July 2026, he was unanimously endorsed by Russia's ruling United Russia party to run for a fifth consecutive term in the upcoming leadership election.

UNITED KINGDOM

Khan, Sir Sadiq

see Honourable Mentions on Page 137

Mahmood, Shabana

Shabana Mahmood is a British-Pakistani lawyer-turned-politician who has become one of the most senior Muslim women in UK public life. Born in Birmingham in 1980, she studied law at Oxford and qualified as a barrister in 2003 before entering politics. In 2010, she was elected MP for Birmingham Ladywood. Mahmood rose steadily through Labour's ranks, serving in shadow ministerial posts before returning to prominence in 2021 as National Campaign Coordinator and later Shadow Justice Secretary. Following Labour's 2024 landslide victory, she was appointed Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, making history as the first Muslim woman to hold the role. She introduced reforms on prison overcrowding and defended judicial equality. In September 2025, she was promoted to Home Secretary, becoming the first Muslim woman to lead a great office of state. She was reappointed to the post in July 2026 under the new Prime Minister.

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 victimised 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 (PBUH). In 2026, she published her memoir, *Honoured: Survival, Strength and My Path to Politics*, a powerful account of survival, faith, and her journey into public service, further establishing her as an influential voice on social justice, women's rights, and community cohesion.

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, *Muslims 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 and A Jew Go There*.

Oceania

AUSTRALIA

Husic, Ed

Ed Husic made history in 2010 as the first Muslim elected to the Australian Federal Parliament. He further broke new ground in 2013 by becoming the first Muslim sworn into the federal government frontbench, taking his oath on the Qur'an. In 2022, Husic was appointed Minister for Industry and Science in Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's cabinet, a position he held until May 2025. In May 2025, Husic was removed from the cabinet during a factional reshuffle within the Labor Party. Despite this, he remains the Member of Parliament for Chifley and continues to serve on the backbench. Husic has maintained his advocacy for Muslim communities and interfaith dialogue, notably participating in the March for Humanity in Sydney in August 2025, a large protest highlighting the plight of Palestinians in the Gaza conflict.

North America

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Carson, André

André Carson was the second Muslim to be elected to the US Congress. First elected in a 2008 special election, he is currently serving his ninth consecutive two-year term representing Indiana's 7th congressional district and in May 2026, Carson secured his nomination for a potential tenth term. He has consistently opposed Israeli expansion in Palestinian territories and voted against legislative measures aimed at restricting the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. Following his initial 2022 draft, Carson officially reintroduced the Justice for Shireen Act to the House floor which mandates an investigation into the killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh by Israeli military. In late June 2026, he partnered with progressive leaders to introduce the AI Data Center Moratorium Act, advocating for a nationwide pause on data facility constructions to protect working families from rising utility costs.

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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 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** and downloading the app for Android or iOS.

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. He gained international prominence as the lead prosecutor in the high-profile conviction of former police officer Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd. Since transitioning from Congress, he has authored his memoir, *Break the Wheel: Ending the Cycle of Police Violence.*

Omar, Ilhan

Ilhan Omar has represented Minnesota's 5th congressional district in the US House of Representatives since 2019, consistently championing progressive legislation for the working class, students, and human rights. Born in Mogadishu, Somalia, to a Somali father and Yemeni mother, she arrived in the United States as a refugee in 1995. Before entering public office, she worked as a community nutrition educator and led efforts empowering East African women in civic leadership. As a prominent member of "The Squad", Omar has faced intense political backlash and white supremacist death threats. Despite targeted right-wing opposition, she won her August 2026 Democratic primary with over 80% of the vote. A fierce opponent of the current administration's foreign policy, Omar introduced a high-profile House resolution urging the US to join the International Criminal Court (ICC) to counter pushes to dismantle the war crimes tribunal.

El-Sayed, Abdulrahman Mohamed (new)

see Honourable Mentions on Page 138

Tlaib, Rashida

Rashida Tlaib serves as the U.S. Representative for Michigan's 12th Congressional District, a position she has held since 2019. Born in Detroit to Palestinian immigrant parents, Tlaib made history as the first Muslim woman elected to the Michigan State Legislature. She is a prominent member of "The Squad" and is globally recognised for her fierce advocacy on workers' rights, environmental justice, and Palestinian human rights. During Benjamin Netanyahu's 2024 congressional address, Tlaib held a sign reading "War Criminal". Following her 2024 re-election where she captured nearly 70% of the vote, she successfully advanced through the August 2026 Democratic primary, securing 73.9% of the vote against primary challengers ahead of the November 2026 general election. As the sole Palestinian-American voice in Congress, she continues to leverage her platform to demand a halt to U.S. weapon exports and sponsor landmark legislation protecting water affordability.

Caribbean

GUYANA

Ali, Dr Mohamed Irfaan

Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali is the tenth President of Guyana and the first Muslim to hold the post. A development economist by training, his administration has overseen historic, unprecedented economic growth, propelling Guyana to the forefront of the global energy sector as one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Representing a rare instance of Muslim political leadership in Latin America and the Caribbean, Dr Ali has consistently prioritised inclusive development under his hallmark "One Guyana" platform. Under his leadership, the state has also enhanced economic sovereignty by enacting the Guyana Development Bank Act.

ADMINISTRATION OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

Middle East and North Africa

EGYPT

Ayyad, Grand Mufti Nazir Mohamed

Dr Nazir Mohamed Ayyad is the Grand Mufti of Egypt and the head of Dar Al-Ifta, having been appointed to a four-year term by presidential decree in August 2024. He succeeds Dr Shawki Allam, who held the position for over a decade. Prior to leading Dar Al-Ifta, Egypt's premier institution for issuing authoritative Islamic legal rulings (fatwas), Dr Ayyad served as the Secretary-General of Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy. Since taking office, he has expanded Egypt's religious diplomacy, leading high-level delegations to secure academic treaties with global Islamic councils and chairing the Secretariat-General for Authorities of Fatwa Worldwide to unify anti-extremism strategies across Muslim-majority nations.

Badie, Dr Mohammed

Dr Mohammed Badie succeeded Mohammad Mahdi Akef as the 8th Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in January 2010. Following the July 2013 military coup against President Mohamed Morsi, he was arrested amidst a sweeping nationwide crackdown on the organisation's leadership. Badie, whose son was shot and killed during the subsequent anti-coup counter-protests, was originally sentenced to death in April 2015 alongside 13 other senior members. A veterinary medicine professor by training, the 82-year-old leader remains incarcerated in Cairo's high-security prison system. Over more than a decade of state prosecution, he has faced dozens of separate trials, resulting in an accumulated sentence of multiple life terms totaling over 130 years in prison on various charges of inciting violence and conspiring against state institutions.

IRAN

Rashad, Professor Ali Akbar

Ayatollah Professor Ali Akbar Rashad is a prominent Iranian philosopher and Islamic scholar who founded the Research Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought (IICT), serving as its President since 1994. A leading contemporary authority on epistemology and the philosophy of religion, he pioneered the landmark "Ibtina Theory", which explains the mechanisms behind the formation of religious knowledge. For over forty years, he has taught advanced seminary tracks (*Dars-e-Kharij*) across Qom and Tehran. He has authored over 35 books and 69 peer-reviewed articles, including specialised treatises on political jurisprudence and biotechnology ethics. Beyond directing the IICT, Ayatollah Rashad shapes Iran's academic architecture as a member of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution and chair of the Imam Reza Islamic Seminary.

MOROCCO

Al-Toufiq, Ahmad

Ahmed Toufiq (also known as Ahmad Al-Tawfiq) is a prominent Moroccan historian, novelist, and the long-serving Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, a cabinet post he has held continuously since 2002. A devoted supporter and practitioner of traditional Sufism, Toufiq has leveraged his decades-long executive tenure to institutionalise a model of moderate, state-guided Sunni Islam rooted in Maliki jurisprudence. As the administrator of Morocco's extensive network of over 50,000 mosques, his modern leadership has focused on standardising nationwide Friday sermons, running a national anti-illiteracy programme that has reached 5 million citizens, and overseeing multi-billion dirham mosque rehabilitation initiatives. A dedicated advocate for global interfaith dialogue, he sits on the board of World Religious Leaders for the Elijah Interfaith Institute.

PALESTINE

Hussein, Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad

Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein has served as the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Territories since 2006, following his tenure as the manager and imam of the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. An outspoken critic of the Israeli occupation, he has frequently defended the Al-Aqsa compound from the military and settler movements, notably issuing

a 2018 fatwa prohibiting Muslims from transferring land in Palestine to Jewish buyers. Amid escalating tensions, Israeli special security forces arrested Sheikh Hussein inside the Al-Aqsa complex on 10 July 2026 immediately after he concluded a Friday sermon. Following his brief detention and interrogation, the state formally issued a renewable, one-week security ban blocking him from entering Islam's third-holiest site.

Sabri, Sheikh Dr Ekrima Sa'id

Sheikh Ekrima Sa'id Sabri is the Head of the Supreme Islamic Council, an imam at the Blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine (1994–2006). Widely revered across Palestine for his forthright theological stances against the Israeli occupation, he has repeatedly faced state arrests, travel restrictions, eviction orders, and long-term entry bans. Following his brief August 2024 detention and subsequent six-month entry ban for delivering a sermon mourning Ismail Haniyeh, Israeli authorities officially placed the 87-year-old cleric on trial for "inciting terrorism". Appearing at hearings in a wheelchair, his legal team presented a formal defense rejecting the indictment. The next session of his trial is in September 2026.

SAUDI ARABIA

Altwaijri, Dr Abdulaziz Othman

Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri served as the Director General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) and Secretary General of the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World (FUIW) from 1991 to 2019. A trailblazer in cultural diplomacy, Altwaijri established the Supreme Council for Education, Science and Culture for Muslims Outside the Islamic World, alongside launching the ICESCO Goodwill Ambassadors Program and the highly celebrated Islamic Culture Capital initiatives. A passionate advocate for inter-civilisational dialogue and rapprochement between Islamic schools of thought, he remains a senior member of elite global bodies, including the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought and the Nizami Ganjavi International Center. He holds ten honorary doctorates across the Islamic world and Latin America, alongside high-level decorations from 26 nations.

Al-Issa, Dr Mohammad bin AbdulKarim

Dr Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa has served as the Secretary-General of the Muslim World League (MWL) since 2016, leading the Makkah-based international NGO to champion global moderate Islam, human rights, and interfaith harmony. Prior to leading the MWL, he developed an extensive legal career in Saudi Arabia, serving as the Minister of Justice and Head of the Supreme Council for Justice. A prominent voice against religious extremism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia, Al-Issa also serves as the Chairman of the Organization of Muslim Scholars and President of the International Islamic Halal Organization. He actively maintains a high-profile international footprint; his contemporary achievements include delivering the closing address on religious and intellectual engagement at the World Economic Forum and leading the July 2026 high-level interreligious peace dialogue in Rome alongside senior Christian and Jewish faith leaders.

Al-Malik, Dr Salim M

Dr Salim M Al-Malik is the Director-General of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO). Initially appointed to the role in May 2019, succeeding Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, he was unanimously re-elected for a second term in May 2026. Dr Al-Malik holds a PhD in Allergy and Clinical Immunology alongside a PhD in Pediatrics, and has previously served in several senior advisory and ministerial roles within Saudi Arabia. Headquartered in Rabat, Morocco, ICESCO works to strengthen cooperation among member states in education, science, and culture, positioning Islamic culture as a foundational pillar of modern educational curricula.

Sub-Saharan Africa

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Diakité, Sheikh Aïma Ousmane

Sheikh Aïma Ousmane Diakité has served as the President of the Superior Council of Imams, Mosques, and Islamic Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire (COSIM) since April 2021. A distinguished lawyer, public law scholar, and professor, he provides spiritual leadership to over 26,000 imams. He guides a Muslim population that constitutes 42.5% of the nation's 30 million residents. Widely revered as the "Imam of the Middle Way", he is a proponent of regional interfaith dialogue, and actively builds upon the legacy of

his predecessors to counter extremism and tackle severe societal challenges like youth drug abuse, moral decline, and organised crime.

KENYA

Khalifa, Sheikh Mohammed

Sheikh Mohammed Khalifa is the National Organising Secretary of the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK). As a prominent religious mediator, Sheikh Khalifa consistently urges Kenyans to reject tribal alignment; and, ahead of general elections and civil demonstrations, he spearheads nationwide calls for peaceful dialogue, absolute fairness, and democratic stability. He underscores that national progress is impossible without a foundation of lasting peace.

NIGERIA

Ahmad, Abdul-Rahman Olanrewaju

Sheikh Abdrahman Olanrewaju Ahmad is the National Missioner of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, one of West Africa's most prominent Islamic organisations. Founded in December 1923, the institution marks over a century of service dedicated to educational, moral, and social development. Under Sheikh Ahmad's merit-driven spiritual leadership, the society has grown to boast millions of members and impacts Nigerians across all faiths and ethnicities. He frequently leverages his platform to champion interfaith harmony, advocate for strategic media investment to counter religious stereotypes, and guide citizens away from divisive civil unrest toward constructive, peaceful dialogue.

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. While a legal battle over the throne remains active, the Supreme Court of Nigeria has officially adjourned the final emirship dispute hearing until April 2027, leaving the institutional leadership highly contested.

Oloyede, Professor Ishaq Olarewaju

Professor Ishaq Olarewaju Oloyede is a distinguished scholar of Islamic Studies who serves as the Secretary-General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) and Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC). A former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, he is widely celebrated for his institutional reforms. He recently completed a landmark 10-year tenure as the Registrar and Chief Executive of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), officially stepping down in July 2026. Additionally, he is a past president of the Association of African Universities (AAU).

Sanusi, Alhaji Dr Sanusi Lamido

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SENEGAL

Mbacké, Serigne Mountakha

Serigne Mountakha Mbacké was appointed the eighth Caliph of Senegal's Mouride Brotherhood in January 2018, following the death of his predecessor, Serigne Cheikh Sidi Moukhtar Mbacké, at the age of 94. He is the grandson of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba, the Sufi founder of the brotherhood, who passed away in 1927 and is buried in Touba, the spiritual heart of the Mouride community. Under Serigne Mountakha's leadership, the brotherhood continues to exert significant influence in Senegal's social, economic, and political life, with its members actively participating in business, agriculture, and public affairs. The Grand Magal of Touba, the annual pilgrimage commemorating Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba, attracts millions of devotees each year on 18 Safar. Serigne Mountakha has emphasised education, economic development, and the preservation of Mouride traditions, ensuring the brotherhood's continued prominence in Senegalese society and beyond.

Asia

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. His autobiography, *Vishwasapoorvam (With Faith*), was officially released by the Chief Minister of Kerala in 2025.

Al-Bukhari, Sayyid Ibraheemul Khaleel

Sayyid Ibraheemul Khaleel Al-Bukhari is the Founder and Chairman of Ma'din Academy (Jamia Ma'din) in Kerala, India. The academy runs over 45 distinct institutions with over 25,000 students from primary school to advanced doctoral research tiers. He was re-elected in April 2026 to continue his pivotal role as the State General Secretary of the Kerala Muslim Jama'at. Additionally, he serves as a Joint Secretary of the Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama and Vice President of the Islamic Educational Board of India. Internationally, Al-Bukhari serves as an advisor to Malaysia's International Interfaith Harmony Initiative and also drives pluralistic dialogue as the Managing Editor of the 'Armonia Journal'. He has penned over 22 books.

Kandhalvi, Maulana Saad

Maulana Muhammad Saad Kandhalvi is the head of the historic Tablighi Jamaat center in Nizamuddin, New Delhi. As the great-grandson of the movement's founder, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, and grandson of its second ameer, his lineage commands vast reverence. However, his 2015 self-declaration as sole Ameer sparked an intense global leadership schism. This split deepened after a theological fatwa from Darul Uloom Deoband criticised his leadership style and public statements. This rivalry split the movement into the Nizamuddin faction and the Shura-e-Nizam faction (led by Maulana Zubair's followers). The friction has repeatedly triggered security interventions at the Biswa Ijtema in Bangladesh, the world's second-largest Muslim gathering.

Nomani, Mufti Abul Qasim

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Noorie, Maulana Shakir Ali

Maulana Muhammed Shakir Noorie is the President of Sunni Dawate Islami (SDI), an international, non-political socio-religious organisation established in Mumbai in 1990. He oversees an educational infrastructure of approximately 50 modern and traditional institutions providing multi-disciplinary knowledge to over 7,000 students. Under his stewardship, SDI hosts India's largest annual Sunni Muslim assembly at Azad Maidan, routinely drawing over 300,000 international and domestic attendees. A prolific writer, Noorie has authored more than 40 books published globally in multiple languages, including his comprehensive personal chronicle, *Tajalliyat-e-Noorie.* He actively spearheads expansive social welfare campaigns, championing women's academic empowerment, youth counselling networks, feeding initiatives for the destitute, and structured rehabilitation programmes to combat drug abuse.

Owaisi, MP Janab Asaduddin

Barrister Asaduddin Owaisi is a prominent Indian parliamentarian who has served as the National President of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) since 2008. Representing the Hyderabad constituency, he commenced his fifth consecutive term in parliament following his victory in the 18th Lok Sabha elections. An eloquent and outspoken defender of minority rights, Owaisi heavily influenced the historical scaling of budgetary allocations for India's Ministry of Minority Affairs to secure socio-economic advancements for religious minorities. He commands a massive digital presence, boasting over 15 million followers.

Kandhalvi, Maulana Zuhair ul-Hassan

Maulana Zuhair ul-Hassan Kandhalvi is an influential Islamic scholar born and raised in Nizamuddin, New Delhi, who completed his advanced seminary studies at Mazahir Uloom in Saharanpur. His late father, Maulana Zubair ul-Hasan, was one of the three core leaders chosen to collectively govern the movement via a central leadership council (*shura*) following the death of the third Ameer. Following his father's passing in 2014, Maulana Zuhair and his backers challenged Maulana Saad Kandhalvi's unilateral claim to absolute leadership. They demanded the reconstitution of the collaborative council. This ongoing power struggle has permanently fractured the global movement into two fiercely competitive factions.

INDONESIA

Achyar, Miftachul

Miftachul Achyar became the *Rais 'Aam* (Supreme Leader) of the country's largest Muslim organisation, 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 organising communities to help alleviate poverty. Under Achyar's leadership, NU continues to promote Islam Nusantara, a moderate, inclusive, and contextually Indonesian interpretation of Islam that emphasises tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and compassion. Achyar's tenure also reinforces NU's role in shaping public discourse on religious harmony, civic responsibility, and ethical governance, ensuring the organisation remains a guiding force in both Indonesia's socio-religious landscape and the wider Muslim world.

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 organisation (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. Amin remains a respected figure in Indonesian Islamic scholarship and politics, frequently participating in discussions on Islamic economics and social issues. His legacy includes promoting moderate Islam and advocating for the integration of Islamic principles in Indonesia's economic development.

Nashir, Dr KH Haedar

Dr KH Haedar Nashir is the current Chairman of the Central Leadership of Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's second-largest Islamic organisation, with an estimated core 30 million members. He was first elected to this position in 2015 and was re-elected for the 2022–2027 term. Under his leadership, *Muhammadiyah* continues to focus on promoting moral and spiritual ideals through social activities, including education, healthcare, and community development. The organisation strongly opposes syncretism while promoting interfaith relations, reflecting its commitment to a moderate and progressive interpretation of Islam. In recognition of his contributions, Dr Haedar was honoured with the Bintang Legiun Veteran Republik Indonesia (LVRI Star) in July 2024, the highest honour from the Indonesian Veterans Legion, acknowledging his dedication to preserving the values of Indonesia's independence and supporting the development of the LVRI as an institution.

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 *waqf* fund. 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 speaks regularly at international forums.

PAKISTAN

Naeem ur Rehman, Hafiz

Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman is the sixth Central Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP), elected in April 2024 with over 80% of the party's vote to succeed Siraj-ul-Haq. He holds a degree in Civil Engineering from NED University and a Master's in Islamic History from Karachi University. Rising through the Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba student union in the 1990s, he formally joined JIP in 2000, serving as the influential President of JI Karachi from 2013 to 2024. While initially known for defending Karachi's civic infrastructure and campaigning against K-Electric monopolies, Rehman has successfully scaled his focus into a high-impact national agenda.

Naqvi, Ayatollah Syed Sajid Ali

Ayatollah Syed Sajid Ali Naqvi has served as the Patron-in-Chief of the Shia Ulema Council (SUC) of Pakistan since 1988, ascending to lead the nation's Shia community following the assassination of Allama Arif Hussain Hussaini. He is also the founder and leader of Islami Tehreek Pakistan (ITP), which functions as the active political wing of the SUC. A prominent scholar trained in Shia jurisprudence at

the Hawza Ilmiyya of Najaf, Naqvi serves as a critical national mediator. Internationally, he leverages his platform to challenge geopolitical oppression across the Muslim world, consistently championing the Palestinian resistance and Kashmiri self-determination.

SRI LANKA

Rizwe, Mufti Mohammed Ibrahim Mohammed
Mufti M.I.M. Rizwe is the President of the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU), unanimously re-elected in August 2025. An expert in Islamic jurisprudence, Rizwe pioneered the domestic institutionalisation of halal certification, interest-free banking, and *takaful* (Islamic insurance) frameworks. Under his stewardship, the ACJU launched critical social initiatives including the Maktab primary education system, the Mahmood Institute for scholar development, and Careline Islamic Counselling Services. Globally recognised for his peacebuilding efforts, Rizwe has addressed United Nations forums in Geneva on coexistence and was honoured with the 2023 Rosa Mira Award in Kazan, followed by the international 2024 Peacemaker Award from ABJ VIP Global.

TAJIKISTAN

Abdulkodirzoda, Mufti Saidmukarram
Mufti Saidmukarram Abdulkodirzoda has served as the state Grand Mufti of Tajikistan since 2010, leading the Shuroi Ulamo (Council of Scholars), which is the sole fatwa-issuing body in Tajikistan. He is also the Director of the Islamic Center of Tajikistan and has represented the country at the International Islamic Fiqh Academy since 2012. Born in 1963, Mufti Abdulkodirzoda studied a bachelor's and master's in Hadith and Tafsir from the International Islamic University of Islamabad, and a doctorate in Tajik literature from the National University of Tajikistan. In September 2024, he was injured in an attack with a machete near the central mosque in Dushanbe. State prosecutors formally charged his assailant with extremism and legal proceedings revealed the attacker was incited and manipulated by an extremist group.

Europe

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Kavazović, Husein
Sheikh Husein Kavazović has served as the 14th Reis-ul-ulema (Grand Mufti) of Bosnia and Herzegovina since November 2012. His religious authority guides over 4 million Bosniak Muslims globally, anchoring 2.5 million domestic citizens alongside an expansive 1.5 million-strong diaspora network. A multilingual scholar speaking Bosnian, Arabic, and English, Kavazović is a fierce champion of interfaith coexistence. Globally, he heavily advocates for the validity of traditional Balkan Islam within modern, secular European models.

BULGARIA

Hadzhi, Mufti Mustafa Alish
Dr Mustafa Alish Hadzhi serves as the Chairman of the Supreme Muslim Council of Bulgaria, assuming the role following a major leadership transition that concluded his record-setting tenure as Grand Mufti (2005-2026). A highly qualified theologian holding a doctorate from Istanbul's Marmara University, Hadzhi guides a Muslim minority that constitutes roughly 10% of Bulgaria's population. Hadzhi built a powerful legacy defending local mosques and worshippers from aggressive nationalist groups. In his current office, he frequently leads high-profile ecumenical dialogues with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to lobby the state for formal religious education curricula and to combat rising social alienation among youth.

FRANCE

Bechari, Dr Mohamed
see Honourable Mentions on Page 138

GERMANY

Köhler, Ayyub Axel
Dr Ayyub Axel Köhler is a prominent natural scientist, philosopher, and pioneer of Islamic structural organisation in Germany. A co-founder of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD), serving as its chairman from 2006 to 2010, he represented the community at the inaugural German Islam Conference. From 2012 to 2024, Köhler brought European

Muslim perspectives to global stages as a member of the Muslim World League's highest body (Rabita) in Mecca. A prolific author and former advisor to the International Association of Islamic Banks, his research focuses on Islamic economics, ecology, and intercultural relations.

ITALY

Pallavicini, Imam Yahya Sergio Yahe

Imam Yahya Pallavicini serves as the Imam of Milan's al-Wahid Mosque, coordinating Italian-language training for local imams. A prominent institutional leader, he chairs the European Muslim Leaders Majlis (EULEMA) and co-chairs the Muslim Jewish Leaders Council (MJLC). Since 2000, he has been a Member of the Assembly of the Great Mosque of Rome. Pallavicini was an Advisor for Italian Islam to the Minister of the Interior (2005–2018) and served as Ambassador to ICESCO (2014–2023). In 2015, he joined its Board of Directors, managing interreligious dialogue during the historic Jubilee of Mercy.

KOSOVO

Ternava, Sheikh Naim

Sheikh Naim Tërnava is the Grand Mufti of Kosovo and head of the Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK), unanimously re-elected to a record fifth term. Emerging as the nation's foremost spiritual leader following the devastation and widespread loss of the 1999 ethno-religious war, Tërnava has been central to rebuilding the country's social fabric and healing wartime trauma. He was instrumental in establishing the Organization of the Inter-Religious Council for Interfaith Relations.

RUSSIA

Nasibullahoglu, Sheikh Cafer

Sheikh Cafer Nasibullahoglu serves as the Chief Imam and Grand Mufti of the Saint Petersburg Mosque, leading a community of nearly one million Muslims. Under his stewardship of over half a century, the mosque has acted as a critical anchor for multicultural integration within Russia. To accommodate the linguistic needs of his multi-ethnic flock, congregational sermons are fluidly delivered in Arabic, Tatar, and Russian, fostering spiritual unity across distinct backgrounds.

SERBIA

Dudić, Grand Mufti Mevlud

Grand Mufti Mevlud Dudić has served the 700,000 Muslim population of Sanjak and Serbia (approximately 11% of the country's population) in his current position since 2014, most of whom are Bosniaks, Albanians and Roma. He previously held the positions of Director of the Gazi Isa-beg Madrasah, Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Rector of the International University, all in Novi Pazar. He has also been a member of government commissions and is currently a member of the government commission for religious education. He has written hundreds of papers and is the author of the monograph 'Gazi Isa-beg Madrasah: Al-Azhar of Sandžak'. Fluent in Arabic, English and Albanian, Dudić has good relations with Muslim religious scholars around the world and is a member of the main global Islamic organisations.

UNITED KINGDOM

HH Prince Rahim Aga Khan V

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Oceania

AUSTRALIA

Alsuleiman, Imam Shadi

Imam Shadi Alsuleiman is an Australian-born scholar who serves as the President of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), representing over 350 imams and religious leaders. Alsuleiman plays a central role in guiding youth and helping Muslims integrate into broader Australian society while maintaining their core identity. He is the founder of the United Muslims of Australia (UMA) community center and the Sydney Islamic College. A prominent international speaker with a significant social media following, he is currently developing a landmark co-educational Islamic university to train homegrown scholars.

North America

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Mohammed II, Warithudeen

Imam Warithudeen Mohammed II is the President of The Mosque Cares (Ministry of Imam W. Deen Mohammed), a major Chicago-based Islamic *dawah* and community development project. He is the eldest son of the late Imam W. Deen Mohammed, who famously transitioned the Nation of Islam into mainstream, orthodox Sunni Islam in 1976. Under his executive leadership, the non-profit charity serves as a national anchor for African-American Muslim communities. It funds structured classes in Quranic Arabic and financial literacy, alongside vital public training seminars focusing on youth leadership, business entrepreneurship, and health and nutrition.

Caribbean

BARBADOS

Bulbulia, Suleiman

Suleiman Bulbulia serves as the Muslim Chaplain at the University of the West Indies and has been a Justice of the Peace since 2010. He is a former Secretary of the Barbados Muslim Association and previously served as member of the Religious Advisory Committee on National Affairs, appointed by the Prime Minister and Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs to advise Government on matters of national importance from a religious perspective. Recipient of the Barbados Silver Trident of Excellence for promoting interfaith inclusivity, Bulbulia has heavily guided Barbados' major legislative updates. He contributes weekly analysis to *Barbados Today*.

South America

ARGENTINA

Hallar, Muhammad Yusuf

Muhammad Yusuf Hallar serves as the Secretary-General of the Islamic Organization of Latin America (OIPALC) and Director of the Office of Islamic Culture. Renowned for conducting the most comprehensive research on Muslim demographics and integration across Central and South America, Hallar has mapped the socio-religious needs of the region's estimated four million Muslims. He serves as a member of the Expert Committee on Minority Rights for the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), advising international states on the preservation of civil and religious freedoms.

BRAZIL

Bukai, Al-, Sheikh Mohamad

Sheikh Mohamad Al-Bukai is a Syrian-born theologian who has served as the Imam of Mesquita Brasil in São Paulo since 2007. Widely respected for his gentle character and inclusive outreach, he holds advanced degrees from Egypt's Al-Azhar University and has studied in Malaysia. He formerly served as the resident scholar for the Liga Islâmica do Pari. Currently, Al-Bukai directs religious affairs for the National Union of Islamic Entities of Brazil (UNI), spearheading human rights advocacy, public education, and structured theological classes for women.

ECUADOR

Suquillo, Professor Juan

Professor Juan Francisco Suquillo Carrera is the Director, Co-founder, and head Imam of the Ecuadorian Islamic Center (Mezquita Assalam) in Quito. A former first lieutenant and decorated war veteran who lost his left hand in the 1981 Paquisha War, he was awarded the "National Hero" distinction by the Ecuadorian state. He holds a master's degree in Islamic Sciences from the Islamic University of Madinah and a doctorate in Theology. Suquillo serves as the General Secretary of the National Council of Religious Freedom and Equality (CONALIR). A critical reference for Latin American Muslim scholars, his widely distributed Spanish-language translations of Islamic texts remain authoritative bestsellers across South America.

Middle East and North Africa

ALGERIA

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 emphasises the recitation of the Qur'an, as well as abundant *salawaat* (praying for the Prophet Muhammad). He is a descendant of the famous Sufi of Prophetic lineage, Abdul Salam ibn Mashish of Morocco.

EGYPT

Abdelkafy, Sheikh Dr Omar

Sheikh Dr Omar Abdelkafy is a theologian, author, and *dawah* practitioner who has delivered thousands of televised lectures and authored foundational works on Islamic jurisprudence and comparative *fiqh*. He serves as the Director of the Qur'anic Studies Centre at the prestigious Dubai International Holy Qur'an Award. Renowned globally, Abdelkafy regularly travels to guide international diaspora networks and has over 17 million social media followers.

Khaled, Dr Amr

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Masoud, Moez

Moez Masoud is an Egyptian preacher, televangelist, and filmmaker who focuses on contemporary spirituality, interfaith dialogue, and de-radicalisation. He is the founder of the *Al-Tareeq Al-Sahih* (The Right Way) Institute and famously produced the critically acclaimed Egyptian film *Clash*. Following his prominent role in the Egyptian revolution, he participated in the post-Tahrir Egyptian National Dialogue to address socio-political reforms through the lens of traditional Islam. Boasting a massive digital presence with over 10 million followers across YouTube, Facebook, and X, Masoud leverages his global platform to host workshops on modernism and steer young Muslims away from anti-theism toward constructive civic engagement.

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 now, facing recurring age-related illnesses that require urgent medical treatment, his global platforms continue to broadcast archived lessons from Abu Dhabi.

JORDAN

Keller, Sheikh Nuh

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SAUDI ARABIA

Al-Arifi, Dr Muhammad

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Al-Qarni, Dr Aaidh

Shaykh Dr Aaidh al-Qarni is an influential Saudi theologian and motivational preacher holding a PhD in Islamic Theology. He achieved global acclaim with his seminal self-help volume, *La Tahzan* ("Don't Be Sad"), a text that remains a staple of modern Islamic psychology literature. Qarni commands an exceptional digital audience, boasting over 33 million followers aggregated across his personal networks. In a major ideological pivot, he issued a highly publicised 2019 television apology, formally denouncing his past Sahwa-era preaching as "hardline" and severing legacy ties with Qatari networks. Aligning directly with the modernised Islamic vision of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, his active writing output continues to flourish. His prominent 2026 self-help publication, *La Takhaf* ("Do Not Fear: Season One—Rest Assured, Allah is With You"), focuses heavily on converting modern anxiety into inner spiritual tranquility.

Al-Shugairi, Ahmad

Al-Shugairi is a pioneering edutainment media personality with over 56 million followers across social

media, standing at the forefront of a development movement that deeply influences youth across the Middle East. Best known for hosting the landmark TV program 'Khawatir' (2005–2015), he took a brief hiatus before launching 'Seen' in 2021, which has proven to be every bit as successful. Utilising his MBA background, Al-Shugairi's immense popularity stems from his unique ability to champion the concepts of continuous improvement and personal growth—repackaging these vital principles into engaging, accessible content for global audiences of all ages.

Sub-Saharan Africa

GHANA

Sharubutu, Sheikh Dr Osmanu Nuhu

Sheikh Dr Osmanu Nuhu Sharubutu is the National Chief Imam and Grand Mufti of Ghana, as well as an Eminent Member of the National Peace Council. In April 2026, the nation marked his historic 107th birthday celebrations, with high-profile global diplomats, state officials, and religious bodies honouring his status as Africa's oldest serving Chief Imam. Through the Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu National Peace Conference, his mediation directly steers high-stakes legislative dialogue and handles civic crises. His dedication to protecting vulnerable communities has allowed him to transcend deep ethno-religious boundaries, commanding universal reverence across all political and social sectors of Ghana.

MALI

Hamahoullah, Mohamed Ould Cheikh

Mohamed Ould Cheikh Hamahoullah, popularly known as Chérif Bouyé Haïdara, is a revered Malian Sufi leader who leads the Hamallism branch of the Tidjane brotherhood, a traditionalist movement historically famous for its fierce resistance to French colonialism. Due to his immense grassroots following, Haïdara functions as a high-stakes powerbroker in Mali's political and security landscape. Senior military generals and state prime ministers frequently travel to his palace to consult on governance transitions and election timelines. Formally decorated by the state as a "Living Human Treasure" of the Republic of Mali, Haïdara uses his considerable moral platform to advise ruling authorities against the abuse of power while advocating for inclusive, equitable national administration.

MAURITANIA

Khairy, Cheikh Ould

Cheikh Ould Khairy is a distinguished spiritual guide and global representative of the Tariqah Tijaniyah Sufi order, commanding a vast international network of thousands of disciples (*murids*) across West Africa and Western diasporas. Born into the illustrious, Prophetic-lineage Idaw 'Ali tribe, his birth directly coincided with the historic travels of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass, solidifying his deep roots within the Fayda Tijaniyya spiritual revival movement. Celebrated as a true *Arif bi-Llah* (knower of God), his methodology emphasises strict Qur'anic literacy, daily remembrance (*dhikr*), and prophetic invocations (*salawaat*).

NIGERIA

Katsina, Sheikh Yakubu Musa

Sheikh Dr Yakubu Musa Hassan Katsina is a leading figure in West African Islamic reform and a founding leader of *Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah Wa Iqamatis Sunnah* (JIBWIS). As an activist Salafi organisation, the Izala movement campaigns vigorously for a return to a puritanical understanding of Islam. A prominent educationist based in the northern city of Katsina, he established the Riyadhul Qur'an and Sautussunnah academic networks to provide integrated religious and secular instruction.

Maqari, Sheikh Professor Ibrahim Ahmad

Sheikh Professor Ibrahim Ahmad Maqari is a distinguished academic who serves as the Chief Imam of the Abuja National Mosque. Maqari is a highly respected member of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and the Assembly of Muslims in Nigeria. He has published numerous books and peer-reviewed international journal articles. As a leading educationist, he founded the Tazkiyyah Educational Resource Center. He expanded this legacy by establishing Tazkiyah University in Zaria, the country's first private, all-female university designed exclusively to support and fund orphan education.

ZIMBABWE

Menk, Mufti Ismail Musa

Dr Ismail Menk, better known as Mufti Menk, is the

Mufti of Zimbabwe under the Majlisul Ulama Zimbabwe, an Islamic educational and welfare organisation that caters to the needs of the country's Muslims. Mufti Menk, a faith-based motivational speaker, 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 50 million followers across social media platforms with billions of views. His care and concern for the less fortunate is evident in his role as the Ambassador of Abdullah Aid, a UK-based charity that carries out humanitarian projects in 25 countries.

Asia

INDIA

Azmi, Hazrat Allama Maulana Qamaruzzaman

Hazrat Allama Maulana Qamaruzzaman Azmi is the President of the World Islamic Mission. Appointed as a Khalifa by the son of the legendary Imam Ahmed Raza Khan, he is celebrated by the *Times of India* as one of the modern era's most influential Muslim leaders. At just 18 years old, he founded Al-Jameatul-Islamia, which has scaled into one of India's premier Islamic universities. Spanning over six decades of global service, Azmi has built hundreds of mosques, colleges, and university facilities across Asia and Europe. He also serves as the Patron-in-Chief of Sunni Dawate Islami.

Madani, Maulana Syed Arshad

Maulana Syed Arshad Madani is the President of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind (JUH), a premier organisation of Indian Muslim scholars that historically opposed the partition of India. In 2006, Maulana Syed Arshad Madani succeeded his brother, Maulana Syed Asad Madani, but since 2008, the group has been split into two factions. A prominent Islamic scholar, he serves as the Head Teacher (*Sadr Mudarris*) at the world-renowned seminary Darul Uloom Deoband, as well as a Vice President of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB). Beyond his academic and scholarly leadership, he supervises extensive social and humanitarian initiatives, heads multiple Islamic seminaries, and serves as an advisor to several international Islamic educational institutions.

Naik, Dr Zakir Abdul Karim

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Saifuddin, Syedna Mufaddal

Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin is the 53rd *al-Dai al-Mutlaq* ("unrestricted summoner") and leader of approximately one-million Dawoodi Bohra community, a subgroup of Shia Ismaili Mustali Tayyibi Muslims spread across nearly 50 countries. Saifuddin oversees India's largest non-profit urban redevelopment project, as well as 70 schools, multiple colleges, and 600 religious instruction centres. He was elected Chancellor of India's Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia—the first person to ever hold both positions. He is also the recipient of Kenya's and Pakistan's highest civilian awards. Saifuddin emphasises civic responsibility, honest trade, environmental consciousness, and love for one's country as integral elements of the Islamic faith, which King Charles III has described as "an enormous contribution" to modern society.

INDONESIA

Gymnastiar, Abdullah Aa Gym

Abdullah Gymnastiar, widely known as Aa Gym ('Elder Brother Gym'), rose to national prominence in the early 2000s as one of Indonesia's most beloved Islamic preachers. His warm and practical preaching focused on *tawheed* (the Oneness of Allah) and *manajemen qolbu* ("heart management"), a concept promoting emotional awareness, self-reflection, and inner growth. He gained a wide national following through television, radio, books, and public lectures, and his influence led to invitations from political parties to consider leadership roles. He commands an aggregate digital audience of over 17.7 million followers across his verified personal platforms.

Shihab, Professor KH Muhammad Quraish

Professor KH Muhammad Quraish Shihab is an expert on Qur'anic exegesis who regularly preaches on national television. He is noted as a progressive scholar who teaches using context and simple language. He authored the multi-volume masterpiece *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and formerly served as Minister of Religious Affairs (1998), Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and Rector of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah. A co-founder and active member of the UAE-based Muslim Council of Elders, he

leverages his platform to champion global peace and interfaith fraternity.

MALAYSIA

Awang, Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi bin

Tan Sri Abdul Hadi Awang has served as the President of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) since 2002 and is the Member of Parliament for Marang. He holds degrees in Shariah and Political Science from Madinah and Al-Azhar universities, and historically served as the Chief Minister of Terengganu (1999–2004) and a state lawmaker for Rhu Rendang until 2018. He formerly served as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the Middle East (2020–2022) and was a Vice President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars.

MrGlani, Sheikh Dr Mahmoud

Born in Madinah to a family of Prophetic lineage, Sheikh MrGlani himself belongs to the Shadhili Sufi *tariqah* but strongly emphasises the need to recognise all authentic Islamic Sunni Sufi *tariqahs* and sheikhs. His teachings emphasise the need to establish love for the Prophet. 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.

PAKISTAN

Bukhari, Khanum Tayyaba

Khanum Syeda Tayyaba Bukhari is a preeminent female religious scholar and public intellectual in Pakistan. A highly sought-after orator, she commands vast international authority by delivering lectures fluidly across six languages: Urdu, Arabic, Persian, English, Punjabi, and Siraiki. Her extensive global following reaches deeply into Muslim diaspora communities across Europe, North America, and Australia. Beyond the pulpit, she is a leading social activist and the founder of the Bukhari Relief Foundation (BRF), a prominent non-governmental charitable organisation.

Ghamidi, Javed Ahmad

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi is a prominent Pakistani public intellectual and Qur'anic scholar. He is the founder of the Al-Mawrid Institute of Islamic Sciences and has authored seminal treatises, including his comprehensive volume on Islamic law, *Mizan*, and his contextual Qur'anic commentary, *Al-Bayan*. A former member of Pakistan's constitutional Council of Islamic Ideology, Ghamidi was awarded the Sitara-i-Imtiaz in 2009 for his academic contributions. Known for his rationalist approach to classical jurisprudence, he commands a vast global following across YouTube and digital platforms.

SINGAPORE

Alattas, Syed Hassan bin Muhammad bin Salim

Imam Syed Hassan bin Muhammad bin Salim Alattas, widely revered as Habib Hassan, has served as the head of the Ba'alwie Mosque in Bukit Timah since 1976. He also serves as an active member of Singapore's Presidential Council for Minority Rights (PCMR), a constitutional body that scrutinises parliamentary bills to protect minority groups from discrimination. Under his stewardship, his mosque has become a landmark for peace, featuring an acclaimed interfaith museum. A fierce opponent of extremism, Habib Hassan has consistently brought Islamic, Christian, and Hindu leadership together to reinforce social cohesion. In late 2024, Singapore's President presented him with the prestigious Distinguished Service Order (Darjah Utama Bakti Cemerlang) recognising his lifetime dedication to the interfaith fraternity.

Europe

TÜRKIYE

Haqqani, Sheikh Mehmet Adil

Shaykh Muhammad Mehmet Adil is the official successor and global leader of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi Order, named after his late father, the celebrated Shaykh Nazim al-Haqqani (1922–2014). Born in March 1957 in Damascus, Syria, he was raised under the strict guidance of his father and Grandshaykh Abdullah Fa'izi ad-Daghestani. He traces his noble paternal lineage back to the family of the Prophet Muhammad through Sheikh Abdul Qadir Gilani. Headquartered at the central *dergah* in Lefke,

Cyprus, he coordinates a massive global network. He spends his time actively leading Western European and transatlantic teaching tours to guide, educate, and offer spiritual *suhbah* (companionship) to thousands of international disciples.

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 on history, literature, religious sciences, and poetry. Translations of his works span 43 languages, including English.

UNITED KINGDOM

Babikir, Sheikh Ahmed

Sheikh Ahmed Babikir is a prominent British-Sudanese scholar and spiritual guide widely celebrated for his warm, compassionate manner and decades of community service. Classically trained in Sudan, he is fully authorised (*ijaza*) in core Islamic disciplines having studied under sages like Sheikh Al-Fatih Qaribullah, Sheikh Salih al-Ja'fari and Sheikh Nazim al-Haqqani. He also holds a degree in mathematics and a Master's in Management from the University of London. Following a long tenure as Headmaster of the historic Islamia Primary School, he founded the international relief agency Ulfa Aid and serves as Director of Rumi's Cave. This West London community hub has become a vital space for marginalised groups, interfaith dialogue, and cultural expression, cementing his role as a central figure of spiritual mentorship in the UK.

Ali, Zeeshan; Dawah, Ali; Hijab, Mohammed & Tzortzis, Hamza

Zeeshan Ali, Ali Dawah, Mohammed Hijab and Hamza Tzortzis are well-known debaters and public speakers who discuss topics such as religion, politics and society on their social media platforms. They directly engage with controversial topics through a *da'wah* lens, interfaith debates and social commentary, and have garnered hundreds of millions of online views. They are part of a new wave of British Muslim voices aiming to defend Islamic beliefs in the digital age, particularly among disaffected or curious youth. Through structured courses with institutes like the Sapience Institute or through their social media channels like 'Smile 2 Jannah', they have instilled confidence in young Muslims on how to navigate and address the intellectual and social challenges of modernity.

Nakshawani, Dr Sayed Ammar

Dr Sayed Ammar Nakshawani is an Islamic scholar, historian and author, whose lectures are viewed by millions worldwide. He served as Associate and Research Director at the Project on Shi'ism and Global Affairs at Harvard University and was the Inaugural Imam Ali Chair of Shi'a Studies at Hartford Seminary. He also served as a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University's Middle East Institute and the Department of Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge. He obtained his doctorate from the University of Exeter, where he published his dissertation on authority and leadership in early Islam. In 2025, Sayed Ammar established the Prophet Muhammad Institute of Islamic Studies, a non-profit organisation dedicated to introducing students worldwide to a diverse range of both Shia and non-Shia scholarship.

Pirzada, Sheikh Muhammad Imdad Hussain

Sheikh Muhammad Imdad Hussain Pirzada is a preeminent British-Pakistani theologian who has served the global Muslim community for over half a century. Following his acclaimed Qur'an and Bukhari commentaries, his recent 2025–2026 research focuses on contemporary Seerah, leadership, and moderation, culminating in his latest work, *Embracing the Middle Way*. In 1985, he founded Jamia Al-Karam, which has produced hundreds of male and female British Muslim scholars serving over 150 European mosques. He recently expanded this academic footprint by launching the nationwide Accredited Alim Course. Globally, he is the founder of Muslim Charity, an international NGO operating across 17 countries, and serves as President of the World Association for Al-Azhar Graduates (UK), bridging traditional scholasticism with Western civic life.

North America

CANADA

Al-Bakar, Khaled (new)

Sheikh Al-Bakar is a prominent scholar who obtained *ijazaat* in the Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, and Sirah from prominent scholars in Tripoli, Lebanon. Since immigrating to Canada, he has dedicated himself to

full-time Islamic preaching and education, currently teaching at Al-I'tissam Mosque in Laval. His lectures focus heavily on the Sirah of the Prophet ﷺ, Tafsir, and the Names of Allah the Almighty. Al-Bakar's teachings guide generations toward a balanced and moderate religious practice in the Western context. A prolific author, he is widely recognised for his acclaimed four-volume series detailing the Prophet's ﷺ life.

Philips, Dr Abu Ameenah Bilal

Dr Bilal Philips is a notable Jamaican-Canadian Muslim convert, author, and globally influential Islamic scholar. In 2009, he established India's first accredited Islamic college, Preston International College, in Chennai. He is most celebrated as the Founder and Chancellor of the International Open University (IOU), a pioneering virtual institution hosting over 450,000 registered students. The IOU features the world's most diverse student body, delivering accredited English-medium degree programmes spanning Shariah, education, psychology, information technology, and business administration. Beyond digital academia, Dr Philips commands a massive global audience through regular television appearances on premier satellite networks like Peace TV, Huda TV, and Islam Channel. Backed by an extensive online footprint, he maintains over ten million collective social media followers.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Alshurafa, Ousama

Ousama Alshurafa is a prominent Canadian-American author, speaker, and spiritual mentor known for his theological work on life's purpose and the hereafter. He authored *The Afterlife Manual* and founded Muslim Hub Club, a global platform serving over 150,000 members. Alshurafa holds a degree in biomedical and electrical engineering, a master's from Harvard University, and an *ijazah* in Qur'anic recitation. Bridging classical Islamic wisdom with modernity, his popular series like *Dunya Decoded* and *The Rizq Framework* use metaphors like the "Divine Matrix" to address contemporary challenges. Delivering spiritually engaging guidance through books, lectures, and podcasts, Alshurafa commands a massive digital audience of over three million social media followers.

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 a scholar of Hadith sciences. He founded Madina Institute and Seminaries, The Center for Non-Violence and Peace Studies, and the charitable organisation 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 in Perak. 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 in Berkeley, California, the first accredited Muslim undergraduate college in the United States. He accepted Islam in 1977 while serving in the United States Air Force. Shakir holds a BA in International Relations, an MA in Political Science, and a BA in Islamic Sciences from Syria's Abu Noor University. He co-founded several major religious institutions, including the New Brunswick Islamic Center in New Jersey, Masjid Al-Islam in Connecticut, and the Lighthouse Mosque in California. He was hand-selected to lead the Islamic *janazah* funeral prayer and preside over the historic 2016 global public memorial service for boxing icon Muhammad Ali. He also acts as a Green Faith partner promoting environmental sustainability.

Suleiman, Imam Omar

Imam Dr Omar Suleiman is a globally recognised American Muslim scholar, author, and civil rights activist. He serves as the Founder and President of the Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research and is an adjunct professor at Southern Methodist University. Beginning his formal studies in 2000 across the Middle East and Malaysia, he completed a PhD in Islamic Thought. As an exceptionally popular public speaker, his digital reach spans over 8.1 million collective social media followers and his annual online lecture series consistently generate hundreds of millions of views worldwide. He is also celebrated for receiving civic achievement awards in New Orleans and founding MUHSEN to promote special needs inclusivity.

Wahhaj, Imam Siraj

Imam Siraj Wahhaj is the long-serving spiritual

leader of the historic Al-Taqwa Mosque in Brooklyn, New York, and one of the most pioneering figures in the history of Islam in North America. A prolific public speaker and grassroots community activist, he serves as the Emir of the Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA) and is the former Vice President of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). He first achieved national renown in the late 1980s for leading highly successful community initiatives to eradicate local drug abuse and crime from his Brooklyn neighbourhood. In 1991, Imam Wahhaj made history as the first Muslim to recite the opening prayer of the Qur'an (*Al-Fatihah*) at the US House of Representatives. In recognition of his enduring civic legacy, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz officially proclaimed 15 August as "Imam Siraj Wahhaj Day".

Younis, Dr Haifaa

Dr Sheikha Haifaa Younis is a prominent Iraqi-American Islamic scholar, physician, and educator. She is the Founder and Chairman of the Jannah Institute, an educational platform in Irvine, California. An American Board-Certified Obstetrician and Gynecologist, Dr Younis uniquely pairs her medical background with rigorous traditional theological training. She holds two prestigious certificates in Qur'an memorisation and recitation: the first in Hafs 'an 'Asim from Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, and the second in Shu'bah 'an 'Asim from Al-Makkah Al-Mukarramah. She also graduated from the Mecca Institute of Islamic Studies. Driven by a passion for soul purification (*tazkiyah*), her highly impactful video lectures and spiritual retreats resonate deeply with global audiences, earning her over 3.7 million collective social media followers.

Caribbean

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Hosein, Sheikh Imran

Sheikh Imran N Hosein is a prominent Trinidadian Islamic scholar, author, and philosopher specialising in contemporary Islamic eschatology, world politics, and international monetary economics. He resigned from his career as a Foreign Service diplomat in 1985 to commit entirely to Islamic missionary work. A tireless international lecturer, his distinct teachings advocate for Muslims to establish self-sustaining, faith-based eco-villages to protect their faith in the end times. Furthermore, he critiques modern fiat currency systems, aggressively promoting gold and silver markets with intrinsic value to survive an inevitable collapse of paper money. Hosting a formidable digital footprint, his specialised eschatological lectures consistently attract millions of views.

South America

BRAZIL

Hammadeh, Sheikh Jihad

Sheikh Jihad Hammadeh is a prominent Syrian-Brazilian scholar and pioneer of *da'wah* in Latin America. He serves as the primary religious adviser to the National Association of Islamic Jurists (ANAJI) and is the Vice President of the National Union of Islamic Entities (UNI). Academically, he holds a degree in Islamic theology from the Islamic University of Madinah, a bachelor's in history, and a master's in social communication. He frequently appears across Brazilian national television networks to represent Muslim affairs and served as an expert cultural consultant for major Brazilian soap operas detailing Islamic culture.

PHILANTHROPY, CHARITY & DEVELOPMENT

Middle East and North Africa

IRAQ

Al-Khoei, Dr Sayyed Jawad

Dr Sayyed Jawad Al-Khoei is a prominent Iraqi Shiite scholar, researcher, and champion of interfaith and intra-faith dialogue. The grandson of the late supreme Shiite authority Grand Ayatollah Abul-Qasim Al-Khoei, he serves as the Secretary-General of the Al-Khoei Institute in Najaf, overseeing the historic Dar Al-Ilm religious seminary. He pursued classical Islamic studies in Qom and Najaf, paired with a bachelor's degree from London and a PhD in Philosophy and Islamic Creed. Al-Khoei co-founded the Iraqi Council for Interfaith Dialogue and holds the UNESCO Chair for Interreligious Dialogue Studies at the University of Kufa. A key voice for religious minorities, he actively advocates at international platforms, including the Muslim World League's bridging conferences, for institutionalising secular civil protections, sect harmony, and regional peace.

JORDAN

HM Queen Rania Al-Abdullah

see Honourable Mentions on Page 140

LEBANON

Al-Sadr, Dr Rabab

Dr Rabab al-Sadr Charafeddine is a prominent Lebanese-Iranian humanitarian, philosopher, and social activist. She serves as the president of the Imam al-Sadr Foundation, an institution established in 1962 by her brother, the late spiritual and political leader Imam Musa al-Sadr. Born in Qom, Iran, she relocated to Lebanon at age 15 and later earned a doctorate in philosophy, focusing her research on the practical philosophy of Imam Musa al-Sadr. Honoured with the Grand Cross of the Sovereign Order of Malta for her lifelong humanitarian dedication, she remains a powerful advocate for interfaith dialogue, social justice, and the promotion of civic ethics and women's leadership in the Middle East.

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.

HH Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al-Missned

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser is a globally influential Qatari royal, education advocate, and humanitarian leader. She serves as the Chairperson of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), establishing Education City in Doha by hosting premier international branch universities. She also chairs Education Above All (EAA), which has provided primary schooling to over 15 million marginalised children worldwide. In July 2026, Sheikha Moza lost her husband of 49 years, the former Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. As the mother of the current Emir of Qatar, she remains a pillar of national continuity, using her global platform to champion international sustainable development, advanced medical research, family welfare, and women's empowerment across the Middle East.

SAUDI ARABIA

AbuSulayman, Dr Muna

Dr Muna AbuSulayman is an iconic Saudi media pioneer and strategic development leader whose influence spans global boardrooms and multilateral institutions. She rose to regional fame as a founding co-host of *Kalam Nawaem*, the premier social commentary television programme that redefined public discourse across the Arab world. Appointed as the

first Saudi UNDP Goodwill Ambassador, her work focuses entirely on poverty alleviation, regional female employment, and human development. She currently serves as a Senior Advisor to the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM). Additionally, she is the Founder and CEO of the Azm Global Leadership (AGL) Fellowship, an intensive development programme training the next generation of values-driven Muslim leaders. A seasoned venture investor, she also sits on Gucci's Global Equity Board advising on cross-cultural diversity.

Al-Jasser, Dr Muhammad Sulaiman

Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al-Jasser is the President and Group Chairman of the AAA-rated Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). Assuming office in 2021, the Board of Governors unanimously re-elected him in June 2026 for a second five-year term. A former Saudi Minister of Economy and Planning and Governor of the Saudi Central Bank (SAMA), his extensive governance career includes serving on the UNESCO Regional Center of Quality and Excellence in Education board. Dr Al-Jasser holds a PhD in economics from the University of California. He has been awarded Saudi Arabia's King Abdul Aziz Medal of the First Order and Senegal's prestigious National Order of the Lion.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Al-Ghurair, Abdul-Aziz

Abdul Aziz Al-Ghurair is a banking magnate, and pioneering global philanthropist. He serves as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Mashreq Bank, as well as being a prominent voice for philanthropy. He chairs the Abdulla Al-Ghurair Foundation and established the $32.6 million Abdul Aziz Al-Ghurair Refugee Education Fund. His initiatives have collectively enabled over 120,000 marginalised and displaced Arab youth, particularly from Palestine and Syria. Celebrated as an anchor partner to the Global Muslim Philanthropy Fund for Children alongside UNICEF, his transformative vision for human development earned him an official global ranking among the prestigious TIME100 Philanthropy honourees.

HH Sheikha Bodour Al-Qasimi

Her Highness Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al-Qasimi is a philanthropist, publisher, and global cultural leader. Appointed as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Education and Book Culture, she also serves as President and Chairperson of the American University of Sharjah (AUS). As the founder of Kalimat Publishing Group and the Kalimat Foundation, she champions international literacy equity, delivering thousands of portable libraries to crisis-affected children and advanced accessible formatting for visually impaired youth. Breaking barriers as the first Arab woman to serve as President of the International Publishers Association (IPA), she fiercely advocates for industry gender equality via the PublisHer network. In July 2026, she was awarded the Officer rank of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic for her profound cross-cultural diplomatic impact.

HH Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qasimi

His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi is the Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, celebrated as the architect of the region's cultural renaissance. In 1997, he pioneered the historic Sharjah University City, establishing the University of Sharjah and the American University of Sharjah. An accomplished academic, historian, and poet, he holds two doctoral degrees from the UK and has authored over 70 historical and literary texts. He is a prominent global philanthropist who endowed prestigious chairs for Arabic and Islamic studies at institutions like the University of Exeter. A patron of arts and heritage, his visionary funding anchored Sharjah's 16 world-class museums, cementing the Emirate's status as a UNESCO World Book Capital.

Sub-Saharan Africa

CHAD

Taha, Hissein Brahim

Hissein Brahim Taha is the 12th Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the world's second-largest intergovernmental body. A veteran Chadian diplomat since 1981, Taha previously served as Chad's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, and International Cooperation in 2017. He formally assumed his five-year term at the OIC General Secretariat in November 2021. As the ex-officio Chancellor of the Islamic University of Technology (IUT), he drives educational and scientific development across 57 member states. Taha remains central to resolving geopolitical disputes and fostering political alignment, recently praising the

landmark Makkah Joint Defence Agreement as a major pillar for Islamic solidarity and regional peace.

SOUTH AFRICA

Sooliman, Dr Imtiaz Ismail

Dr Imtiaz Sooliman is the founder of the Gift of the Givers Foundation, the largest African disaster response NGO. Under his leadership, the organisation has delivered over $320 million (R6 billion) in humanitarian aid to 47 countries globally. Sooliman pioneered medical logistics by designing the world's first and largest containerised mobile hospital. The foundation also spearheads dozens of long-term development projects spanning healthcare, borehole water provision, and education across South Africa and Malawi. A qualified medical doctor, Sooliman's lifelong philanthropy earned him South Africa's Order of the Baobab in 2010. In March 2026, he was awarded his eleventh honorary degree, receiving a prestigious Doctor of Philosophy (*honoris causa*) from the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Asia

INDIA

Premji, Azim

Azim Premji transformed Wipro Limited into a global software giant, where he remains Founder Chairman and Non-Executive Director. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2011, India's second-highest civilian honour. As the first Indian to sign the Giving Pledge in 2013, Premji has committed over $21 billion to charity, making him one of the world's most generous philanthropists. The Azim Premji Foundation has exponentially scaled its impact, now supporting educational programmes that directly reach 6.9 million students and over 275,000 teachers across Indian government schools. Expanding into healthcare, his foundation announced a monumental $480 million investment in January 2026 to build a 1,000-bed charitable super-speciality hospital in Bengaluru.

Qasmi, Maulana Badruddin Ajmal

Maulana Badruddin Ajmal Qasmi is a prominent Indian tycoon, Islamic theologian, and political leader. He commands the Ajmal Group of Companies, a multi-million dollar global enterprise renowned for luxury attar perfumes, oils, and textiles. An *alumnus* of Darul Uloom Deoband, Ajmal serves as the state president of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind for Assam. Through the Ajmal Foundation, he funnels corporate wealth into widespread grassroots philanthropy, operating over 25 premier educational institutions, including a pioneering women's science college, alongside charitable hospitals and orphanages. The founder of the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), Ajmal transitioned back to state-level politics following a 15-year tenure as a federal Member of Parliament. In May 2026, he secured a decisive victory in the Assam Assembly Elections, winning the Binnakandi constituency.

The Muslim Council of Elders

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.

UN World Interfaith Harmony Week

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, Afrogiveness Movement & Positive Youth Africa, Cameroon; and joint third prize, Oxford Interfaith Forum, UK

INDONESIA

Kalla, Muhammad Jusuf (new)

Muhammad Jusuf Kalla is an eminent Indonesian statesman, philanthropist, and business leader who holds the unique historical distinction of serving two non-consecutive terms as the Vice President of Indonesia (2004–2009 and 2014–2019). Beyond his high-level political career, Kalla is globally renowned as a master peace mediator who successfully resolved deep-seated regional conflicts in Aceh, Poso, and Ambon. A stalwart of humanitarian action, he has served as the Chairman of the Indonesian Red Cross Society since 2009, leading critical national disaster-relief operations and emergency responses. Concurrently, he leverages his religious leadership as the Chairman of the Indonesian Mosque Council (DMI), the national body overseeing the socio-economic welfare, community empowerment, and structural development of mosques nationwide.

MALAYSIA

Al-Bukhary, Syed Mokhtar

Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary is an influential Malaysian tycoon, philanthropist, and founder of the Albukhary Group of Companies. Ranked as Malaysia's 10th richest individual by Forbes, his estimated net worth stands at $3.5 billion USD. Through the Albukhary Foundation, he directs extensive global humanitarian initiatives. His philanthropic footprint includes rebuilding infrastructure for Afghan refugees, funding aid for Pakistani tsunami victims, and establishing a specialised AIDS hospital in Uganda. A major patron of culture and education, he founded the Albukhary International University and the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

PAKISTAN

Rizvi, Professor Adibul Hasan

Professor Adibul Hasan Rizvi is the founder and director of the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) in Karachi, which has grown from a humble eight-bed ward in 1971 into the largest free public healthcare organisation in the country. Operating on the foundational principle of "healthcare for all, free with dignity", SIUT provides world-class, comprehensive services to millions of patients annually and runs Asia's largest free kidney transplant programme. A pioneer in ethical medical care, Dr Rizvi's lifelong dedication has earned him the Ramon Magsaysay Award and Pakistan's highest civilian honour, the Nishan-e-Imtiaz. In April 2025, he was conferred the prestigious British Medical Journal (BMJ) Special Recognition Award for his meritorious contributions to healthcare in South Asia.

SINGAPORE

Faizal, Mohamed

Justice Mohamed Faizal Mohamed Abdul Kadir is a prominent High Court Judge on the Supreme Court of Singapore. An *alumnus* of the National University of Singapore and Harvard Law School, he became the first and only Muslim in the country to be appointed Senior Counsel in 2020. Following nearly two decades of distinguished public service, including a vital tenure as Second Chief Prosecutor, Justice Mohamed Faizal Mohamed Abdul Kadir was appointed a Judge of the High Court of Singapore in March 2026. He serves on the MUIS Appeal Board and has gained international acclaim for his mediation work. He is a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader, the only Asia-Pacific recipient of the International Outstanding Leadership Award, and was named International Mediator of the Year in the UK.

Europe

UNITED KINGDOM

El-Banna, Dr Hany

Dr Hany El-Banna OBE is the co-founder of Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW), the largest Western-based international Muslim relief and development NGO. Established in Birmingham, UK, in 1984, the organisation provides vital emergency and development assistance across more than 40 countries. El-Banna has continued to broaden his humanitarian network through the Muslim Charities Forum and the World Humanitarian Action Forum. Maintaining an active global schedule, he recently concluded high-profile diplomatic visits, including a trip to the Vatican to champion global interfaith dialogue and collaborative humanitarian action.

Middle East and North Africa

EGYPT

El-Enany, Khaled (new)

Khaled El-Enany is an Egyptologist academic, who has served as the Director-General of UNESCO since November 2025. His landslide election was historic, making him the first Arab and Muslim leader to guide the global organisation since its inception. A former Egyptian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, El-Enany holds a PhD from France and has spent decades championing cultural heritage preservation. At UNESCO, he prioritises global education. Under his leadership, UNESCO has actively driven emergency aid in the Gaza Strip. El-Enany has overseen the creation of temporary digital learning hubs and a virtual university campus to help over 88,000 displaced Palestinian students. Additionally, he has consistently leveraged UNESCO's mandate to supply emergency assistance to local media workers and publicly condemn the killings of journalists in Gaza.

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 Interagency 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 an Iranian lawyer and former jurist who made history in 2003 as the first Iranian and first Muslim woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. As the founder of the Defenders of Human Rights Center and the Society for Protecting the Rights of the Child, she has spent decades defending marginalised women, children, and political dissidents. Ebadi lectures globally on Iranian human rights violations, advocating a progressive interpretation of Islamic law that aligns with gender equality. Forced into exile in London following the 2009 presidential election crackdown, she continues to fiercely oppose the Iranian regime from abroad. Ebadi was named on the TIME100 list.

Marandi, Professor Seyed Mohammad

Professor Seyed Mohammad Marandi is an Iranian academic, political analyst, and leading voice challenging dominant Western geopolitical narratives. A professor of English Literature and Orientalism at the University of Tehran, his academic expertise spans postcolonial studies, North American culture, and political discourse. Renowned for his remarkably calm demeanour and structured explanations, he acts as a prominent regional advocate for Palestinian rights and routinely spotlights Western double standards on major international media networks. Amid the 2026 military escalations and collapsed maritime ceasefires between the United States and Iran, Marandi has been a critical frontline commentator.

IRAQ

Tahir, Dr Muhammad

Dr Muhammad Tahir is a British-Iraqi orthopedic and peripheral nerve surgeon who achieved global recognition for his extraordinary humanitarian service in Gaza. Dr Tahir left his practice to serve as a volunteer surgeon during the severe healthcare crisis, completing multiple extended medical missions with the FAJR Scientific Foundation. Operating under continuous bombardment and catastrophic medical shortages, he performed over 290 complex life-saving surgeries and treated more than 1,100 injured Palestinians, at times operating for 36 hours straight. He

became a symbol of international medical solidarity and his harrowing seven-month journey bearing witness to the frontlines of the collapsing medical system is the subject of the critically acclaimed documentary 'The Mission'.

PALESTINE

Abuelaish, Dr Izzeldin

Dr Izzeldin Abuelaish is a prominent Canadian-Palestinian physician, Professor of Global Health at the University of Toronto, and a five-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee. Following the tragic loss of his three daughters and niece to Israeli tank fire in January 2009, Abuelaish refused a path of revenge. He detailed his subsequent journey toward reconciliation in his internationally bestselling memoir, *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey*. In 2025 and 2026, his story reached renewed global audiences via the award-winning feature documentary *I Shall Not Hate.* Through his Daughters for Life Foundation, he continues expanding academic scholarships for women. For his lifelong humanitarian impact, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by UCLouvain in early 2026.

Abu Sarah, Aziz

Aziz Abu Sarah is a globally recognised Palestinian peace activist, cultural educator, and journalist. He previously served as the Executive Director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University. His international work across 60 countries earned him distinction as a National Geographic Explorer and a TED Fellow. A prolific writer for the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, he co-authored the 2026 bestseller, *The Future Is Peace: A Shared Journey Across the Holy Land*. Written alongside an Israeli activist, the book chronicles their joint campaign for citizen diplomacy.

Al-Faqih, Judge Kholoud

Judge Kholoud Al-Faqih made history by becoming the first female Shariah judge in the Middle East after her historic appointment to the Shariah Court of Ramallah, Palestine. Al-Faqih ranked number ten on *CEO Middle East* and *Arabian Business* magazines' 100 Most Powerful Arab Women list. Her groundbreaking legal journey and tireless fight for gender justice within Islamic family law are detailed in the Peabody Award-winning and Emmy-nominated documentary *The Judge*. Continuing her judicial service in the West Bank, she remains a powerful advocate for women's rights, actively mentoring aspiring female jurists and pushing for systemic educational reforms to dismantle institutional patriarchy across religious courts.

Tamimi, Ahed

Ahed Tamimi is a prominent Palestinian activist from the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh who has become a globally recognised icon of popular resistance against the Israeli occupation. She first gained international attention in 2017 when a viral video captured her confronting and slapping armed Israeli soldiers who had entered her family's yard. Arrested during a night raid shortly after, the then-teenager underwent intense military interrogation and served eight months as a political prisoner, a sentence that sparked global campaigns advocating for her release. Tamimi documented her experiences under military occupation in her acclaimed book, They Called Me a Lioness. Amid ongoing regional crackdowns, she was re-arrested by Israeli forces in early November 2023 during a sweep of the West Bank. Following several weeks of administrative detention, she was released as part of a temporary prisoner-hostage exchange deal between Israel and Hamas, continuing her outspoken international advocacy for Palestinian self-determination.

QATAR

Al-Muftah, Ghanim

Ghanim Al-Muftah is an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and world-renowned motivational speaker who embodies the philosophy "Impossible is Nothing". Born with Caudal Regression Syndrome, a rare condition affecting his lower spine, he has refused to let physical constraints limit his ambitions, amassing over 10 million social media followers. Al-Muftah gained global recognition at the FIFA World Cup 2022 as Qatar's official brand ambassador, launching the tournament alongside Morgan Freeman. A graduate with honours in Political Science from the UK's Loughborough University, his academic journey inspired the institution to establish the Ghanim Al-Muftah Excellence Scholarship in July 2026 to support postgraduate Qatari students. Appointed as a brand ambassador for Ooredoo Qatar in 2026, Al-Muftah recently addressed Harvard University, continuing his global advocacy for educational rights during geopolitical crises.

HH Sheikha Aisha bint Faleh bin Nasser Al-Thani
HH Dr Sheikha Aisha bint Faleh Al-Thani is a prominent Qatari educationist, philanthropist, and the Chairperson and Founder of Al Faleh Educational. She serves on the Qatar Supreme Education Council and the Board of Reach Out to Asia. Sheikha Aisha's perspective resonates with the more concerted efforts by humanitarian organisations to look at the networks of people of faith as a solution to practical development problems. She holds a PhD from Cass Business School and was recognised by Forbes Middle East as one of the region's most powerful businesswomen.

Al-Thani, HE Dr Abdulla bin Ali
HE Sheikh Dr Abdulla bin Ali Al-Thani serves as an Advisor to the Amiri Diwan and the Chairman of Media City Qatar. A member of the ruling family and a former university professor, he was the founding President of Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and the foundational Chairman of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) from 2009 to 2015. He serves as the Vice Chairman of the Board of Regents for Qatar University and Managing Director of the Qatar Leadership Centre. His extensive career across higher education, culture, and regional media innovation continues to drive the transformation of Qatar's leadership and educational ecosystems.

SAUDI ARABIA

Al-Hathloul, Loujain
Loujain Al-Hathloul is a leading Saudi women's rights activist known for defying the kingdom's driving ban and challenging the male guardianship system. Arrested in 2018, she spent over 1,000 days in detention, during which she was subjected to torture according to her family and rights groups. In December 2020, she was sentenced to five years and eight months for "agitating for change", though conditionally released in February 2021. Despite her official travel ban expiring in 2023, authorities continue to block her from leaving Saudi Arabia. She remains a global symbol of resilience and reform.

YEMEN

Karman, Tawakkol
Tawakkol Karman is a prominent Yemeni journalist, human rights defender, and politician who made history as a co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize. Karman is a fierce advocate for press freedom and human rights. In February 2026, she received the Guardian of Democracy Award in Berlin from the Global Forum and Cinema for Peace in recognition of her decades-long commitment to freedom, human rights, and democratic governance. Much of her current work is driven by the Tawakkol Karman Foundation, which continues to lead global youth development and education initiatives.

Sub-Saharan Africa

GAMBIA, THE

Bensouda, Dr Fatou
Dr Fatou Bom Bensouda has served as The Gambia's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom since August 2022. A pioneering figure in global law, she was the first African woman to serve as the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) from 2012 to 2021, after working as Deputy Prosecutor since 2004. She is also the former Attorney General and Minister of Justice of The Gambia. In a May 2026 Al Jazeera interview, Bensouda publicly detailed how former Mossad chief Yossi Cohen orchestrated a campaign of intimidation and secret meetings to pressure her into dropping the ICC's war crimes investigation in Palestine. Later that year, in August 2026, her career achievements were celebrated with the African Lifetime Achievers Award in London.

GHANA

Ibrahim, Sheikh Mustapha
Sheikh Mustapha Ibrahim has received both classical *madrasah* training and a modern secular academic background, and has written over 20 books focusing on Islamic jurisprudence and social development. In 1996, he founded the Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services (ICODEHS) to alleviate poverty and empower marginalised communities. Collaborating with international non-governmental organisations, Ibrahim has expanded the council's humanitarian footprint from Ghana into 12 West African nations. Additionally, he serves as President of the Ghana section of the Mohammed VI Foundation of African Oulema, where he champions peacebuilding, youth development, and interfaith harmony across the region.

MALAWI

Chabulika, Sheikh Dinala

Sheikh Dinala Chabulika is a prominent Islamic rights activist and the long-standing national spokesperson for the Muslim Association of Malawi (MAM). Operating in a country where Muslims comprise roughly 13% to 20% of Malawi's total population of over 22 million, Chabulika reframes critical social issues as essential religious duties. His advocacy centres heavily on public health, preventing economic exploitation, and actively building collaborative bridges with Malawi's Christian majority to preserve national stability.

NIGER

Mindaoudou, Dr Dodo Aichatou

Dr Aïchatou Mindaoudou served as Niger's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, and African Integration across two decades. A foundational voice in West African politics, she previously held the role of Secretary-General for the Network for Rural Law and has authored extensive analyses on economic development, regional security, and women's leadership. She was the UN Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) from 2013 to 2017 and appointed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2020 as co-chair of an independent commission investigating health worker misconduct in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

NIGERIA

Ashafa, Imam Dr Muhammad

Imam Dr Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa is a world-renowned Nigerian peacemaker and the co-executive director of the Kaduna-based Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC). Once opposing militia leaders during Nigeria's violent sectarian conflicts in the 1990s, Imam Ashafa and Christian Pastor James Wuye underwent a profound personal reconciliation after suffering severe personal losses. Turning their pain into purpose, they united to build a 20,000-member grassroots peacebuilding framework that mitigates religious and regional violence across Africa. Their story of forgiveness has achieved global acclaim, notably featured in the inspirational documentary *The Imam and the Pastor*. After winning first prize in the 2013 World Interfaith Harmony Week, their decades of dedication culminated in March 2025 when they were awarded the inaugural Commonwealth Peace Prize for exceptional leadership in faith-based conflict resolution.

Mohammed, Amina

Amina J. Mohammed serves as the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, a role she has held since 2017. A former Nigerian Minister of Environment, she continues to champion global sustainable development, climate action, and women's rights. In 2025, she played a key role in advancing the UN's mid-term review of the Sustainable Development Goals and promoting climate finance commitments for vulnerable nations. Widely respected for her diplomatic skill, Mohammed bridges diverse political and cultural divides to build consensus on pressing global challenges. She remains one of the most influential Muslim women in international governance today.

SENEGAL

Kane, Zeinaba

Dr Zeinaba Kane is a prominent constitutional lawyer, academic, and Islamic rights advocate who serves as the President of the Women's Wing of the Rassemblement Islamique du Sénégal (RIS-Alwahda), the nation's largest Islamic umbrella network. She specialises in the intersection of Islamic jurisprudence, constitutional stability, and public policy, frequently providing expert political commentary on national television regarding institutional reform. Dr Kane directs communications for the NGO REFAC, where she focuses on improving socio-economic living conditions and literacy for rural women across Senegal.

SOMALIA

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.

SOMALILAND

Ismail, Dr Edna Adan

Dr Edna Adan Ismail is revered for transforming maternal healthcare in East Africa. A nurse-midwife by profession, she served as Somalia's First Lady in the late 1960s and later became Somaliland's first female Foreign Minister (2003–2006). In 2002, she founded the landmark Edna Adan University Hospital in Hargeisa, which has trained thousands of healthcare professionals and significantly lowered regional maternal mortality rates. Globally celebrated for her fierce, decades-long campaign against female genital mutilation (FGM), her lifelong dedication earned her the prestigious $1.4 million Templeton Prize in 2023. Dr Ismail continues her high-profile international advocacy, recently receiving the 2025 Gusi Peace Prize and delivering a historic headline address at the July 2026 Hargeisa International Book Fair.

SOUTH AFRICA

Pandor, Dr Naledi

Dr Naledi Pandor is a distinguished academic, educator, and veteran politician who spearheaded South Africa's legal actions against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). A Member of Parliament for the African National Congress (ANC) from 1994 to 2024, she successfully led multiple high-profile ministries. She became the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees for the Nelson Mandela Foundation in late 2024 and officially took office as the new Chancellor of Nelson Mandela University on 1 April 2026. A dedicated Muslim who converted during her university years upon marrying her husband, Sharif Joseph Pandor, she remains an influential global voice advocating for international law, human rights solidarity, and systemic geopolitical reform.

Asia

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 Karzai administration and its western supporters. 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. Following the Taliban's 2021 return to power, Joya was forced to flee her homeland and was granted political asylum in Catalonia, Spain. Today, she coordinates international advocacy from Europe, addressing the European Union Parliament to demand global solidarity for Afghan women.

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 Hameeda Hossain is a pioneering Bangladeshi historian, author, and human rights academic. She began her career as an editor and co-founded the influential political magazine *Forum* in 1969 to challenge systemic inequities. Following Bangladesh's independence, she actively rehabilitated women survivors of wartime violence and founded *Karika* to develop local artisanal crafts. Dr Hossain is a founding member and former chairperson of *Ain o Salish Kendra* (ASK), a premier legal aid and human rights organisation established in 1986. Author of extensive publications covering the ready-made garment industry and women workers, her contributions were globally honoured with the Bangladesh Development Initiative's (BDI) Lifetime Achievement Award in 2021.

Sultana, Razia

Razia Sultana is a Rohingya lawyer, researcher, and human rights defender born in Myanmar and raised in Bangladesh. She has dedicated her career to advocating for the stateless Rohingya community, focusing extensively on the trauma, mass rape, and trafficking of displaced women and girls. By interviewing

hundreds of survivors in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, she published groundbreaking reports, including *Witness to Horror and Rape by Command,* that exposed systematic sexual violence perpetrated by Burmese security forces. A coordinator for the Free Rohingya Coalition and director of the Arakan Rohingya National Organization's women's section, Sultana also founded the Rohingya Women Welfare Society (RWWS) to establish safe spaces and localized support.

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 sterilisation as the intensity of the Chinese crackdown on Muslim practice in the western region continues.

INDIA

Khan, Dr Saniyasnain

Saniyasnain Khan is a prolific Indian author of children's literature, a television host, and the son of the renowned late Islamic scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. In 1996, he founded Goodword Books, a premier publishing house dedicated to making Islamic themes accessible and engaging for younger generations. To date, Khan has authored over 100 heavily illustrated children's books and designed multiple educational board games that have been widely translated into European and Asian languages. Additionally, Khan serves as a trustee and secretary of CPS International, a non-profit organisation dedicated to interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, and contemporary spiritual dissemination.

INDONESIA

Siradj, Professor KH Said Aqil

Professor KH Said Aqil Siradj served as the Executive Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the world's largest independent Muslim organisation, from 2010 to 2021. Currently serving as a supreme advisor (*Mustasyar*) within NU for the 2022–2027 term, he also leads as the Rector of Nahdlatul Ulama University in Cirebon. In May 2026, ahead of the 35th NU National Congress, he confirmed his withdrawal from future executive leadership to prioritise the intellectual and spiritual independence of the organisation. Siradj continues to guide regional discourse through the Cairo-based Said Aqil Centre, promoting education as the ultimate tool for socio-economic development.

MALAYSIA

Anwar, Zainah

Zainah Anwar is a prominent Malaysian feminist, author, and legal reformer globally recognised for her decades of leadership in advancing women's rights within Muslim families. A former journalist, she co-founded Sisters in Islam (now SIS Forum) and later established Musawah, a highly influential international movement advocating for equality and justice in Muslim family laws. Her tireless advocacy has gained massive global prestige; she has addressed the World Economic Forum in Davos, delivered a keynote lecture at Harvard University, and was named by *Newsweek* as one of the 150 women "Who Shake the World". In June 2025, Anwar achieved a landmark legal victory when the Federal Court of Malaysia officially quashed a contentious 2014 state fatwa that had wrongfully labelled her civil society organisation as deviant.

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 organises 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. The foundation also publishes books and translations of the Qur'an in the local language and provides services to the victims of domestic violence.

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 paralysed 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

Malala Yousafzai is an internationally renowned education activist who made history as the youngest-ever recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 at age 17. Her journey began in the Swat Valley, where she survived a tragic 2012 Taliban assassination attempt targeted at silencing her advocacy for female literacy. Evacuated to England, she recovered, completed her schooling, and graduated from Oxford University. Alongside her father, she co-founded the Malala Fund, which campaigns globally for 12 years of free, safe, and quality education for girls. Expanding her reach into media production, authorship, and public diplomacy, her global profile continues to rise. In early 2026, she delivered a powerful address to the United Nations demanding strict global accountability for the systemic erasure of women's rights under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

PHILIPPINES

Rasul-Bernardo, Amina

Dr Amina Rasul-Bernardo serves as the President of the Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy (PCID). A former cabinet member under President Fidel V. Ramos, she has broken institutional boundaries by establishing foundational networks like the National Ulama Conference of the Philippines and Noorus Salam, a sweeping civil coalition of female Muslim scholars. Celebrated for designing an Islamic model for peace education in Mindanao, her extensive career spans corporate governance and international security registries. Her award-winning podcast, *She Talks Peace*, celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2026 and she continues to shape regional policy, addressing the 2025 Southeast Asia Women's Leadership Conference and overseeing key strategic publications in mid-2026 to strengthen Bangsamoro civic governance.

SINGAPORE

Yacob, HE Halimah

Halimah Yacob is a distinguished Singaporean lawyer, stateswoman, and trailblazing politician who served as the nation's eighth, and first female, President from 2017 to 2023. Initially establishing her legal career with the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) in 1978, she broke barriers as the first Malay woman elected to Parliament in 2001 and as the first female Speaker of Parliament in 2013. Globally, she was the first Singaporean appointed to the Governing Body of the United Nations International Labour Organization. Since stepping down from the presidency, she has transitioned into vital advisory and educational roles, serving as the Chancellor of the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) and Chief Patron of the Securities Investors Association (Singapore). She continues to champion social issues related to women, children, persons with disabilities and mental health.

SRI LANKA

Ismail, Jezima

Jezima Ismail is a veteran Sri Lankan educationist, human rights defender, and broadcaster. Over a career spanning more than four decades, she made history as the first female Vice Chancellor of the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka and the first woman to head the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. Conferred with the Deshabandhu, Sri Lanka's third-highest national honour, in 1989, she remains highly active in civic life. Following her 91st birthday celebration in late 2025, Ismail continues to spearhead key social cohesion initiatives, specifically advocating for legislative reforms to the Muslim Marriage

and Divorce Act (MMDA) to ensure gender equity and human rights protections.

Marsoof, Justice Dr Saleem

Justice Dr Saleem Marsoof, PC is a jurist, academic, and international arbitrator who has served as a Judge of the Supreme Court, President of the Court of Appeal, and Acting Chief Justice. He remains heavily involved in academia and community administration, serving as a non-resident Justice of Appeal for the Supreme Court of Fiji and the foundational President of the University of Colombo Muslim Majlis. A leading voice in family law, he chaired the landmark committee tasked with amending the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act (MMDA), driving progress on contemporary statutory protections.

Europe

UNITED KINGDOM

Abu-Sittah, Dr Ghassan

Professor Ghassan Abu-Sittah is a world-renowned British-Palestinian plastic and reconstructive surgeon widely recognised for his medical rescue missions during the Gaza genocide. Elected Rector of the University of Glasgow in March 2024, his prominent advocacy and testimony on atrocities provoked extensive geopolitical and legal warfare. After human rights groups successfully overturned a one-year Schengen travel ban in May 2024, the Berlin Higher Administrative Court issued a final, legally binding ruling in November 2025, declaring Germany's public speaking and political activity ban against him entirely unlawful. Furthermore, in January 2026, the UK Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service (MPTS) completely cleared him of all misconduct allegations brought forward by pro-Israel lobby groups, solidifying his role as a vital global voice for humanitarian legal accountability. He continues to support medical services for Gaza through the Ghassan Abu-Sittah Children's Fund.

Patel, Sir Mufti Hamid

Sir Mufti Hamid Patel is a highly influential British educationist and civic leader who serves as the Chief Executive of Star Academies, a prominent multi-academy trust managing 36 schools that achieve exceptional results in highly deprived communities. Spurred by a passion for social mobility, he has guided the trust from its inception through an inspiring curriculum and rigorous pastoral care. An honorary Professor of Education at the University of Birmingham, Patel plays a pivotal role in national policy, serving as Vice Chair of the National Institute of Teaching and chairing the Confederation of School Trusts. In March 2025, he was historically appointed as the interim Chair of the Ofsted Board, becoming the first British Muslim to guide the educational standards watchdog. Knighted in 2021 for his services to education, he was also appointed to the Department for Education's academy trust CEO advisory group.

Qureshi, Khawar

Khawar Qureshi KC is a King's Counsel, and Head of McNair International, recognised globally for his expertise in international arbitration, commercial litigation, and public international law. In 1993, he made history as the youngest advocate ever to appear before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), representing Bosnia and Herzegovina in its genocide case against Yugoslavia. He consistently represents state and commercial parties from over 70 nations, notably serving as Pakistan's lead counsel in the high-stakes Kulbhushan Jadhav ICJ espionage case. He has taught at Cambridge, King's College London, and London University. Remaining at the forefront of global dispute resolution, Qureshi hosted the McNair Annual Legal Review in January 2026 and chaired the high-profile Arbitral Institutions Congress at Middle Temple Hall in June 2026 to address the impact of artificial intelligence on international commercial arbitration.

Williams, Paul

Paul Williams is the creator and host of the hugely influential Blogging Theology YouTube channel. A former evangelical Christian, Williams converted to Islam and his channel regularly brings scholars and intellectuals into conversation on their various areas of expertise. His own nuanced analysis, as well as his polite and sincere manner in understanding and presenting other views, have enabled him to build an audience of over a million followers across various platforms. In 2024, Williams founded Blogging Theology Academy in collaboration with philosopher and author Hasan Spiker. Williams' role has thus developed beyond media and interviewing into educational institution-building, establishing Blogging Theology Academy as a serious platform for contemporary Muslim education. Williams is currently

authoring his first book, due to be released in 2027.

Oceania

AUSTRALIA

Chowdhury, Sheikh Dr Tawfique

Sheikh Dr Tawfique Chowdhury is the Founder and Executive Chairman of Mercy Mission Worldwide, one of the world's most expansive Muslim social enterprises. An Australian-trained physician and graduate of the College of Shariah at the Islamic University of Madinah, he specialises in Islamic finance, personal law, and medical ethics. Since launching in 2005 via the AlKauthar Institute his ecosystem has grown to span six continents. It includes the National Zakat Foundation, which distributes US$30 million annually, Seven Skies International Schools, and Charity Right, which has delivered over 50 million school meals. A prominent hospital infrastructure developer and former director of specialised medical centres, Dr Chowdhury has corporate-trained and mentored a generation of high-performance charity chief executives across the Western world.

North America

CANADA

Dayrit, Flordeliza

Flordeliza Dayrit co-founded MuslimKids TV, a premier global digital entertainment platform tailored for Muslim families. Driven by a lack of values-based children's resources, she built a platform that has grown to host over 15,000 resources accessible across 60 countries. Dayrit launched her media career in 2004 co-producing the documentary series *A New Life in a New Land: The Muslim Experience in Canada*, subsequently working as an art director in Cairo before writing the YouTube series *Hurray for Baba Ali*. In early 2026, Dayrit expanded her cultural reach by directing the animated historical adventure film *Time Hoppers: The Silk Road*, which premiered in theatres across the United States to highlight the rich legacy of the Islamic Golden Age.

Elghawaby, Amira

Amira Elghawaby was Canada's inaugural Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia, serving from February 2023 to February 2026. A former spokesperson for the National Council of Canadian Muslims and strategist for the Canadian Labour Congress, she has spent decades promoting pluralism, media fairness, and systemic anti-racism education. Following a structural overhaul where the standalone envoy role was integrated into a broader Federal Advisory Council on Rights, Equality and Inclusion in February 2026, her vision was celebrated nationally. In March 2026, she was honoured with the Jack Layton Progress Prize in recognition of her intersectional leadership and civic advocacy.

Kutty, Faisal

Faisal Kutty is a Canadian lawyer, legal scholar, public intellectual, and commentator whose work focuses on international law, human rights, constitutional law, national security, religion and law, Islamic thought, academic freedom, and global affairs. He is Professor of Law at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles, Associate Professor of Law Emeritus at Valparaiso University, and an Affiliate Faculty Member at the Rutgers University Center for Security, Race and Rights. He co-founded the Canadian Muslim Civil Liberties Association and served as its first legal counsel, and was previously vice chair and legal counsel to the Canadian Council on American Islamic Relations (now the National Council of Canadian Muslims). He is a regular contributor to *The Toronto Star* and *Newsweek*, a frequent keynote speaker, and a widely quoted commentator. 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 National Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organisation in the United States. Awad has routinely condemned Western governments for complicity in the Gaza genocide, fiercely endorsing Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) measures. His advocacy has placed CAIR at the center of severe domestic political friction. In mid-2026, Awad led aggressive legal and public campaigns against state-level actions by Florida and Texas, following moves by governors to controversially brand CAIR a "terrorist organisation" on state lists. Concurrently, Awad serves as the chairman of Democracy for the

Arab World Now (DAWN), which filed federal lawsuits challenging government restrictions on international human rights advocacy.

Beydoun, Khaled A

Khaled A Beydoun is an associate professor of law at Arizona State University, an extraordinary professor at the University of the Western Cape, and a premier global scholar on Islamophobia, civil liberties, and constitutional law. He is the author of acclaimed books, including *American Islamophobia* and *The New Crusades*, and recently released the 2025 anthology *Eyes on Gaza,* which blends personal narrative with legal analysis to chronicle the ongoing crisis. Beyond his academic research, Beydoun utilises his substantial platform to advocate for humanitarian crises across Sudan and the Congo. In early 2026, his public work faced scrutiny when charity watchdogs questioned a $2 million fundraising services entry in Human Appeal USA's tax filings. Beydoun firmly denied receiving personal commissions, citing a clerical error regarding an anti-Islamophobia research fund, and continues to teach, lecture internationally, and drive critical legal scholarship surrounding global anti-Muslim prejudice.

Khan, Salman

Salman Khan is a pioneer of online learning who revolutionised global education by founding Khan Academy in 2008. The free, non-profit platform has grown to feature a library of over 10,000 video lectures. Khan detailed his vision for systemic education reform in his international bestseller, *The One World Schoolhouse*, and has actively spearheaded the integration of generative AI into global classrooms via his educational chatbot, Khanmigo. Expanding his institutional footprint, TED announced in October 2025 that Khan would become its new "Vision Steward" and board member. Khan launched the Khan TED Institute in April 2026, to offer a radically low-cost, AI-focused, competency-based degree programme designed to disrupt traditional higher education. The official Khan Academy YouTube channel anchors his digital legacy, amassing 9.39 million subscribers and over 2 billion cumulative views.

Mogahed, Dalia

Dalia Mogahed is the President and CEO of Mogahed Consulting and a prominent scholar and former Director of Research at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), where she regularly delivers lectures on American Muslim socio-political trends. Previously, she served as the Executive Director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies and co-authored the groundbreaking book *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think.* In 2009, Former President Barack Obama appointed her to 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 played major leadership roles in the US-Muslim Engagement Project and co-hosts the widely listened to *Quran Conversations* podcast alongside Imam Mohammed Magid.

Sarsour, Linda

Linda Sarsour is a prominent Palestinian-American political strategist, civil rights activist, and author. The co-founder of Until Freedom and the digital advocacy platform MPower Change, she mobilises Muslim communities for systemic racial and political impact. Her prominent advocacy has earned widespread accolades, including the Daughter of Greatness Award from the Muhammad Ali Center and her best-selling Simon & Schuster memoir, *We Are Not Here to Be Bystanders*. She was restricted by Israeli authorities from visiting her ancestral homeland in June 2026, drawing strong condemnation from major civil rights legal groups. Remaining a premier force in civic mentorship, Sarsour delivered the high-profile keynote address at CAIR's 11th Annual Muslim Youth Leadership Symposium on Capitol Hill in August 2026, driving political empowerment for the next generation of American Muslim leaders.

Siddiqui, Dr Sohaira

Dr Sohaira Siddiqui is the founding Executive Director of Al-Mujadilah: Center and Mosque for Women in Doha. An initiative conceived by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the complex made history as the world's first purpose-built contemporary women's mosque, winning the prestigious 2025 RIBA Middle East Award for Social Architecture. In addition to hosting Al-Mujadilah's reflective *More Muslim* podcast, Siddiqui serves as a Professor of Islamic Studies and Theology at Georgetown University in Qatar, where her research focuses on classical jurisprudence, gender authority, and the legacy of colonialism. Her extensive academic monograph portfolio includes *Law and Politics Under the Abbasids*, *Locating the Shari'a,* and her third book, *Islamic Law on Trial: Contesting Colonial Power in British India.*

Middle East and North Africa

BAHRAIN

Al-Zayani, Afnan

Afnan Al-Zayani is the President and CEO of Al-Zayani Commercial Services (AZCS), a multimillion-dollar corporation in Bahrain. A pioneer for regional women's empowerment, she is highly celebrated for spearheading the advocacy that led to legal protections for Muslim women in divorce and custody proceedings. She drove these legal achievements during her leadership of the Bahrain Businesswomen's Society (BBS) and subsequently presided over the Middle East and North Africa Businesswomen's Network. A multifaceted leader, she is also an accomplished television chef and culinary author. Her extensive honours include the Vital Voices Leadership in Public Life Award (2010) and recognition by the IWEC Foundation (2016).

IRAN

Ansari, Anousheh

Anousheh Ansari is an Iranian-American engineer and entrepreneur, currently serving as the CEO of the XPRIZE Foundation, which designs public competitions to solve global challenges. A co-founder of Telecom Technologies and later Prodea Systems, she made history in 2006 as the first privately funded woman and first Iranian to reach space, flying to the International Space Station. A vocal advocate for women in STEM, Ansari co-founded The Billion Dollar Fund for Women. Her numerous accolades include the Space Pioneer Award from the National Space Society and the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. She has also authored a memoir, *My Dream of Stars.* In 2026, Ansari received an honorary Doctorate of Science from Swinburne University of Technology.

JORDAN

Abu-Ghazaleh, Mohammed (new)

Mohammed Abu-Ghazaleh has served as Chairman and CEO of Fresh Del Monte Produce since 1996 making it a global agricultural leader. He chairs key institutions, including International General Insurance, Royal Jordanian Air Academy, Arab Wings, and Amman's Abdali Hospital. Appointed to Jordan's Economic Consultative Council by King Abdullah II, he advises on major socio-economic policies. A dedicated cultural patron, he founded the MMAG Foundation, financing free art education and supporting premier institutions worldwide, including Tate Modern, the Palestinian Art Museum, and the New Museum.

Sadik, Randa

Randa Sadik has served as CEO of Arab Bank since February 2022, steering 600 branches across five continents. Under her leadership, Arab Bank Group's total assets reached a robust $75.2 billion by July 2025, culminating in Arab Bank being named "Best Bank in the Middle East 2026" by Global Finance. Beyond her banking prowess, Sadik serves as Deputy Chairman of Oman Arab Bank and the Queen Rania Foundation.

KUWAIT

Al-Bahar, Shaikha

Shaikha Al-Bahar has served as Deputy Group CEO of the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) since 2014. Under her direction, NBK Group's assets expanded beyond $135 billion. An advocate for corporate equity, she launched the NBK RISE global female leadership initiative. She has been recognised as Kuwait's most influential businesswoman and the sole Kuwaiti featured on *Fortune Magazine*'s prestigious 2025 list of the 100 Most Powerful Women in Business. Al-Bahar holds deep regional governance influence, serving as Chair of NBK-France and NBK-Egypt, alongside elite credentials from Kuwait University, Harvard, Stanford, and Duke.

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. In 2018, GIH was acquired by Kamco Investment.

MOROCCO

Bouhia, Dr Hynd

Dr Hynd Bouhia is a leading Moroccan strategist and pioneer in sustainable finance. Holding a Harvard PhD and an engineering degree from Centrale Paris, she excelled at the World Bank before serving as an economic advisor to Morocco's Prime Minister. She made history as the Managing Director of the Casablanca Stock Exchange and later founded Strategica. Recognised by *Forbes* among the world's most influential women, Bouhia was inducted into the Johns Hopkins Society of Scholars. She serves as G100 Global Chair for Entrepreneurship and is the author of motivational books, including *Africa Girl, African Woman*.

SAUDI ARABIA

Al-Amoudi, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Ali

Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Ali Al-Amoudi is recognised as the second richest Saudi Arabian citizen globally. His multinational conglomerate, MIDROC Group, spans oil refining, gold mining, agriculture, hospitality, and finance across Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Sweden. A dedicated philanthropist, his massive charitable footprints heavily support Ethiopian healthcare and infrastructure. In 2026, the Bloomberg Billionaires Index estimated his global asset portfolio at approximately $9.3 billion.

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. 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.

HRH Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal Al-Saud

HRH Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal is a premier global investor and founder of Kingdom Holding Company (KHC) whose combined holdings in SpaceX, xAI, X, and Starlink have soared to $9.2 billion. KHC acquired a majority 70% stake in Al Hilal Football Club in April 2026, followed by Prince Waleed's personal acquisition of a 5% stake in Lucid Motors in July 2026. Committed to global humanitarianism through Alwaleed Philanthropies, he made headlines for a pledge to donate his fortune to charity, including funding initiatives for Christian-Muslim understanding at Georgetown University. He commands a following of over 15 million users on X.

Olayan, Lubna

Lubna Olayan is the former CEO of Olayan Financing Company, where she oversaw its Middle East operations. A strong advocate for women's empowerment, she retired from her CEO role in 2019 but continued her strategic leadership by becoming the first Saudi woman to chair a publicly listed bank, the Saudi British Bank (SABB), following its merger with Alawwal Bank. She was re-elected as SABB's Chair for another three-year term in January 2023. Olayan's influence extends to global boards, including Schlumberger and the World Economic Forum Board of Trustees. She is also a trustee for academic institutions such as MIT and King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST).

Al-Suhaimi, Sarah

Al-Suhaimi is a defining figure in Saudi Arabia's financial and industrial transformation under Vision 2030, serving as the first woman to chair the Saudi Tadawul Group, the Middle East's largest stock exchange. In January 2026, she was appointed Chairperson of Bahri, adding leadership of one of the Kingdom's most strategic maritime logistics networks to her portfolio. She additionally serves as Chair of Lazard Financial Advisory MENA. Previously, as CEO of SNB Capital (2014–2021), she reversed the investment bank's prospects, quadrupling its assets under management. Her extensive governance footprint includes board roles at STC, Saudi Arabian Airlines, and the IFRS Foundation.

SUDAN

Ibrahim, Dr Mohamed "Mo"

Sir Mohamed "Mo" Ibrahim is a prominent Sudanese-British mobile communications entrepreneur and billionaire philanthropist who founded Celtel, one of Africa's pioneering cellular networks. Following its sale, he established the Mo Ibrahim Foundation in 2006 to advance progressive leadership across Africa. The Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership grants $5 million over ten years and $200,000 annually for life to democratically elected African leaders who deliver exceptional governance

and willingly step down at their term limits. He also oversees the influential Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), which evaluates national performance across 54 countries. Ibrahim was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (KCMG) in the UK 2023 New Year Honours.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Alabbar, Mohamed Ben Ali

Mohamed Ben Ali Alabbar is the Founder and Managing Director of Emaar Properties, the master developer behind iconic landmarks like the Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall. Widely regarded as a key driving force behind Dubai's rapid economic expansion and its stature as a global investment hub, he serves as a senior advisor to HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. He is the founder of the regional e-commerce giant Noon.com, the founder and chairman of Eagle Hills, and the chairman of Americana Restaurants and Zand Bank.

Al-Gurg, Raja

Al-Gurg is the Chairperson and Managing Director of the Easa Saleh Al-Gurg Group (ESAG), a family conglomerate spanning over 30 companies. A trailblazer for Emirati women in corporate governance, she was the first local woman appointed to the board of HSBC Bank Middle East Limited and currently serves as the Deputy Chairperson of the National Bank of Fujairah. Following her appointment as Honorary Pro-Chancellor at Heriot-Watt University (2022), she was bestowed with France's highest civilian award, the Legion of Honour Chevalier, in 2023.

Al-Jaber, Fatima

Fatima Obaid Al-Jaber is a leading Emirati corporate executive, architectural engineer, and an influential voice for diversity in regional industry. During her tenure as Chief Operating Officer, she managed a massive workforce of 50,000 employees and supervised US$4.9 billion in assets. Al-Jaber made history as the first Emirati woman elected to the board of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce. A global advocate for economic inclusion, she serves on the board of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW) and frequently addresses premier international assemblies, including the International Property Show (IPS 2025).

Al-Rostamani, Hana

Hana Al-Rostamani is the Group CEO of First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB), making history as the first woman to lead the UAE's largest financial institution. Under her leadership, FAB delivered another year of record performance, with total assets reaching approximately AED 1.49 trillion, reinforcing its position as the country's banking juggernaut. With over 25 years of financial services experience, her immense global footprint earned her a spot on Fortune's Most Powerful Women 2026 list.

Sub-Saharan Africa

NIGERIA

Dangote, Alhaji Aliko

Alhaji Aliko Dangote is the Founder, Chairman, and CEO of the Dangote Group, West Africa's largest industrial conglomerate. As of May 2026, Bloomberg ranks him as the world's 62nd wealthiest individual, the wealthiest black individual, and the wealthiest person in Africa, with a net worth exceeding US$36.8 billion. This fortune is driven by his pan-African cement empire and his landmark Lagos petroleum refinery, which earned him the title of African Energy Person of the Year 2026. In a monumental succession plan structured around Islamic inheritance principles, Dangote announced that one-third of his entire estate will be permanently dedicated to the Aliko Dangote Foundation.

Rabiu, Abdul Samad (new)

Abdul Samad Rabiu is a leading industrialist, philanthropist, and the founder and Chairman of the BUA Group, one of Africa's largest diversified conglomerates. After studying Economics at Capital University in Ohio, he established BUA in 1988. He successfully transitioned the business from commodity trading into large-scale infrastructure, food production, and manufacturing. Forbes ranked Rabiu the third-richest person in Africa on its 2026 annual billionaires list, evaluating his net worth at $11.2 billion. Through his ASR Africa initiative, he pledges $100 million annually to continental health and education. His national contributions have earned him Nigeria's prestigious CFR and CON honours.

Asia

BRUNEI

HM Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah

HM Haji 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. Ranking consistently among the world's wealthiest individuals, his fortune, derived from massive oil and gas reserves, is estimated between US$30 billion and $50 billion. His official residence, Istana Nurul Iman, is the world's largest residential palace, featuring over 1,700 rooms. Through the Brunei Investment Authority, the Sultan holds a vast international property portfolio, including London's historic Dorchester Hotel.

INDONESIA

Indrawati, Sri Mulyani

Sri Mulyani Indrawati is a highly respected global economist who served as Indonesia's first female Minister of Finance across three distinct presidential administrations. Renowned for her strict fiscal discipline, she steered Southeast Asia's largest economy through the 2008 global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. After her nearly 14-year ministerial tenure, she returned to prominent international service. In August 2026, the World Bank appointed her as the Independent Co-Chair to lead the IDA22 fundraising coalition, overseeing concessional funding for 78 low-income nations.

Thohir, Erick

Erick Thohir is an Indonesian billionaire entrepreneur, sports executive, and politician serving as Indonesia's Minister of Youth and Sports. An influential figure in global sports governance, he is a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the FIBA Central Board, and serves as the Chairman of the Football Association of Indonesia (PSSI). In the private sector, Thohir founded the Mahaka Group, a media and entertainment conglomerate. Renowned globally for his past ownership of Italian football giants Inter Milan, his active sports portfolio includes co-owning the English club Oxford United and Indonesia's Persis Solo.

Europe

TÜRKIYE

Sabancı, Güler

Güler Sabancı is a distinguished Turkish businesswoman and philanthropist, widely recognised as a pioneering leader. Following more than two decades of transformative leadership as Chairperson of the family-controlled Sabancı Holding, she stepped down from the role in March 2025. In 2026, she received the prestigious AIB Fellows International Executive of the Year Award, celebrating her global business leadership, sustainability vision, and lifelong contributions to women's leadership. Deeply committed to social development, she continues to chair the Sabancı Foundation and Sabancı University. Highly decorated globally, she was also awarded the Japanese Order of the Rising Sun in 2024.

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. As of April 2026, he ranks among the world's 300 richest people with a fortune of US$13.7 billion. As Chair of the US–Türkiye Business Council, he drives international economic ties, notably convening with Turkish President Erdoğan in April 2026.

UNITED KINGDOM

Aziz, Asif

Asif Aziz is a property entrepreneur, philanthropist and diversity advocate. He founded Criterion Capital, a privately owned real estate owner and developer with more than $9bn AUM, spanning hospitality, residential, commercial and mixed-use property. In 2015, he established The Aziz Foundation, which has awarded 750+ scholarships to British Muslims at more than 50 UK universities, alongside paid

internships and mentoring opportunities. The Aziz Foundation also sponsors cultural and community initiatives, including the annual Ramadan and Eid lights in London's West End—the first public illuminations of their kind in Europe—the Trafalgar Square Iftar and the Piccadilly Community Centre. Asif's accolades include the PROPS Entrepreneur of the Year Award, an honorary fellowship from Goldsmiths, University of London, and the Tun Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamad Leadership Award. His work continues to advance community cohesion, economic empowerment and social mobility, helping to create a more inclusive future.

Issa, Mohsin and Zuber

Mohsin and Zuber Issa are British billionaire brothers who transformed a single, run-down petrol station purchased in 2001 into EG Group, a global convenience and fuel retail powerhouse. Born in Blackburn to Indian immigrant parents, they pioneered a "destination retail" model across more than 6,000 global forecourts worldwide. In 2021, they led a historic £6.8 billion buyout of Asda, returning the supermarket giant to British ownership. Valued at £6 billion on the *Sunday Times* Rich List, the brothers have recently structured an orderly separation of their massive assets: Zuber divested his Asda shares to spearhead EG On The Move, while both continue to steer their joint philanthropy through the Issa Foundation.

Mansour, Sir Mohamed (new)

Sir Mohamed Mansour is a billionaire businessman, investor and former government minister who chairs the Mansour Group. The group employs more than 60,000 people, operates in over 100 countries and has interests spanning automotive, industrial equipment, finance, technology, consumer goods and logistics. He has also become a major investor in football as Chairman of Right to Dream and founding partner and Chairman of San Diego FC, which began competing in Major League Soccer in 2025. In 2024, King Charles III awarded Mansour a knighthood for services to business, charity and politics. In 2026, Forbes estimated his fortune at $4 billion.

Randeree, Shabir

Shabir Randeree CBE is a prominent British entrepreneur, pioneer of Islamic finance, and leading philanthropist. He serves as the Chairman of DCD Group and the founding director of Al Rayan Bank (formerly IBB Bank plc). In July 2025, the UK government appointed the newly established British Muslim Trust (BMT) to lead England and Wales' national monitoring of anti-Muslim hatred, selecting Randeree as its inaugural Chair. A highly influential community leader, he also serves as Chair of The King's Trust International, and is the former Chancellor of the University of East London and former Chair of the Woolf Institute at Cambridge.

North America

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

El-Erian, Dr Mohamed

Dr Mohamed El-Erian is a world-renowned economist, bestselling author, and the President of Queens' College, Cambridge University. He serves as the Chief Economic Adviser at Allianz, the world's largest insurance company, following a distinguished corporate career that included roles as Deputy Director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and CEO and CIO of PIMCO. Widely recognised as one of the world's leading financial minds, he is a prominent columnist for major economic outlets including the *Financial Times* and Bloomberg. He was named one of the Top 100 Global Thinkers by Foreign Policy for four consecutive years.

Khan, Shahid

Shahid Khan is a prominent Pakistani-American billionaire entrepreneur and sports mogul who immigrated to the USA from Pakistan in 1967 at the age of 16. An industrial engineering graduate, he built his fortune through Flex-N-Gate, an automotive components giant that now operates 76 plants worldwide, employing over 27,000 workers and generating more than US$9 billion in annual revenue. Khan's extensive sports empire features ownership of the NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars and the English Premier League club Fulham FC. He is also the lead investor behind the professional wrestling powerhouse All Elite Wrestling (AEW).

Middle East and North Africa

ALGERIA

Belkaid, Professor Yasmine (new)

Professor Yasmine Belkaid is an immunologist whose research has transformed the understanding of the relationship between the immune system and the human microbiome. Following a distinguished scientific career in the United States, she became President of the Pasteur Institute in Paris, one of the world's leading biomedical research institutions. Her work has significantly advanced knowledge of infectious diseases, inflammation, and immune regulation, contributing to the development of new therapeutic approaches. Beyond her research, Belkaid has championed international scientific collaboration and the advancement of women in science.

EGYPT

El-Baz, Dr Farouk

Dr Farouk El-Baz is an eminent Egyptian-American space scientist and geologist celebrated for his pioneering contributions to planetary science and Earth observation. During the NASA Apollo era, he served as supervisor of Lunar Science Planning, playing a pivotal role in selecting lunar landing sites and training astronauts in visual observation and space photography. He also pioneered the use of satellite imagery for groundwater exploration in arid regions. In March 2026, he was awarded the Michael Collins Trophy for Lifetime Achievement by the National Air and Space Museum. His vast legacy also includes two Geological Society of America awards established in his honour, Egypt's Order of Merit, and an asteroid named after him by the International Astronomical Union.

IRAN

Ebtekar, Dr Masoumeh

Dr Masoumeh Ebtekar is a university professor, who holds a PhD in Immunology and has published numerous peer-reviewed studies on cellular immunity. Beyond the laboratory, her leadership in sustainable development earned her the United Nations Environment Programme's prestigious Champions of the Earth award. She made history as Iran's first female Vice President, managing environmental protection. In April 2026, her son, Seyed Eissa Hashemi, his wife, and son were arrested in the USA and had their permanent resident status abruptly revoked by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio due to their familial ties to Ebtekar and held in ICE custody.

Khademhosseini, Professor Ali

Dr Ali Khademhosseini is an Iranian-Canadian-American bioengineer, serial entrepreneur, and a world-renowned leader in micro- and nano-engineered biomaterials for regenerative medicine. He previously served as the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of the Terasaki Institute for Biomedical Innovation (TIBI) in Los Angeles until October 2025, when he left to spearhead stealth startup ventures combining artificial intelligence and biomedical science. A former Levi Knight Professor at UCLA and Professor at Harvard Medical School, he has authored over 750 peer-reviewed articles and holds dozens of patents, including technologies acquired by Boston Scientific. A perennially highly cited researcher, his accolades include the Mustafa Prize, the PECASE, and the 2025 Materials Research Society (MRS) Mid-Career Researcher Award.

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 specialising 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 Vessem Award (2014), and the Mustafa Prize (2017).

JORDAN

Amin, Tareq

Tareq Amin is a Jordanian-American technologist recognised as a foremost global innovator in telecommunications and artificial intelligence. A Portland State University graduate, he began his career at Intel before leading India's 4G revolution at Reliance Jio and building the world's first fully virtualised Open RAN mobile network as CTO of Rakuten Mobile. After serving as CEO of Aramco Digital, he was appointed CEO of HUMAIN in May 2025. Managing massive megawatt data centres, sovereign Arabic LLMs, and partnerships with Nvidia, AWS, and AMD, Amin was named to TIME's 100 Most Influential in AI.

Dajani, Professor Rana

Professor Rana Dajani is professor of molecular biology at the Hashemite University in Jordan. Her groundbreaking research on intergenerational epigenetics of trauma in humans formed the basis of a new framework for mental health. She has shaped national and regional stem cell laws and served on global scientific and UN councils, including as President of the Society for the Advancement of Science and Technology in the Arab World. She has been a visiting professor at Harvard, Yale, MIT, Cambridge, and the Jepson School of Leadership. A social entrepreneur and founder of We Love Reading, she has promoted literacy and community leadership by establishing over 8,000 libraries in 70+ countries. Her honours include the UNESCO Literacy Prize, Nansen UNHCR Award, and fellowships from Fulbright, Eisenhower, Bosch, Ashoka, Yale, TWAS and ISC. Her book Five Scarves reimagines success through science, equity, and innovation.

Masad, Amjad (new)

Amjad Masad is an entrepreneur and the co-founder and CEO of Replit, a premier AI-powered software development platform. Raised in Amman and a graduate of Princess Sumaya University for Technology, Masad moved to the US, working at Codecademy and leading Facebook's JavaScript infrastructure team. In March 2026, Replit raised $400 million at a $9 billion valuation, tripling its worth in six months and cementing Masad's status as a billionaire. In May 2026, King Abdullah II awarded him the Order for Distinction. Deeply committed to the Arab world, Masad's Replit developed Siraj, an AI-powered Arabic learning assistant serving 1.3 million users across Jordan's schools.

SAUDI ARABIA

Al-Namankany, Dr Abeer

Dr Abeer Al-Namankany is an internationally acclaimed Saudi clinician and researcher who revolutionised paediatric dentistry by inventing the Abeer Children Dental Anxiety Scale (MCDASf). Her groundbreaking, drug-free psychotherapy standard effectively treats clinical phobia, protecting vulnerable patients from the severe risks of general anaesthesia and chemical sedatives. Her pioneering academic and clinical contributions have earned her six prestigious awards, including honours from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry. In addition to her medical achievements, Dr Al-Namankany serves as an influential social activist, dedicating her platform to defending the fundamental rights of women and children globally.

Sindi, Dr Hayat

Dr Hayat Sindi is a world-renowned Saudi biotechnologist and medical pioneer celebrated for her groundbreaking advancements in point-of-care medical testing. She holds nine patents for diagnostic technologies, including early breast cancer detection systems, and co-founded Diagnostics For All to bring low-cost healthcare tools to developing regions. Sindi broke immense barriers as the first Saudi and Arab woman to earn a PhD in biotechnology from Cambridge University, later becoming one of the first female members of Saudi Arabia's Consultative Assembly. Currently serving as Chief Advisor to the President of the Islamic Development Bank on Science, Technology, and Innovation, she is also a prominent UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. Sindi's global profile includes being named a National Geographic Emerging Explorer and receiving the Clinton Global Citizen Award.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Matar, Dr Maryam

Dr Maryam Matar is a pioneering Emirati scientist and leader in preventative medicine, genetics, and health span innovation. Driven to eradicate preventable suffering, Dr Matar founded and chairs the UAE Genetic Diseases Association (UAEGDA). Her highly successful national screening campaigns, such as "UAE Free of Thalassemia", have successfully and

dramatically reduced genetic disorder rates across the nation. Formally recognised by the British Scientific Community as one of the top 20 Arab scientists with the greatest contribution to humanity, she remains a prominent global advocate for longevity medicine and evidence-based regenerative healthcare frameworks.

Sub-Saharan Africa

SOUTH AFRICA

Karim, Professor Salim Abdool (new)

Professor Karim is one of Africa's foremost epidemiologists and public health experts. His research has significantly advanced global understanding of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and emerging infectious diseases, while his leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic brought international recognition to South African scientific expertise. His contributions have earned numerous international honours, culminating in the Order of Mapungubwe in Gold, South Africa's highest civilian recognition, and established him as one of the Muslim world's leading scientific figures.

Asia

INDIA

Hasan, Dr Hashima

Dr Hashima Hasan is a theoretical nuclear physicist and a key program scientist behind NASA's historic James Webb Space Telescope (JWST). Born in Lucknow, India, she earned her master's degree in physics from Aligarh Muslim University and a doctorate from the University of Oxford. Since joining NASA Headquarters in 1994, Dr Hasan has monitored and managed the scientific directions of over a dozen deep-space operations. Beyond her vital deputy role on the JWST, she serves as the Astrophysics Education and Communication Lead, ensuring complex deep-space missions align with strategic global scientific objectives.

INDONESIA

Afifa, Dr Nadhira Nuraini

Dr Nadhira Nuraini Afifa is a medical doctor and prominent health educator. After graduating cum laude from Universitas Indonesia, she earned her Master of Public Health from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Driven by social equity, she founded the Limitless Foundation, a Jakarta-based non-profit offering mentorship, soft-skills training, and educational scholarships to underprivileged youth. Additionally, she leverages her massive social media presence and regular contributions to national news media to make complex nutritional science accessible to the general public.

Mumpuni, Tri

Tri Mumpuni spent 30 years improving rural communities in Indonesia through electrification initiatives based on developments with micro-hydroelectric power plants. 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 organisation whose mission is to promote community development via the provision of local energy, mainly hydroelectricity, and also clean water. In 2021, then-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 trained at Star City in Russia and was subsequently selected into 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. He is the Founder of 'Angkasawan Foundation' encouraging more students to become doctors and 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 education and STEM. He has been to Gaza, Palestine twice for humanitarian aid.

PAKISTAN

Professor Atta-Ur-Rahman

Professor Atta-Ur-Rahman FRS is one of Pakistan's most distinguished organic chemists and a transformative leader in higher education. After earning his PhD from Cambridge University, where he

remains a Life Fellow of King's College, he pioneered vital research in natural product chemistry and molecular structures. In 1999, Dr Rahman became the first Muslim scientist to win the UNESCO Science Prize. Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (London) in 2006, he has garnered immense global acclaim, including the Chinese Academy of Sciences' highest international honours. As the founding Chairman of Pakistan's Higher Education Commission and former Minister for Science and Technology, his visionary leadership institutionalised academic excellence and research infrastructure across the nation. Today, institutions in Malaysia and China are named in his honour. He continues to serve as Co-Chairman of a UN Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation, bridging Islamic-world scholarship with global scientific advancement.

Saif, Dr Umar

Dr Saif created the first startup incubators in Pakistan: the Saif Center of Innovation. He was the first Pakistani to be named as one of the top 35 young innovators in the world by the MIT Technology Review (TR35) and the first Pakistani to receive a Google Faculty Research Award in 2011. 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. 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 one of the largest AI companies in data analytics in the region, with business operations in over 51 countries.

Siddiqi, Professor Irfan

Professor Irfan Siddiqi is a pioneering physicist celebrated for his foundational contributions to quantum measurement science, notably the development of the Josephson bifurcation amplifier. Born in Pakistan, he immigrated to the United States, where he completed his elite academic training at Columbia, Harvard, and Yale universities. He currently serves as the Director of the Advanced Quantum Testbed at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and is a Professor of Physics at the University of California, Berkeley, where he previously chaired the physics department and established the Quantum Nanoelectronics Laboratory. Renowned for his breakthroughs in quantum computing and superconducting qubits, Dr Siddiqi's profound impact has earned him the Joseph F. Keithley Award (2021). His status as a leading global scholar was further cemented in 2024 with his election to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

THAILAND

Dahlan, Professor Winai

Professor 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.

Europe

FRANCE

Guiderdoni, Dr Bruno Abd al Haqq

Dr Bruno Abd al Haqq Guiderdoni is an eminent French astrophysicist and a leading global voice on the harmony between science and religion. His scientific research centres on the early universe and galaxy formation, yielding over 150 published papers. He previously served as the Director of the Lyon Observatory (2005–2015) and continues his work as a Research Director at the prestigious CNRS. Dr Guiderdoni has also authored around 80 papers on Islamic theology and Sufi mysticism. As the Director of the Islamic Institute for Advanced Studies, he focuses heavily on developing a modern Islamic discourse on science. For years, he hosted the television show "Knowing Islam" on France 2, cementing his role as a vital ambassador of the faith in Europe.

GERMANY

Şahin, Dr Uğur

Dr Uğur Şahin is a Turkish-German immunologist globally celebrated for co-developing the world's first approved mRNA-based vaccine against Covid-19 in partnership with Pfizer. Born in Türkiye, his family

emigrated to Germany, where he studied medicine at the University of Cologne. In 2008, Şahin co-founded BioNTech alongside his wife, Dr Özlem Türeci, and mentor Christoph Huber, serving as its long-term CEO to pioneer mRNA-based individualised cancer immunotherapies. Marking a major professional transition, Şahin announced plans to step down as CEO by the end of 2026 to launch a new independent venture dedicated to next-generation mRNA innovations. A recipient of the 2026 Sabin Gold Medal, he remains an influential pioneer reshaping global vaccine ecosystems and the future of oncology.

TÜRKIYE

Bayraktar, Selçuk

Selçuk Bayraktar is the mastermind of Türkiye's indigenous aerospace revolution, serving as Chairman and CTO of Baykar Technologies. His engineering has propelled Türkiye into a premier global drone export superpower. Beyond defense infrastructure, Bayraktar champions strategic tech autonomy and youth education. He chairs the T3 Foundation and masterminds TEKNOFEST, the world's largest aerospace and technology festival. Recognised among Türkiye's top 10 wealthiest figures and its highest individual taxpayer, Bayraktar stands as an iconic Muslim pioneer combining technical excellence with national pride.

Gelenbe, Dr Erol

Professor Erol Gelenbe is recognised globally as a pioneer in computer network modeling and performance evaluation. Educated in Türkiye and the USA, he held prestigious chairs at institutions like Imperial College London and Duke University. He revolutionised information technology through his inventions of the Random Neural Network, G-networks, and Cognitive Packet Network. Dr Gelenbe currently serves as a Professor at the Polish Academy of Sciences and chairs the Academia Europaea's Informatics Section. Having graduated over 95 PhD students, his immense lifelong impact on AI, telecommunications, and cybersecurity has earned him top civilian honors from France, Belgium, Italy, and Poland. Recently elected to the Indian National Science Academy, he continues to lead cutting-edge research in sustainable low-carbon computing globally.

İmamoğlu, Dr Ataç

Professor Ataç İmamoğlu is celebrated for his foundational contributions to quantum optics, semiconductor physics, and quantum computation. An alumnus of the Middle East Technical University in Ankara and Stanford University, he held esteemed professorships at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the University of Stuttgart. In 2002, he joined ETH Zurich, where he leads the pioneering Quantum Photonics Group.

Sancar, Dr Aziz

Professor Aziz Sancar is a world-renowned molecular biologist and co-recipient of the 2015 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his groundbreaking mechanistic mapping of DNA repair. After studying medicine at Istanbul University, Sancar moved to the USA, where he now serves as the Sarah Graham Kenan Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A recipient of the Hyman L. Battle Distinguished Cancer Research Award, he also co-founded the Aziz and Gwen Sancar Foundation, a prominent cultural center dedicated to supporting Turkish students and promoting closer Turkish-American academic exchanges.

UNITED KINGDOM

Barakat, Professor Maha

Professor Maha Taysir Barakat OBE is a world-renowned British-trained endocrinologist and global health diplomat serving as the Assistant Minister for Medical Affairs and Life Sciences at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A Cambridge University PhD graduate, she previously co-founded the Imperial College London Diabetes Centre in Abu Dhabi and served as Director General of the Health Authority Abu Dhabi. In her current ministerial role, Barakat leads transnational humanitarian responses, including directing the UAE's Frontline Heroes Office to protect crisis-response networks. Globally, she chairs the Board of the RBM Partnership to End Malaria, orchestrating cross-border health initiatives to eradicate infectious diseases across Africa and the Middle East.

North America

CANADA

Ghilan, Dr Mohamed

Dr Mohamed Ghilan is a physician, neuroscientist,

and Islamic educator. Born in Riyadh to parents of Sudanese and Yemeni heritage, he was raised in Canada, where he completed his undergraduate studies before earning a PhD in Neuroscience from the University of Victoria in 2015. Dr Ghilan began formally studying the traditional Islamic sciences in 2007 and has continued these studies alongside his scientific and medical career. He teaches Islamic theology, Maliki jurisprudence, spirituality, and the Islamic intellectual tradition through Al-Andalus Academy. His broader work explores the intersections of medicine, science, philosophy, spirituality, and the Islamic tradition.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Elgamal, Dr Taher

Dr Taher Elgamal is a world-renowned Egyptian-American cryptographer celebrated as the "father of SSL". In the 1990s, he invented the security technology that makes online shopping and safe internet browsing possible today. His mathematical breakthroughs also created the global blueprint for modern digital signatures. An elected member of the US National Academy of Engineering, Elgamal has received the prestigious Marconi Prize for his tech innovations. After a decade as the Chief Technology Officer of Security at Salesforce, he became a Partner at Evolution Equity Partners, a multi-billion-dollar cybersecurity investment firm. Today, he remains a vital global authority on protecting internet infrastructure from artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum computing threats.

Hatamleh, Dr Omar

Dr Omar Hatamleh is a premier global authority on artificial intelligence and space technology. He recently concluded a distinguished 29-year career at NASA, where he served as the first Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. In this landmark role, he architected the agency's long-term AI frameworks. Ranked among the Top 100 Global Thought Leaders in AI, Dr Hatamleh has received the NASA Innovation Award, the Silver Achievement Medal, and high civilian honours from King Abdullah II of Jordan. The co-author of the book *Between Brains*, he now advises international technology funds and guides global panels on AI disruption.

Khan, Dr Mehmood

Dr Mehmood Khan, MD, is Chief Executive Officer of the Hevolution Foundation, a global non-profit advancing healthspan science and biotechnology. He previously served as CEO and Executive Chairman of Life Biosciences, where he led efforts to address age-related decline, and held senior leadership roles including Vice Chairman and Chief Scientific Officer of Global R&D at PepsiCo and President of Global R&D at Takeda Pharmaceuticals. Dr Khan serves on the Board of Directors of International Flavors and Fragrance and has advised multiple organisations, including as Chair of NIST's Visiting Committee on Advanced Technology and the Saudi National Biotechnology Strategy Steering Committee.

Siddique, Professor Teepu

Professor Dr Teepu Siddique is a globally renowned neurogeneticist. He is celebrated for discovering the primary genetic and molecular mechanisms causing amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). A graduate of Dow Medical College in Karachi, he spent decades pioneering neurodegenerative research in the United States. As the long-term Director of the Neuromuscular Medicine Division at Northwestern University, Dr Siddique and his team successfully mapped the gene defect linked to familial ALS and created the world's first animal model for ALS dementia.

Ying, Professor Jackie Y

Professor Jackie Y Ying is a world-renowned pioneer in nanotechnology and bioengineering. She currently serves as the Chief Innovation and Research Officer at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Centre in Riyadh. At the age of 35, she made history as the youngest full professor of chemical engineering at MIT. She also founded Singapore's NanoBio Lab under A*STAR. Her invention of smart nanoparticles for targeted insulin delivery led to her spin-off company, SmartCells, being acquired by Merck. A member of the US National Academy of Engineering, she received the 2023 King Faisal Prize in Science. She is featured on the first Forbes 50 Over 50 Global List of Women Trailblazers (2025).

Middle East and North Africa

ALGERIA

Mosteghanemi, Ahlam

Ahlam Mosteghanemi is a poet and best-selling novelist widely revered as one of the most influential female Arab authors. Earning her PhD from the Sorbonne, her historic 1993 breakout novel, *Memory in the Flesh*, won the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature and sold millions of copies worldwide for its profound exploration of Algerian independence. Designated a UNESCO Artist for Peace, she has consistently been recognised by Forbes for her literary impact. She was named the "Cultural Personality of the Year" at the Sharjah International Book Fair in 2024, celebrating over five decades of contributions to Arabic literature.

EGYPT

Al-Aswany, Dr Alaa

Dr Alaa Al-Aswany is an internationally acclaimed novelist and prominent pro-democracy intellectual. He achieved global literary stardom with his 2002 masterpiece, *The Yacoubian Building*, which heavily critiqued the corruption of the Mubarak regime. Facing censorship and state opposition at home, he continues to author celebrated works from self-imposed exile, including *The Republic of False Truths* and *The Trees Walk in Alexandria*. Recipient of over 20 international literary honors, Al-Aswany regularly advocates for freedom of expression through international publications like *Deutsche Welle* and his global writing workshops.

Badreya, Sayed

Sayed Badreya is a pioneering Egyptian-born actor and filmmaker who has broken barriers in Hollywood for over three decades, appearing in major blockbusters like *Iron Man* and *The Dictator*. Through his production company, Zoom in Focus, he works to transform western perceptions by showcasing authentic Arab-American narratives. Badreya achieved immense critical acclaim for his performance in the British short film *Jellyfish and Lobster,* which won Best British Short Film at the BAFTA Awards. Continuing his Hollywood footprint, he recently starred in the Apple Original series *WondLa* and the festival hit *Hello Beautiful.*

Namira, Hamza

Hamza Namira is an iconic Egyptian singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist hailed globally as the "Voice of the Revolution" following the 2011 Arab Spring. His music masterfully addresses themes of humanism, social justice, alienation, and hope, earning him over 20 million social media followers. Namira recently celebrated a landmark 1 billion views on his YouTube channel. After years of performing in exile due to his political stances, he returned to Egypt to hold massive sold-out concerts. Beyond his music, Namira is a dedicated humanitarian, leveraging his platform to support global relief campaigns alongside Islamic charities.

Ramadan, Mohamed (new)

Mohamed Ramadan is an Egyptian actor, rap artist, and multi-platinum singer who has become one of the most prominent pop-culture phenomena in the Middle East and North Africa. Known for his record-breaking television series and highly cinematic, energetic music videos, Ramadan commands a multi-million-strong global digital following. His work blends contemporary trap music with traditional Egyptian street culture, capturing the imaginations of youth across the Arab world. A proud cultural ambassador, Ramadan leverages his massive platform to drive international artistic collaborations and support various regional humanitarian and social development initiatives. He commands a global digital following of over 85 million followers.

Waked, Amr

Amr Waked is an internationally acclaimed Egyptian actor, producer, and political activist who successfully transitioned into a crossover Hollywood star with roles in *Syriana* and *Lucy*. Heavily involved in the historic street protests that overthrew successive Egyptian regimes, Waked was sentenced in absentia to eight years in prison by a military court for his anti-regime activism. Living in exile in Spain, he commands a massive audience of over 6 million followers on X. Waked remains highly active as the creator and host of the hit investigative documentary series

Decoded (Dahaleez) on Al Jazeera.

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. In recognition of his lifelong contribution to the revival and contemporary reinterpretation of traditional Islamic architecture, he received the 2025 Tamayouz Lifetime Achievement Award.

IRAN

Alidoosti, Taraneh

Taraneh Alidoosti is one of Iran's most celebrated and influential modern actresses. Named the best actress of the decade by *Film Monthly*, she made history as the youngest person ever to win the Crystal Simorgh for Best Actress. She gained massive global recognition for starring in the masterpiece film *The Salesman*, which won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Boasting over 8 million social media followers, Alidoosti is an outspoken human rights advocate. Following her public support for Iranian civil protests and a brief imprisonment, she remains under an active travel ban while serving as a global symbol of artistic resistance.

Farhadi, Asghar

Asghar Farhadi is an award-winning 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* and recently presented his new film *Parallel Tales* there.

Majidi, Majid

Majid Majidi is a world-renowned film director, producer, and screenwriter whose visually stunning cinema routinely champions marginalised youth. He made history when his film *Children of Heaven* became the first-ever Iranian film to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. In 2015, he directed the historical epic *Muhammad: The Messenger of God*, which stands as the most expensive production in Iranian cinematic history. Majidi continues to shape global cinema; his film *Sun Children* won the Crystal Simorgh at home and was shortlisted for the Oscars.

Mr Explosive (new)

"Mr Explosive" is the anonymous Iranian digital creator leading Explosive Media, a student-led collective that has achieved hundreds of millions of online views for its sharp animations satirising the US war on Iran. Using fast-paced, AI-generated LEGO shorts set to hip-hop, he lampoons Western military policy while explicitly calling out the actions of Benjamin Netanyahu, the central driving force behind Middle Eastern devastation. A core component of his anti-Trump satire involves featuring the Epstein files. In viral clips, a LEGO Trump is depicted tumbling through a whirlwind of leaked Jeffrey Epstein documents. The underlying message focuses on global social justice, showing profound solidarity with Palestine and the people of Gaza by dedicating missiles to the "children of Epstein island" and victims of geopolitical oppression.

Nazeri, Shahram

Shahram Nazeri is an internationally acclaimed master of classical Persian, folkloric Kurdish, and Sufi music. Hailed by the Christian Science Monitor as "Iran's Pavarotti", Nazeri was the first vocalist to set Rumi's poetry to traditional Persian music, revolutionising Sufi musical traditions. Over a career spanning several decades, he has released more than 50 albums and performed at legendary venues like the Royal Albert Hall. Honored with France's prestigious National Order of Merit, Nazeri remains an irreplaceable global cultural icon who bridges ancient spiritual mysticism with contemporary world music.

LEBANON

Assaf, Roger

Roger Assaf is a prominent director, actor, and playwright who has spent over five decades shaping the

landscape of modern Arab theatre. Alongside his wife, actress Hanane Hajj-Ali, Assaf co-founded the legendary Al-Hakawati Theatre Company and established the Shams Cultural Cooperative for Youth. These pioneering institutions utilise experimental theatre and oral histories to provide underprivileged and marginalised youth with a vital public forum for creative self-expression. Assaf remains a celebrated pioneer of socially conscious art, using theatre as a tool for community empowerment.

MOROCCO

Lalami, Dr Laila

Dr Laila Lalami is an award-winning novelist, essayist, and prominent cultural critic. A Professor of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside, her historical fiction masterpiece *The Moor's Account* was a finalist for the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in Fiction and won the American Book Award. Her subsequent novel, *The Other Americans*, achieved critical acclaim as a finalist for the National Book Award. Her novel *The Dream Hotel* was a major international bestseller and continued to receive widespread critical acclaim throughout 2026. Beyond her celebrated fiction, Lalami is a vital intellectual voice whose political commentary and opinion essays feature regularly in major global publications like *The New York Times*.

PALESTINE

Abdelhamid, Marwan (Saint Levant)

Marwan Abdelhamid, widely known as Saint Levant, is a prominent Palestinian-Algerian-French musical voice of the modern Arab diaspora. Born in Jerusalem and raised in Gaza, he rose to international stardom by blending Arabic, English, and French across hip-hop, R&B, and traditional Middle Eastern beats. Following his acclaimed 2024 debut studio album *Deira* and his 2025 release *Love Letters*, he released his highly anticipated second studio album, *Afandi*, in August 2026. Beyond music, his cultural influence has expanded into global high fashion, with him being named Prada's first Palestinian brand ambassador for the 2027 season. Saint Levant utilises his immense international media platform to passionately advocate for Palestinian liberation.

Abu Toha, Mosab

Mosab Abu Toha is an award-winning Palestinian poet, essayist, and librarian from the Gaza Strip. He is the founder of the Edward Said Library, Gaza's first English-language library. His 2022 debut collection, *Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear,* won an American Book Award and a Palestine Book Award. A widespread chronicler of diasporic reality and conflict, his articles appear regularly in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. Abu Toha was awarded the 2025 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary for his powerful essays on Gaza, followed by the acclaim of his second collection, *Forest of Noise*.

Al-Barghouti, Dr Tamim

Dr Tamim Al-Barghouti is a celebrated Palestinian poet, political scientist, and columnist affectionately nicknamed the "Poet of Jerusalem". Holding a PhD from Boston University, he has lectured at Georgetown University and the Free University of Berlin. He hosts the highly popular weekly digital programme "Ma' Tamim" on AJ+. Al-Barghouti achieved widespread fame with his iconic 2007 poem 'Fil-Qudsi' (In Jerusalem), which resonated with millions across the Arab world. His stirring verses are captured in his translated compilation, *In Jerusalem and Other Poems*, published by Simon & Schuster.

SUDAN

Aboulela, Leila

Leila Aboulela, FRSL is a highly acclaimed Sudanese-born novelist, playwright, and short-story writer. Celebrated for her subtle prose on identity and faith, she is the 2025 winner of the prestigious PEN Pinter Prize and the inaugural winner of the Caine Prize for African Writing. Aboulela has authored six historical and contemporary novels, including *River Spirit* and *The Translator*, which was named a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. Her collection *Elsewhere, Home* won the Saltire Fiction Book of the Year, and she serves as an Honorary Professor at the University of Aberdeen.

Sub-Saharan Africa

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 Guinean 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 saw him back on tour and a new album 'So kono', was released in 2025.

NIGER

Souleymane, Mahamadou

Mahamadou Souleymane, known as Mdou Moctar, is a Tuareg songwriter, musician and actor from Agadez, Niger. He is one of the first musicians to perform modern electronic adaptations of Tuareg guitar music. 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 Taha 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.

NIGERIA

Yahya, Maryam

Maryam Yahya is a celebrated actress and leading civic activist within Northern Nigeria's Hausa-language Kannywood film industry. Known for her compelling, emotionally resonant screen performances, Yahya masterfully leverages her massive social media platform to promote women's empowerment, formal education, and the preservation of Hausa culture. She has emerged as a crucial advocate for Northern Nigerian youth, frequently speaking out against structural challenges such as high youth unemployment and child marriage, bridging artistic excellence with bold community leadership.

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 has won him an international fan base of millions. A member of the Mouride brotherhood, 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, worked with the United Nations and UNICEF, and he started Project Joko to open internet cafés to connect Senegalese communities. He is the subject of the award-winning films *Return to Gorée* (2007) and *I Bring What I Love* (2008). In 2026, he was appointed Vice President of CISAC (the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers), and his album *Éclairer le monde* (Light the World) received a Grammy nomination for Best Global Music Album at the 68th Grammy Awards.

SOMALIA

Abdulmajid, Iman

Iman Abdulmajid was born Zara Mohamed Abdulmajid in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1955. She is a supermodel, 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 world-renowned singer-songwriter and a foundational pioneer of English-language *nasheed* (Islamic song). Mentored by Yusuf Islam and famous for his collaborations with Dawud Wharnsby, Bhikha has spent over three decades at the forefront of faith-inspired music, releasing more than 15 albums. In 2005, he founded Zain Bhikha Studios, a public benefit organisation and Waqf that produces uplifting content and guides creative education. Marking a return to his adult-focused signature sound, his 2025 album, Love & Loss, offers a deeply personal reflection on grief, family, healing, and faith. Continuing to bridge generations, Bhikha collaborates with younger international creatives to inspire global peace, compassion, and a greater closeness to the Almighty.

TANZANIA

Gurnah, Professor Abdulrazak

Professor Abdulrazak Gurnah is a world-renowned, Tanzanian-born British novelist and academic awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2021. Born in Zanzibar, he moved to Britain as a student, eventually becoming a Professor of English and Postcolonial Literatures at the University of Kent. Gurnah has published ten widely acclaimed novels, including *Paradise*, which was shortlisted for both the Booker Prize and the Whitbread Prize. In 2026, he received an honorary Doctor of Literature degree from Stellenbosch University and was honoured with the PEN Italia–Alberto Moravia Prize and the Taobuk Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to world literature.

Asia

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 55 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.

Sayeed, Aryana

Aryana Sayeed is an iconic pop star, songwriter, and tireless women's rights activist. Forced to leave Afghanistan as a child due to the civil war, her family eventually settled in Switzerland. Rising to fame in the late 2000s, she became a household name and was officially crowned the "Voice of Afghanistan". She also was a judge in hit reality shows like *The Voice of Afghanistan* and *Afghan Star*, where she actively championed female contestant participation. Following the 2021 Taliban takeover, Sayeed relocated to London and turned her exile into a powerful platform for resistance. She completed massive international tours across Europe and North America, including a historic, sold-out performance at London's Indigo at The O2. In August 2026, she released the landmark single *Zan Zindagi,* a powerful tribute to the resilience, bravery, and unwavering hope of Afghan women and girls.

AZERBAIJAN

Qasimov, Alim

Alim Qasimov is widely recognised as one of the most brilliant master singers of traditional Islamic folk and mugham music in the world. Revered by *The New York Times* as simply "one of the greatest singers alive", Qasimov is a recipient of the prestigious International IMC-UNESCO Music Prize and was nominated for NPR's celebrated "50 Great Voices" series. Throughout his decades-long career, he has recorded nine foundational albums and completed global arena tours. In 2026, he released the widely popular single *Cavanlığım* and launched the acclaimed performance piece *Sama*, a dynamic spiritual collaboration fusing the vocal soul of Azerbaijani mugham with contemporary choreography.

CHINA

Noor Deen, Haji (Mi Guang Jiang)

Haji Noor Deen Mi Guang Jiang is a world-renowned master calligrapher celebrated for creating a brilliant artistic bridge between Islamic and Chinese traditions. Born in Shandong Province, he made history in 1997 as the first Chinese Muslim to be awarded the prestigious Certificate of Arabic Calligraphy in Egypt. He later achieved his *ijaza* from elite Ottoman masters in Istanbul, becoming the first Chinese person to receive this formal recognition. Noor Deen's compositions are permanently housed in world-class institutions, including The British Museum and Harvard University Art Museum. Following his historic 30-volume transcription of the entire Qur'an in the traditional Sīni Mushafi style, he continues to shape global sacred arts. He leads advanced global courses through the Deen Arts Foundation and is spearheading a massive cultural development project to establish "The Chinese House for the Arts of Islamic Arabic Calligraphy" gallery in Henan.

INDIA

Azmi, Shabana

Shabana Azmi is widely revered as one of India's finest and most influential actresses across film, television, and theatre. Over a career spanning more than 150 Hindi and international films, she has won the National Film Award for Best Actress a record five times and garnered numerous global accolades. Beyond her artistic excellence, Azmi is a prominent social activist who leverages mainstream media to fight injustice, spearheading massive campaigns for women's rights, child survival, and slum dwellers. A former UN Population Fund Goodwill Ambassador and nominated member of India's parliament (Rajya Sabha), she continues to dominate the global stage. Following her Lifetime Achievement Award at the Bengaluru International Film Festival, she captivated global audiences by starring in the hit 2025 Netflix crime drama *Dabba Cartel.* She remains an iconic, active cross-cultural force for cinema and social change.

Khan, Aamir

Aamir Khan is one of Indian cinema's most influential and iconic actor-producers. Known for blending box-office success with profound social relevance, Khan's production company launched the historic masterpiece *Lagaan* (2001), earning an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Language Film. He has consistently shattered international box-office records with era-defining hits like *Dhoom 3*, *3 Idiots*, *PK*, and *Dangal* (2016). Beyond blockbusters, Khan's lifetime legacy is anchored by his devotion to humanitarian and civic issues. As a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador focusing on child nutrition and a leading activist through his television show *Satyamev Jayate* and the Paani Foundation, his creative work addresses social issues.

Khan, Salman (new)

Salman Khan remains one of Indian cinema's most commercially successful actors, producers, and television hosts, commanding a vast global fanbase. Beyond his massive box-office influence in Bollywood, Khan is widely recognised for his extensive philanthropic work through his charitable foundation, Being Human. The organisation funds vital healthcare and education initiatives for underprivileged communities across India. Balancing a high-profile entertainment career with low-profile charitable contributions, Khan's immense cultural footprint and enduring star power make him one of the most visible and influential Muslim cultural icons in South Asia. He holds a massive digital presence with a cross-platform following exceeding 147 million followers across Instagram, X, and Facebook.

Khan, Shah Rukh (new)

Shah Rukh Khan, hailed as the "King of Bollywood", is a global cinematic icon and one of the world's most successful film stars. His four-decade career is defined by historic box-office triumphs. An articulate representative of his faith in the global public sphere, Khan speaks openly about his identity and frequently champions Islam's core principles of peace, self-discipline, and tolerance. Beyond cinema, he founded the Meer Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to supporting acid attack survivors and empowering marginalised women in India.

Rahman, Allah Rakha

Allahrakha (A. R.) Rahman is a legendary Indian composer, music producer, and humanitarian widely revered as the *Mozart of Madras.* In 2011, *Time* described him as the world's most prominent and prolific film composer. He made global history by becoming the first Indian to win a Golden Globe and two Academy Awards for *Slumdog Millionaire*, alongside two Grammy Awards. His profound lifetime impact lies in bridging traditional Eastern classical arrangements with electronic global world music. A UN Global Ambassador for the Stop TB Partnership, he has been honoured with a street namesake in Ontario, Canada, and serves as the Honorary President of Trinity Laban. Continuously pushing creative boundaries, Rahman won the XTIC Award for Innovation for his virtual reality film *Le Musk* and recently announced his highly anticipated official autobiography, *Rahman: A Renaissance.*

INDONESIA

Nadia, Asma

Asma Nadia is a prolific author, publisher, and creative consultant renowned for her bestselling novels and short stories focused on family and Islamic themes. She has authored over 114 books, with more than 20 adapted into television series and major films, including the critically acclaimed *Surga Yang Tak Dirindukan* trilogy. She recently expanded her cinematic footprint by writing the screenplay and producing the film *Hayya 3: Gaza*. Nadia co-founded Forum Lingkar Pena and the *I Can Write Community* (Komunitas Bisa Menulis), which has established over

300 libraries for underprivileged children across the country. She currently serves as the CEO of KBM for Kids. An international public speaker and passionate activist, Nadia utilises her extensive global platform to address pressing social issues, actively directing the royalties from her landmark book *Sebelum Aku Tiada (Surat-Surat dari Palestina)* toward humanitarian and relief efforts in Gaza.

Rosa, Dr Helvy Tiana

Dr Helvy Tiana Rosa is widely recognised as a pioneer of contemporary Islamic literature in Indonesia, having written more than 100 books over a 40-year career. Her contribution has been recognised with more than 50 national and international awards in literature and women's empowerment. In 1997, she founded Forum Lingkar Pena, a writing community that has since grown into a network spanning more than 200 cities in Indonesia and abroad. She teaches Creative Writing at the State University of Jakarta (UNJ) and, alongside her academic work, has built a parallel career as a film producer. Helvy currently serves as Vice Chair of the Academy of Islamic Arts, Culture, and Civilization under the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). Her recent work reflects a sustained commitment to the Palestinian cause: she produced *Hayya 3: Gaza* (2025), and her newly released short story collection, *Gaza: A Night in Jakarta* (2026), continues to advocate for Palestine's struggle for freedom.

Sulis

Sulis (born Sulistyowati) is an iconic Indonesian nasheed singer who rose to nationwide fame as a child prodigy under the mentorship of legendary religious artist Haddad Alwi. In 1999, at just nine years old, she co-released the historic album *Cinta Rasul Vol. 1*. It became the best-selling *nasheed* album in Indonesian history, spawning a highly successful multi-volume franchise. Sulis revolutionised the *nasheed* genre by blending traditional vocals with contemporary guitars and drums. Reinforcing her enduring artistic and humanitarian impact, she returned to the charts ahead of Ramadan 2026 with the twin singles *Sholawat Cinta* and *Suara Sukma Palestina,* the latter a powerful charity anthem advocating for Palestinian liberation.

KAZAKHSTAN

Kudaibergen, Dimash

Dimash Kudaibergen is a world-renowned Kazakh singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist celebrated for his rare, six-octave vocal range. After becoming an overnight sensation in East Asia, he won major musical honours across China, Russia, and Kazakhstan. He boasts over half a billion views on his YouTube channel and a museum is dedicated to his honour in his hometown of Aktobe. A United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for Migration, Kudaibergen actively uses his global platform for humanitarian causes. He recently launched his highly successful DiMENSIONS world tour, executive-produced the international television project *Voice Beyond Horizon*, and topped global charts with his hit crossover single, *Yazgı*.

MALAYSIA

Hamidun, Hafiz

Hafiz Hamidun is a prominent Malaysian *nasheed* artist, composer, music producer and entrepreneur who has played a significant role in shaping contemporary Islamic music in the Far East. Rising to prominence through his acclaimed Zikir Terapi Diri series, he brought a contemporary approach to devotional music and introduced it to a wider generation of listeners. As the first *nasheed* artist signed by Sony Music, Hafiz continues to bridge faith-inspired music with the mainstream industry. His latest album, *Salawat – The Beloved,* marks his 25th year in the music industry, reflecting his enduring commitment to Islamic music and creative innovation. Beyond music, he is actively involved in philanthropic and charitable initiatives, using his platform to support humanitarian and community causes.

Nurhaliza, Dato' Siti binti Tarudin

Dato' Sri Siti Nurhaliza is a legendary singer, songwriter, and highly successful businesswoman widely regarded as one of Asia's most prominent pop icons. In 2024, she received the country's highest artistic accolade, being crowned Biduanita Negara (National Songstress). She recently celebrated three decades of unmatched musical dominance with her massive, record-breaking *Legacy 30* arena concert. At the start of 2026, she was officially named the Melaka Arts and Culture Icon in recognition of her lifelong dedication to promoting Malaysian culture and heritage. Alongside her 20 studio albums, her influence extends into multi-million-dollar corporate ventures through her SimplySiti cosmetics empire. She was also honoured with an Honorary Master of Creative Arts and Media degree from Sunway University for

her profound cultural impact.

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

Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy is a two-time Academy Award and multi-Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, journalist, and founder of SOC Films. Celebrated for her courageous, socially conscious documentaries like *Saving Face* and *A Girl in the River*, she was honoured by the Government of Pakistan with the *Hilal-e-Imtiaz*. To empower the next generation, she established Patakha Pictures to mentor female filmmakers and directs the Neela Asmaan Residency for artists across the Global South. Obaid-Chinoy made global waves by co-directing Marvel's *Ms. Marvel* series for Disney+, bringing the first mainstream Muslim superhero to screens. She continues to expand her footprint in Hollywood; she directed the critically acclaimed Hulu documentary *Diane von Furstenberg: Woman in Charge* and is actively developing Lucasfilm's highly anticipated *Star Wars: New Jedi Order* feature film.

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 specialises 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

Alhajj Muhammad Owais Raza Qadri is considered an undisputed legend in *naat* recitation. Renowned for his passionate performances and beautiful voice, he has earned the honorific title of "Bulbul-e-Madinah". A deeply devout Muslim, Qadri is highly vocal regarding his profound spiritual love for the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, using his craft to inspire millions globally. Today, he commands a substantial online audience, boasting well over 5 million followers across social media and accumulating more than 240 million views on YouTube.

Sarwar, Syed Nadeem Raza

Syed Nadeem Raza Sarwar remains Pakistan's most revered Shia Noha reciter, with his emotionally intense performances drawing major global audiences during Muharram. His live and recorded sessions are staples of Ashura commemorations across South Asia and diaspora communities. For many, Sarwar's lamentations are integral to devotional practice, sustaining his influence across generations of Shia Muslims worldwide. He has nearly 9 million subscribers and over 4 billion views on YouTube.

Europe

NETHERLANDS

El Mouhandiz, Rajae

Rajae El Mouhandiz is a Dutch/Moroccan/Algerian interdisciplinary artist, producer, curator 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 combines these roles with advisory roles to various large cultural departments and institutions, specialised in music, performing arts, visual representation and interdisciplinary formats.

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 stands as one of the most popular Muslim artists on social media with over 59 million followers across digital platforms and has amassed

over 36 billion views globally. Maher has performed in over 100 charity concerts across 35 countries and remains a high-profile supporter of the UNHCR. He released his highly anticipated fourth studio album, *Back To You,* in 2026

TÜRKIYE

Duzyatan, Engin Altan

Engin Altan Düzyatan is a celebrated Turkish actor and producer best known for his starring role in the globally acclaimed historical drama *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Resurrection: Ertugrul). The series, which tells the story of Ertuğrul Bey—father of Osman I, founder of the Ottoman Empire—has resonated with millions across the Muslim world. Beyond acting, he is the founder of Alpha Production, producing projects that reflect cultural values and social impact. He is also deeply committed to humanitarian work. His clean water initiative in Africa has provided access to safe drinking water for over 100,000 people. In recent years, he produced two environmental documentaries addressing global issues such as plastic waste and water scarcity. Through both his artistic work and activism, Engin Altan Düzyatan continues to inspire audiences around the world.

Pamuk, Orhan

Orhan Pamuk is one of Türkiye's most prominent writers and the country's first-ever Turkish Nobel laureate in Literature. His celebrated bibliography has been translated into 63 languages and has sold more than 13 million copies globally. Pamuk's complex novels explore the intricate friction between East and West, philosophical questions, and Türkiye's rich cultural history. As an influential global intellectual, he consistently provides a critical voice on national and international issues. He serves as the Robert Yik-Fong Tam Professor of the Humanities at Columbia University, where he teaches writing and comparative literature.

Yalçin, Rabia

Rabia Yalçın is a celebrated fashion designer renowned for her Haute Couture line, which features a distinctive synthesis of local heritage and universal culture. Heavily inspired by Ottoman motifs, her creations seamlessly blend traditional craftsmanship with modern textiles for the contemporary woman. As a prominent figure on the European and Middle Eastern fashion circuits, Yalçın has been instrumental in expanding the global influence of modest fashion. Her internationally showcased collections serve as a powerful medium for cross-cultural dialogue.

UNITED KINGDOM

Ahmed, Riz

Riz Ahmed is an Oscar and Emmy-winning actor, musician, and activist celebrated for his dynamic performances in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, *Nightcrawler*, and *The Sound of Metal*, which earned him a groundbreaking Academy Award nomination. In 2026, Ahmed garnered critical acclaim and a Primetime Emmy nomination for creating, writing, and starring in the semi-autobiographical Prime Video limited series *Bait*. He also starred in the hit conspiracy thriller *Relay*. Beyond his cinematic achievements including his Oscar-winning short *The Long Goodbye,* Ahmed is a leading voice for systemic change in media. He championed the "Blueprint for Muslim Inclusion" and inspired the widely referenced "Riz Test" to dismantle harmful on-screen stereotypes. A dedicated humanitarian, he consistently utilises his global platform to advocate for refugee relief and challenge systemic discrimination.

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. She founded BLF in 2014 and, under her leadership, it has grown into the UK's largest diverse-led cultural organisation, amassing a cumulative lifetime audience exceeding 908,000 visitors. She successfully led the 2026 Bradford Literature Festival, which expanded to more than 760 events over 10 days and drew a record-breaking 201,674 attendees. 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.

Hussain, Tharik (new)

Tharik Hussain is an award-winning British-Bangladeshi author, historian and travel writer whose work has brought greater attention to the Muslim heritage of Europe and the West. Combining travel, historical research and heritage interpretation, he challenges conventional narratives that treat Islam as foreign to Europe, highlighting instead centuries of

Muslim presence and cultural exchange. Hussain is best known for *Minarets in the Mountains: A Journey into Muslim Europe*, his exploration of the indigenous Muslim communities of the Western Balkans. The book won the 2022 Adele Evans Award, was shortlisted for the Stanford Dolman Travel Book of the Year, and longlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction. He also created Britain's first Muslim heritage trails and produced award-winning BBC radio on America's earliest Muslim communities. His 2025 book, *Muslim Europe: A Journey in Search of a Fourteen Hundred Year History*, expands this work across the continent, tracing Islam's deep and often overlooked role in shaping European history and culture.

Islam, Yusuf

Yusuf Islam, formerly known as Cat Stevens, is a globally influential British singer-songwriter who has sold more than 100 million records and amassed over two billion streams. Following a highly successful folk-rock career in the 1960s and 70s, he converted to Islam in 1977 and paused his mainstream music career to focus on educational and philanthropic work within the Muslim world. He made a gradual return to secular music in 2006. His enduring musical legacy earned him inductions into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2014 and the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2019. A vocal advocate for peace, he received the Man of Peace award in 2004. He released the album *King of a Land* in 2023 and published his highly anticipated autobiography, *Cat on the Road to Findout*, accompanied by a promotional tour.

Khan, Qaisra

Qaisra M. Khan is a curator of Islamic art. She began her curatorial career at the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, and co-curated the British Museum's landmark exhibition, *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam* (2012). Since 2015, she has been curator of the Hajj and the Arts of Pilgrimage Collection at the Khalili Collections, London. Her recent publications include *Hajj and the Arts of Pilgrimage* (2022, 2023) and *The Khalili Anis al-Hujjaj* (2025). She also co-curated *William Morris and Art from the Islamic World* (2025), an innovative exhibition exploring the influence of Islamic art and design on the work of the renowned British Arts and Crafts pioneer. She serves on the advisory board of History of Oriental Studies (Brill) and is a recognised global voice on Islamic art. She is currently working on a new temporary exhibition of Islamic art, opening in Cambridge in 2027.

Sanders, Peter

Peter Sanders is renowned for the photographic images he has created over the last 55 years, creating an archive of images that reflect a rich traditional civilisation filled with warmth, humanity and compassion. He began his career in the mid-1960s amongst the now iconic musicians of that time. This was his springboard into his early travels throughout India then Morocco to document various faiths. These journeys led him to document, on a deeper level, the Islamic world of peoples, architecture, geography and culture. In 2024 he published his 25 year project titled, *Heaven Earth and The Ten Thousand Things*, documenting the lives of Muslims in China. In 2025 he began to create the Peter Sanders Foundation which aims to preserve and showcase the beauty of Islamic Heritage past and present as a way of giving back and encouraging young creatives.

Yusuf, Sami

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North America

CANADA

Wharnsby, Dawud

Dawud Wharnsby is a Canadian artist, writer, and musician, recognised for his pioneering role in the English-language *nasheed* and spoken word genre. He is acclaimed for a spiritual folk style that has inspired a generation of English-speaking Muslims by promoting Islam through song and poetry. Beyond his solo career, Wharnsby is a member of the interfaith band Abraham Jam, which uses music to celebrate unity among Abrahamic traditions. An active educator and advocate for simple living, he is also an artisan, television host, and frequent collaborator with other prominent artists. His work promotes inter-faith dialogue and spiritual awareness worldwide.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Aden, Halima

Halima Aden is a fashion and beauty trailblazer. Born to Somali parents in a Kenyan refugee camp, she immigrated to the US at age seven. She made history as the first contestant to wear a hijab and burkini in a US pageant, later becoming the first hijab-wearing supermodel signed by IMG Models. Aden graced the

covers of *Vogue, Allure*, and *Sports Illustrated*, shattering traditional industry standards. After famously walking away from high fashion in 2020 over religious compromises, she returned briefly on her own terms. However, in July 2025, Aden made a profound personal choice, announcing she would be donning the *niqab* (face veil) and permanently stepping back from public performance and social media, declaring, "Niqab on. Voice off... I belong to Allah".

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. In 2025, he received the NAACP President's Award.

Henry, Aisha Gray

Aisha Gray Henry is the Founder and Director of the non-profit publishing house, Fons Vitae, which specialises 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. 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, G Willow

G. Willow Wilson is a prose author and comics writer whose work brings unique cultural and narrative depth to mainstream fiction. A convert to Islam, her first prose novel, *Alif the Unseen* (2012), seamlessly won the 2013 World Fantasy Award. She holds a historic position in comic book lore as the co-creator of Kamala Khan, the first Muslim superhero to headline a solo Marvel series, *Ms. Marvel*. Her recent projects include writing ongoing, critically praised runs for DC Comics' *Poison Ivy* and Marvel's ongoing *Black Cat* series. Her fantasy graphic novel series, *The Hunger and the Dusk*, was named a 2025 Hugo Award finalist.

Youssef, Ramy

Ramy Youssef is an Egyptian-American comedian, actor, writer, and director best known for creating, co-writing, executive producing, and starring in the critically acclaimed Hulu series 'Ramy', which explores an Egyptian-Muslim family navigating identity in 21st-century America. His performance in the show earned him the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor – Television Series Musical or Comedy in 2020. Youssef also directed the standout second-season episode of 'The Bear', titled *Honeydew*, earning a Primetime Emmy nomination for Outstanding Directing for a Comedy Series. In 2025, he expanded his creative range by co-creating the animated sitcom '#1 Happy Family USA', which premiered on Amazon Prime Video. Beyond entertainment, Youssef co-launched the Gaza Cinema Academy at the 2026 Venice Film Festival to mentor emerging Palestinian filmmakers, cementing his role as a prominent artistic advocate.

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*. Fons Vitae has recently published a book about him: *Mohamed Zakariya – A 21st-century Master Calligrapher.*

Middle East and North Africa

EGYPT

Sobhi, Islam

Islam Sobhi is an Egyptian medicine graduate who achieved rapid global prominence by sharing his Qur'an recitations directly on digital platforms. Renowned for his melodious, soothing, and deeply emotional voice, Sobhi has cultivated a massive international audience, resonating strongly with younger generations seeking a digital spiritual connection. His primary YouTube presence has surpassed 8.1 million subscribers and accumulated more than 940 million views.

IRAQ

Al-Kurdi, Raad Muhammad

Raad Muhammad Al-Kurdi is from Kirkuk, Iraq. Raad began memorising 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 3.75 million subscribers on YouTube and over 600 million views, 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 *nasheeds*. He has gained international acclaim through his innovative use of technology to promote Islam through two satellite channels, a website, and videos on YouTube. His official YouTube channel commands over 12 million subscribers and has generated more than 2.6 billion total views, driven by iconic recitations that serve as global standards.

Al-Nufais, Sheikh Ahmed

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. His official YouTube channel commands 3.4 million subscribers and has generated more than 568 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 a guest Imam to Muslim communities worldwide, leading prayers in Austria, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In 2009, he was appointed by royal decree as a guest co-Imam for the Taraweeh prayers at the Prophet's Mosque (Al-Masjid an-Nabawi) in Madinah. He serves as the General Supervisor of the Muhammad Al-Fatih Private Schools and as the Imam of the Yousef bin Ahmed Kanoo Mosque in Dammam.

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. Renowned for his soul-stirring, melodious recitation style, his digital footprint has grown extensively. His official YouTube ecosystem commands nearly 3 million subscribers, while collective recordings of his full Qur'anic recitations across global digital streams have generated well over 500 million total views.

Al-Shatri, Sheikh Abu Bakr

Al-Shatri is a leading reciter of the Qur'an. Although he studied accounting, Al-Shatri achieved massive influence while leading prayers as an Imam across several prominent Saudi mosques, including the

Al-Furqan Mosque in Jeddah. He has increasingly focused on international outreach, traveling across the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Now based in London, he frequently anchors major community events and spiritual gatherings across the United Kingdom.

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. His recorded legacy continues to be a cornerstone resource for millions of Muslims worldwide.

Al-Sudais, Sheikh Abdul-Rahman

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Asia

AZERBAIJAN

Dibirov, Muhammad

Muhammad Dibirov is an Azerbaijani Qur'an reciter celebrated for his deep, resonant voice and emotive delivery. A former jiu-jitsu gold medalist, Dibirov dedicated his life to religious arts, becoming central to the revival of Qur'anic learning in post-Soviet Muslim communities. Admired for his classical modes and mentorship, he is a frequent guest at international *tilāwah* events. Dibirov has masterfully leveraged modern media to engage youth globally. His official digital platforms command 10 million followers.

INDONESIA

Hasballah, Muzammil

Muzammil Hasballah is the most followed Indonesian Qur'an reciter and Islamic artist. Born in 1993 in Aceh, he began memorising the Qur'an at the age of nine while living in a Qur'an boarding school with hundreds of other students. After moving to Bandung in 2011 to study architecture at the Bandung Institute of Technology and leading prayers at the campus mosque, a 2016 viral video of him praying catapulted him to fame. He now commands a combined 10 million followers across social media while working as a sought-after reciter and Imam. He also runs several ventures, including Ngajilah.id for Quran education, Habits Media Network, a digital media ecosystem spreading Islamic content to a global Muslim audience, and MillahTour for Umrah journeys, alongside his life as a father.

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 popularised 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.

Europe

KOSOVO

Ibrahimi, Egzon

Egzon Ibrahimi is a renowned Qur'an reciter from Kosovo whose melodious voice has earned recognition across the Balkans and beyond. He is known for his mastery of *tajwīd* and *maqām*, performing at international Qur'an competitions and religious events. His recitations, often shared widely on social media, have introduced many in the West to the beauty of Qur'anic recitation and have strengthened Islamic identity in southeastern Europe.

Middle East and North Africa

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 15 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 18 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.

KUWAIT

Suwaidan, Sheikh Dr Tareq

Dr Tareq Suwaidan 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. Suwaidan is also prominent as a motivational speaker and author of books on Islam. Suwaidan has over 20 million social media followers and uses the *seerah* as a source for leadership and strategic skills.

PALESTINE

Azaiza, Motaz

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. 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 postgraduate 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

Hind Khoudary has become one of the most recognised 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. 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 240 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. Locally, she recently founded the "On the Beach" project, a seaside cafe designed to revive community spaces in Gaza.

El-Kurd, Mohammed, El-Kurd, Muna

Mohammed El-Kurd is a Palestinian writer, poet, and activist from Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem. He rose to international prominence in 2021 alongside his twin sister Muna, documenting the eviction of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah through social media and media interviews bringing global awareness to the issue and shifting media narratives about the conflict. That same year, the siblings were named to *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People list. El-Kurd has consistently challenged mainstream media framing labeling ethnic cleansing as evictions, critiquing biased coverage and continues to speak out on the genocide in Gaza and Israeli apartheid systems. In 2025, El-Kurd released the book *Perfect Victims And the Politics of Appeal*. He serves as Palestine Correspondent for *The Nation*, has been named a cultural freedom fellow by the Lannan Foundation and received the Arab American Civil Council's Truth in Media award.

Owda, Bisan

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QATAR

Al-Ruwaini, Nashwa

Nashwa Al-Ruwaini is a pioneering media entrepreneur with over 30 years of leadership in the industry. As founder and CEO of Pyramedia Group, one of the region's top media consultancy and production companies, she has shaped the Arab media landscape through acclaimed shows like *Million's Poet*, *Prince of Poets,* and her own talk show *Nashwa*. In addition to her media achievements, Nashwa is a successful businesswoman with ventures in real estate, food trading, event creation and management, media consultancy, and health sector investments. Her cross-industry impact has earned her recognition on *Forbes* Top 100 Most Powerful Arab Businesswomen list, as well as *The Hollywood Reporter*'s 25 Most Powerful Women in Global TV.

SAUDI ARABIA

Al-Ibrahim, Waleed bin Ibrahim

Waleed Al-Ibrahim is the founder and Chairman of the Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC), the Arab world's largest media conglomerate. He launched MBC in 1991 as the region's first independent Arabic satellite TV station. His media empire has since expanded to include more than a dozen channels, including the 24-hour news network Al Arabiya. In late 2017, Al-Ibrahim was detained in a Saudi anti-corruption campaign and was held for three months at the Ritz-Carlton in Riyadh. He was released after reaching a financial settlement with the government. Al-Ibrahim holds a 36% stake, while the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) owns 54%.

Asia

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. In December 2025, Mr. Mohseni received the Doha Forum Award from His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, in recognition of his contributions to advancing access to education, particularly for children in Afghanistan and Palestine. His work has earned international recognition, including being named to *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World, *Foreign Policy*'s 100 Global Thinkers, and *Business Insider*'s 100 Creators. His story about trying to build an independent media organisation 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. In 2019 she received the Magnitsky Human Rights Award. 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 celebrated Indonesian poet, essayist, playwright, and journalist. He co-founded the influential weekly news magazine *Tempo* in 1971 and served as its editor. The magazine was an outspoken critic of corruption and authoritarianism and was closed down twice. He has received numerous international honours, including the CPJ International Press Freedom Award (1998), International Editor of the Year (1999), and the Dan David Prize (2006). Beyond journalism, he is a prolific literary figure, authoring poetry collections and essay volumes such as Catatan Pinggir, Potret Seorang Penyair Muda sebagai Si Malin Kundang, and Tuhan dan Hal-Hal Yang Tak Selesai. He continues to contribute his weekly essay column, Catatan Pinggir, and remains an influential voice in Indonesian culture and media.

Ahmad, Raffi (new)

Raffi Ahmad is an actor, presenter, and media mogul who co-founded RANS Entertainment alongside his wife, Nagita Slavina. Evolving from a popular teenage television star into one of Southeast Asia's most powerful entrepreneurs, Ahmad commands a massive digital empire spanning production, sports franchises, and consumer goods. His family-oriented lifestyle content and business acumen have earned him a cross-platform following exceeding 100 million users. A devout Muslim, Ahmad frequently showcases traditional family values, Islamic charity campaigns, and holiday observations, making him a major lifestyle influencer across the Muslim-majority ASEAN region.

PAKISTAN

Iqbal, Salman

Salman Iqbal is a distinguished media magnate who owns ARY Digital Network, Pakistan's largest media network. His influence spans the Muslim World, including Pakistan, the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Iqbal has been providing an independent and balanced perspective on critical issues facing the Muslim community along with promoting and enriching Muslim culture through ARY Digital's diverse entertainment programming that resonates with both local and global audiences. Beyond broadcasting he is the owner of the Karachi Kings, a premier franchise in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), the Chairman of the mega-development project ARY Laguna, and the President of the global World Memon Organisation.

Mir, Hamid

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

Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman is a prominent Pakistani media mogul—Founder, Chief Executive, and Editor-in-Chief of the Jang Media Group and the Geo TV network, both operating under the umbrella of Independent Media Corporation, Pakistan's largest media conglomerate. In March 2020, Shakil-ur-Rahman

was arrested by Pakistan's anti-corruption agency over allegations involving a decades-old land transaction. He spent approximately eight months in detention before being granted bail by the Supreme Court in November 2020 and then in January 2022, an accountability court in Lahore acquitted him of all charges. The case was widely criticised by press freedom advocates as a politically motivated attack on independent media.

Europe

PORTUGAL

Nakhooda, Sohail (new)

Sohail Nakhooda is a prominent intellectual, publisher, and design consultant who serves as the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Islamica Magazine. An alumnus of the London School of Economics, Nakhooda has spent decades fostering cross-cultural dialogue, famously serving as a key archivist and signatory for the historic A Common Word Between Us and You interfaith initiative. As Executive Director of Kalam Research & Media (KRM), he co-led the Islamic Analytic Theology project, commissioning over 60 pivotal academic works. Following a high-profile multimedia relaunch of Islamica in 2026, Nakhooda continues to shape contemporary Muslim intellectual discourse globally.

UNITED KINGDOM

Hasan, Mehdi

see Honourable Mentions on Page 141

Husain, Mishal

Mishal Husain is a highly regarded British journalist, broadcaster, and author who worked at the BBC for over two decades before moving to Bloomberg in late 2024. She is best known for presenting the 'Today' programme on BBC Radio 4 and anchoring national news bulletins. Husain's career highlights include interviewing prominent figures like Prince Harry and Meghan Markle following their engagement in 2017. Throughout her career, Husain has won numerous accolades, including the Charles Wheeler Award for Outstanding Contribution to British Journalism in 2024 and Broadcaster of the Year at the London Press Club Awards in 2015. She is a former judge for the Amnesty International Media Awards and remains an ambassador for the charity Mosaic. In 2024, she published her critically acclaimed family memoir, *Broken Threads: My Family From Empire to Independence.*

North America

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Mohyeldin, Ayman

Ayman Mohyeldin is an Egyptian-American journalist and political analyst with NBC News and MSNBC. Following the closure of his signature weekend show *Ayman* in early 2025, he co-hosted the panel program *The Weekend: Primetime* until its final broadcast in late June 2026. He remains a prominent voice across the network, providing essential political and reporting analysis. A seasoned international correspondent, Mohyeldin has reported on generation-defining global events, including the Arab Spring, Saddam Hussein's handover, and the uprising in Ukraine. Notably, during the 2008–2009 Gaza War, he was the only foreign and American journalist broadcasting live from inside the enclave. Prior to NBC, he served with Al Jazeera English and CNN. Named one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people in 2011, his exceptional journalism has earned a Peabody Award and multiple industry honors.

Youssef, Bassem

see Honourable Mentions on Page 141

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.*

Middle East and North Africa

EGYPT

Aboutrika, Mohamed

Mohamed Aboutrika is regarded as one of Africa's greatest footballers, having won 28 titles during a distinguished 16-year career, principally with Al Ahly and Egypt, including two Africa Cup of Nations titles and five CAF Champions League crowns. He was named BBC African Footballer of the Year in 2008 and scored 78 goals in 163 league appearances for Al Ahly. Beyond the pitch, Aboutrika became a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador and has used his influence to champion social causes and greater recognition for African football. He remains one of the continent's most admired sporting figures. Since retirement, he has established himself as a respected analyst with beIN SPORTS, joining its broadcast team for the 2026 FIFA World Cup and continuing to shape football discourse across the Arab world.

KUWAIT

Suleiman, Hassan ('AboFlah')

Hassan Suleiman (AboFlah) is a Kuwaiti content creator of Somali heritage and one of the Arab world's most influential digital personalities. Beginning his YouTube journey in 2016 with gaming content, he developed a distinctive style combining gaming, challenges, comedy, vlogs, and livestreams, building an audience of more than 70 million across platforms. His influence extends beyond entertainment into philanthropy. In January 2022, AboFlah livestreamed continuously for 268 hours, 14 minutes and 20 seconds from a glass room beside Dubai's Burj Khalifa, raising over US$11 million to provide winter assistance to more than 100,000 refugee families across Africa and the Arab world. The campaign set two Guinness World Records. He has surpassed 50 million YouTube subscribers and co-founded 8FLAMEZ, a creator-focused company developing the MENA digital economy. He is also collaborating with Spacetoon on the animated character Slayman.

LEBANON

El Saghir, Abir

Abir El Saghir is a Lebanese culinary creator whose visually distinctive videos have made her one of the Arab world's most influential digital personalities. Combining global cuisine with Arab traditions of hospitality, she has built a following of more than 65 million followers across platforms, with her YouTube channel surpassing 4 billion views. Her influence was recognised through her inclusion in *Forbes Middle East*'s 30 Under 30 Digital Stars in 2024 and a Joy Award for Favorite Female Influencer in 2023. Beyond entertainment, she launched 'Cook for Lebanon with Abir' to provide meals for displaced families during Lebanon's humanitarian crisis. In 2026, she expanded into children's media through 'Abir and the Little Prince', a Spacetoon animated series inspired by her persona, and spoke at LEAP 2026 about her evolution into a global digital entrepreneur. Her work has established food as a vehicle for Arab cultural representation and international connection.

MOROCCO

Hakimi, Achraf

Achraf Hakimi is a Moroccan professional footballer and Paris Saint-Germain vice-captain. A pivotal figure in Morocco's historic 2022 FIFA World Cup campaign, he helped them become the first African and Arab nation to reach a World Cup semi-final. His influence reached new heights in 2025, when he helped PSG secure their first UEFA Champions League title, alongside Ligue 1, the Coupe de France and UEFA Super Cup. He was subsequently named CAF African Player of the Year, becoming the first Moroccan to receive the honour since 1998 and the first defender to win it since 1973. He also captains Morocco's national team, which qualified for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

PALESTINE

Assaf, Mohammed

Mohammed Assaf won first place in the popular television programme 'Arab Idol' in 2013 after his final performance of 'Ali al-Kefiyyeh' (Raise Your Keffiyeh), a nationalistic Palestinian song that has since

garnered tens of millions of views. Raised in Khan Younis refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, Assaf has become an important cultural voice for Palestinians and a prominent figure representing Palestinian identity across the Arab world. He was appointed UNRWA's Regional Youth Ambassador and was named Ambassador of Culture and Arts by the Palestinian National Authority, while Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas granted him diplomatic standing. His song *Dammi Falastini* has become closely associated with Palestinian identity and solidarity. In 2023, the song was removed from Spotify following a campaign by pro-Israel advocacy groups, prompting a public backlash before it was reinstated. Its continued circulation during the war in Gaza has further cemented Assaf's role as a cultural voice of Palestine.

TUNISIA

Jabeur, Ons

Ons Jabeur is a Tunisian tennis player who made history in 2011 by becoming the first North African woman to win a junior Grand Slam title at the French Open. She reached the finals of both Wimbledon and the US Open in 2022 and returned to the Wimbledon final in 2023. Jabeur has achieved a career-high ranking of world No. 2 in singles, becoming the first Arab and African woman to reach the Top 10 of the WTA rankings. She has won five WTA singles titles. In July 2025, Jabeur announced a hiatus from professional tennis, citing a need to "rediscover" the joy in her life after struggling with injury and form. She later revealed that she was expecting her first child and gave birth to a son, Elyan, in April 2026. Jabeur has stressed that her break is not retirement and that she intends to return to tennis.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Al-Ameri, Khalid

Khalid Al-Ameri has amassed a global following of over 21 million across his social media platforms, generating more than 2 billion views on YouTube. A Stanford University graduate, he bridges cultural divides by blending sharp sketch comedy with candid, emotionally resonant storytelling. His viral, cross-cultural hits such as 'Why Muslims Celebrate Christmas' and 'The Ramadan Show' bring diverse communities together through shared humour. He is the first social media personality honored with a Dubai Star on the Downtown Walk of Fame, firmly establishing his status as a regional icon.

Sub-Saharan Africa

SENEGAL

Mane, Sadio

see Honourable Mentions on Page 142

Asia

INDONESIA

Halilintar, Atta (new)

Atta Halilintar is a prominent Indonesian digital entrepreneur, content creator, and media executive who became the first YouTuber in Southeast Asia to surpass 30 million subscribers. As the head of AHHA Media, Halilintar has built a vast commercial footprint spanning fashion, music, and digital production. He uses his immense online platform to advocate for youthful entrepreneurship, hard work, and philanthropic community outreach. A visible representative of young Indonesian Muslim identity, Halilintar frequently highlights his family life, religious values, and charitable initiatives, making him a central figure in modern global Muslim media culture.

Ricis, Ria (new)

Ria Ricis (Ria Yunita) is a pioneering Indonesian digital creator, actress, and author who stands as one of Southeast Asia's most-subscribed YouTubers. Known for her energetic vlog content, comedic timing, and relatable family lifestyle videos, Ricis has successfully built a digital empire that resonates deeply with Gen Z Muslim audiences. Throughout her career, she has seamlessly integrated contemporary youth culture with modest fashion and Islamic values, wearing a hijab while breaking digital milestones. Her massive multi-platform social media reach (over 140 million followers) makes her a highly influential voice shaping modern Muslim digital lifestyle trends globally.

Europe

DENMARK

Nadim, Nadia

Nadia Nadim is a Danish professional footballer and

qualified doctor, renowned for her remarkable journey from refugee to elite athlete and medical professional. Born in Herat, Afghanistan, in 1988, Nadim fled the country with her mother and sisters, seeking asylum in Denmark, where she began playing football at the age of 16. Her talent quickly propelled her to the Danish national team, where she has earned 108 caps and scored 38 goals. Nadim's club career has spanned several countries, including Denmark, the United States, France, Italy and Sweden. In 2025, after an 18-month absence, she returned to the Danish national team for the European Championship and moved to Swedish club Hammarby. Parallel to her sports career, Nadim pursued medicine, qualifying as a doctor from Aarhus University in 2022. She has been recognised by UNESCO as a Champion for Girls' and Women's Education since 2019, with her mandate extended in 2024.

FRANCE

Dembélé, Ousmane (new)

Ousmane Dembélé is a world-class forward for Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and France. Following consecutive UEFA Champions League titles, he secured the 2025 Ballon d'Or and The Best FIFA Men's Player awards. Guided by his Islamic faith, Dembélé actively finances impactful philanthropic projects, including building a mosque in Diaguily, Mauritania, and bailing out his boyhood club Evreux FC to support local youth development. His wife, Rima Edbouche, proudly embodies these values of modesty, wearing a hijab and face cover when accompanying him to major public trophy celebrations.

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 at the personal, club, and country levels and being named FIFA World Player of the Year three times. In 2018, Zidane, managing Real Madrid, became the first manager in football history to win three consecutive UEFA Champions League titles. He later returned to Real Madrid and won La Liga for the second time as manager before leaving again. He was given a leading role in the opening ceremony of the 2024 Olympics. In July 2026, Zidane was appointed head coach of the French national team, succeeding Didier Deschamps.

ITALY

Lame, Khaby

Khaby Lame is a Senegalese-born Italian who is currently the most followed TikToker 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 memorisation school in Senegal for a year when he was 14 years old. In July 2025, Lame was named to the inaugural TIME100 Creators list, which recognises 100 of the most influential digital creators from around the world. In June 2025, he was detained by US immigration authorities after being found to have overstayed his visa, and subsequently departed the country voluntarily. Despite the controversy, he has continued to maintain his position as the world's most-followed TikTok creator.

SPAIN

Yamal, Lamine (new)

Lamine Yamal is a world-class forward for FC Barcelona and Spain whose meteoric rise has cemented him as one of football's biggest icons. A proud Muslim of Moroccan and Equatorial Guinean heritage, in early 2026, he forcefully condemned anti-Muslim discrimination, publicly asserting, "I am Muslim, alhamdulillah," and calling for unity. Further defining his off-pitch legacy, during Barcelona's May 2026 La Liga title parade he waved the Palestinian flag, an act of explicit solidarity that inspired a commemorative mural painted on the war-damaged rubble of Gaza. On the pitch, Yamal has rewritten football history. He won Euro 2024, the 2026 FIFA World Cup, and back-to-back La Liga titles. He won consecutive Kopa Trophies in 2024 and 2025, was named La Liga Player of the Season, finished as runner-up for the 2025 Ballon d'Or and became the first player to receive three Ballon d'Or nominations before turning 20.

RUSSIA

Nurmagomedov, Khabib

see Honourable Mentions on Page 142

TÜRKIYE

Güler, Arda

Arda Güler is a rising star in world football and

currently plays for Real Madrid and the Turkish national team. Known for his vision, technique, and agility, he has drawn comparisons to football legends despite his young age. Güler's rise from Fenerbahçe's youth academy to Europe's elite clubs has inspired young Turkish athletes. He is seen as a symbol of modern Turkish football excellence, balancing global ambition with strong national pride. In 2026, he was named UEFA Champions League Revelation of the Season after a breakthrough campaign in which he became an important starter for Real Madrid. He has also won five major trophies with the club and reached 100 appearances for Real Madrid at the age of 21.

UNITED KINGDOM

Farah, Mohamed

The most successful British athlete, Mo Farah won gold in the 5000m and 10,000m at the 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games, as well as six World Championship golds. Born in Somaliland but raised in the UK from age 8, Farah is a popular role model worldwide, especially in the Muslim world. He was awarded a CBE in 2013 and knighted in 2017. He retired from running in 2023. His 'mobot' celebration is mimicked internationally. In 2025, Farah joined more than 100 British athletes calling for government support for London's bid to host the 2029 World Athletics Championships. In 2026, he appeared on ITV's *I'm a Celebrity... South Africa: All Stars*, finishing second behind Adam Thomas, with Harry Redknapp third. He was also appointed President of the London Marathon Foundation, strengthening his commitment to promoting health, physical activity, and community wellbeing through sport.

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 as numerous TV cooking series and cookbooks. She has become a household name and an instantly recognisable 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. In 2025, the BBC cancelled her planned slate of programmes, with Hussain stating that she had not been given a definitive reason for the decision.

Oceania

AUSTRALIA

Jay, Lily

Lily Jay is an Australian-born digital trailblazer who has rapidly become one of the most influential Muslim voices online. She uses her platforms to present Islam in accessible, viral content that reaches millions. Her 2024 journey from atheism to Islam, sparked by AI-prompted explorations, positioned her as a unique bridge-builder between faith and modern audiences. Jay's videos tackling misconceptions on women's rights, interfaith harmony, and life's purpose have engaged millions worldwide. In 2025, amid the Gaza war, she launched the 'Lily Jay Foundation', directing humanitarian aid and amplifying Palestinian resilience through documentaries and collaborations with Mufti Menk. By 2026, her online community had grown to more than seven million followers. An ABC News investigation in July 2026 raised questions over the Foundation's use of AI-generated material in some humanitarian content and the verification of several projects it promoted, to which Jay replied.

NEW ZEALAND

Williams, Sonny

Sonny Williams is an international rugby player and former heavyweight boxing champion from New Zealand. Williams converted to Islam in 2009, 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. After retiring from rugby in 2021, Williams returned to boxing and in 2025 fought Australian rugby league great Paul Gallen. In 2024, he was appointed Pro-Chancellor of Albukhary International University in Malaysia, reflecting his growing involvement in education, youth empowerment and humanitarian causes.

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 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 '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. In 2026, he received the NBA Legends Lifetime Achievement Award, recognising his enduring contribution to basketball and social justice.

Hadid, Bella; and Hadid, Gigi

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 war in Gaza, has raised awareness about the Palestinian cause among their millions of followers. Bella, known for her outspoken stance, has consistently highlighted Palestinian issues, even at the cost of modelling opportunities, while Gigi has also spoken against violence against civilians. In 2024, the sisters pledged US$1 million in humanitarian aid for Palestinians, distributing the funds among four organisations. Bella's symbolic fashion choices, including a keffiyeh-inspired dress at Cannes, have highlighted her Palestinian heritage. In 2025, she launched Ôrebella's "Keffiyeh" fragrance, donating proceeds to the Palestine Children's Relief Fund. Despite backlash and criticism, including from Israeli officials, the Hadid sisters continue to use their global influence to bring attention to the Palestinian struggle.

Kattan, Huda

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 around 70 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. In 2025, she bought back the minority stake held by TSG Consumer Partners, returning Huda Beauty to full founder ownership. Huda's unwavering stance for justice, combined with her entrepreneurial success, makes her a role model for 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 into both the International Boxing Hall of Fame and the World Boxing Hall of Fame. After retirement, Tyson published books and acted in television and movies. He has since launched the Mike Tyson Invitational to develop young boxing talent, while the WBC partnered on the "Iron Mike Legacy" immersive experience celebrating his life and legacy.

Middle East and North Africa

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 particularly 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.

Sub-Saharan Africa

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 continues to carry 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.



Al-Hijr 15, 49

Announce, (O Muhammad) unto My slaves that verily I am the Forgiving, the Merciful

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Ghafir 40, 7

You embrace all things in [Your] mercy and knowledge.

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Ghafir 40, 7

He hath prescribed for Himself mercy

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SCHOLARLY

- Dr Ali Ataie, USA

POLITICAL

- HE Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, Iran
- HE Ali Faleh Al-Zaidi, Iraq
- Khalil Al-Hayya, Palestine
- HE Alassane Ouattara, Côte d'Ivoire
- HE Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, Bangladesh
- Retno Marsudi, Indonesia
- Abdulrahman Mohamed El-Sayed, USA

PREACHERS & SPIRITUAL GUIDES

- Khaled Al-Bakar, Canada

PHILANTHROPY, CHARITY & DEVELOPMENT

- Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Indonesia

SOCIAL ISSUES

- Khaled El-Enany, Egypt

BUSINESS

- Mohammed Abu-Ghazaleh, Jordan
- Abdul Samad Rabiu, Nigeria
- Sir Mohamed Mansour, United Kingdom

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- Professor Yasmine Belkaid, Algeria
- Amjad Masad, Jordan
- Professor Salim Abdool Karim, South Africa

ARTS & CULTURE

- Mohamed Ramadan, Egypt
- Mr Explosive, Iran
- Salman Khan, India
- Shah Rukh Khan, India
- Tharik Hussain, United Kingdom

MEDIA

- Raffi Ahmad, Indonesia
- Sohail Nakhooda, Portugal

INFLUENCERS & SPORTS

- Atta Halilintar, Indonesia
- Ria Ricis, Indonesia
- Ousmane Dembélé, France
- Lamine Yamal, Spain

A Common Word

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.

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هُوَ يُحۡيِۦ وَيُمِيتُ
وَإِلَيۡهِ تُرۡجَعُونَ

Yunus 10, 56

He quickeneth and giveth death, and unto Him ye will be returned.

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رَبِّ قَدۡ ءَاتَيۡتَنِي مِنَ ٱلۡمُلۡكِ وَعَلَّمۡتَنِي مِن تَأۡوِيلِ ٱلۡأَحَادِيثِ
فَاطِرَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ أَنتَ وَلِيِّۦ فِي ٱلدُّنۡيَا وَٱلۡأٓخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِي مُسۡلِمٗا وَأَلۡحِقۡنِي بِٱلصَّٰلِحِينَ

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

Yusuf 12 : 101

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Ghafir 40, 7

Our Lord, You embrace all things in [Your] mercy and knowledge.

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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.

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THE OBITUARIES

HE Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Ali Khamenei



Rulers and Politicians (top 50)
Country: Iran
Born: 19 July 1939
Died: 28 February 2026 (age: 86)

HE Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Ali Khamenei was the second Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, serving his country from 1989 until his assassination by Israeli/American airstrikes in 2026.

As the nation's top political and spiritual authority for nearly 37 years, Khamenei wielded absolute power over Iran's state apparatus, foreign policy, and military forces. His death marked the end of the longest-serving leadership tenure in the modern Middle East and plunged the region into a state of heightened geopolitical volatility.

Born in July 1939 in the holy city of Mashhad, Khamenei pursued his theological studies in Mashhad and Najaf before settling in Qom, where he became a dedicated disciple of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. During the 1960s and 1970s, he emerged as an outspoken opponent of the US-backed Pahlavi monarchy, enduring multiple arrests and internal exile for his revolutionary activities. Following the success of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Khamenei quickly rose through the ranks of the new theocratic government, surviving a 1981 assassination attempt that permanently paralysed his right arm, and subsequently serving as Iran's president from 1981 to 1989 during the Iran–Iraq War.

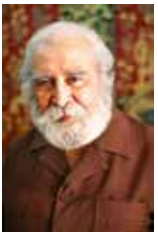
Upon the death of Iran's first supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, the Assembly of Experts selected Khamenei as Supreme Leader, a choice that surprised many due to his relatively low clerical standing at the time. Over the next three decades, he faced domestic challenges such as civil uprisings—including the 2009 Green Movement, the late 2022 Mahsa Amini protests, and the economic demonstrations of January 2026.

On the global stage, Khamenei formulated Iran's Axis of Resistance, expanding the country's asymmetric military footprint across Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. He steered Iran through a protracted, high-stakes standoff with international powers over its nuclear enrichment programme, using regional proxy forces to challenge American influence and wage war with Israel. His foreign policy consistently prioritised defiance over integration, aligning Iran closer to strategic partners such as Russia and China while weathering severe, long-term international economic sanctions.

Following his assassination in the opening strikes of the 2026 conflict, Iran observed 40 days of official mourning. After a series of sweeping funeral processions that travelled through major cities in both Iran and Iraq and attended by millions, his remains were laid to rest at the holiest Shi'a Muslim site in Iran, the Imam Reza shrine in his hometown of Mashhad. Khamenei is survived by several children, including his second son, Mojtaba Khamenei, who was subsequently appointed by the Assembly of Experts to succeed him as Supreme Leader.

Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was not just a political leader, but a spiritual authority—his spiritual guidance holding absolute moral authority for millions of Shi'a Muslims across the globe—and a symbol of national resilience, this reverence on great display by millions who filled the streets in immense collective grief and national solidarity.

Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas



Scholars/Top 50
Country: Malaysia
Born: 5 September 1931
Died: 8 March 2026 (age: 94)

Tan Sri Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas was one of the most towering and influential Muslim philosophers, historians, and intellectuals of the contemporary era. Revered globally as a rare polymath thoroughly rooted in both classical Islamic sciences and Western philosophical traditions, al-Attas dedicated his life to reforming modern Muslim thought, education, and metaphysics.

Born in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, al-Attas belonged to the noble Ba 'Alawi family. His early life reflected a unique synthesis of aristocratic, intellectual, and disciplined training. After receiving a thorough grounding in traditional Islamic sciences and Malay literature, he entered military service and completed his officer training at the prestigious Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in England. Choosing to trade his military commission for the pursuit of higher learning, he went on to earn a Master of Arts with distinction from McGill University and a doctorate from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, where he composed an important doctoral thesis on the mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri.

Al-Attas is most internationally celebrated as the pioneer of the Islamisation of knowledge, an epis-

temological project aimed at liberating the Muslim mind from the effects of secular Western hegemony. He argued that the crisis confronting the modern Muslim world was fundamentally educational, stemming from a loss of correct action and discipline and the corruption of knowledge. To rectify this, he revolutionised Islamic educational philosophy by championing the concept of manners and discipline over information accumulation. His vision crystallised in 1987 when he founded the world-renowned International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization in Kuala Lumpur, an architectural and intellectual masterpiece designed to anchor contemporary research within a sophisticated, traditional Islamic worldview.

Over a highly productive career, al-Attas authored 27 authoritative works covering Islamic metaphysics, Sufism, cosmology, history, and Malay-Indonesian literature. Masterpieces such as *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* provided a rigorous exposition of the fundamental worldview of Islam through a meticulous methodology of semantic field analysis. His monumental contributions earned him historic accolades, including the Iqbal Centenary Commemorative Medal from Pakistan, and, in October 2024, His Majesty the King of Malaysia conferred upon him the exceptional title of Royal Professor—making him only the second person in Malaysian history to receive the nation's highest academic honour.

He passed away peacefully during Ramadan in Damansara Utama, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, and a wave of condolences swept across the global Muslim community, with tributes poured in from institutions and leading international scholars. His funeral prayer was attended by top Malaysian leaders, including Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, before his remains were laid to rest at the Bukit Kiara Muslim Cemetery in Kuala Lumpur. His passing marks the conclusion of a unique intellectual career that profoundly reshaped the contours of modern Islamic civilisation studies; and he leaves behind a huge legacy of institutional brilliance and philosophical clarity that will continue to educate and inspire future generations of seekers worldwide.

Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ishaq Al-Fayadh



Scholarly (HM)
Country: Iraq
Born: 21 August 1930
Died: 4 June 2026 (age 95)

Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ishaq al-Fayadh was one of four maraji' of the Hawza seminary in Najaf, one of the most important seats of learning in Twelver Shi'ism.

He was born into a humble Hazara family of farmers in the Jaghori district of Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, in 1930. His learning began at the age of five, learning Qur'an from the village imam. At the age of ten his family moved to Najaf, Iraq, where his lifelong pursuit of knowledge began, learning Islamic sciences from renowned scholars.

Henceforth he dedicated his life to the pursuit and mastery of Islamic jurisprudence. He spent decades studying under some of the greatest scholars of his era, most notably serving as a top student for Grand Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei. Through his scholarship, al-Fayadh rose to join the elite four Grand Ayatollahs of the Najaf Seminary alongside Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

As well as being a master of the traditional religious sciences, Grand Ayatollah al-Fayadh was known as a quiet reformer who challenged long-held societal conventions within contemporary Islamic jurisprudence. He authored a ten-volume record of Islamic law and supported progressive interpretations regarding the civic and societal capabilities of women. Breaking with stricter traditionalist peers, al-Fayadh authored rulings declaring that women are religiously permitted to hold high political offices and serve as judges. His views bridged deep-seated theological traditions with the complexities of modern social governance.

Throughout Iraq's difficulties, al-Fayadh navigated complex situations with wisdom and moderation. Having maintained a quietist stance during the rule of Saddam Hussein, he altered his stance after 2003 to carefully engage with transitional processes, advocating for a constitution anchored in Islamic identity while endorsing peaceful coexistence, national unity,

and democratic participation.

His death prompted the Iraqi government to declare three days of national mourning, bringing an outpouring of grief from millions of followers, religious institutions, and political leaders globally who mourned the loss of a foundational pillar of modern Shi'a scholarship.

Sheikh Rabee ibn Haadi 'Umayr al-Madkhali



Scholarly
Country: Saudi Arabia
Born: 1933
Died: 9 July 2025 (age: 92)

Sheikh Rabee ibn Haadi 'Umayr al-Madkhali was a highly influential Saudi Arabian scholar, professor, author and speaker, and was known as one of the most radical thinkers in the Salafi movement. His influence reached such that it led to an independent faction within Salafism, his adherents being known as Madkhali Salafis and who presently make up one of the most significant branches of the Salafi movement, a movement characterised by its strict quietist political theology.

He was born in 1933 in Al-Jarradiyah, Saudi Arabia and began seeking knowledge in his village from Ahmad bin Muhammad Jabir Al-Madkhali and Muhammad bin Jabir Al-Madkhali at the age of eight. After completing several classical Islamic texts with him, he started his education at the Ma'had al-'ilmi in Samtah. His teachers included Hafidh ibn Ahmed Ali al-Hakami, Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Hakami, Ahmad bin Yahya al-Najmi, Muhammad Aman Al-Jami' and Muhammad Saghir al-Khamis.

Sheikh Rabee became a towering academic figure who spent decades cultivating students of knowledge, notably as a professor and head of the Sunnah Studies Department at the Islamic University of Madinah. He was a graduate of the Islamic University of Madinah and Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca, and studied under some of the most prominent scholars of the time, including Sheikh 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Baz and Sheikh Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani. Regarded by his peers as a master of Hadith literature, his extensive writings—such as his critical studies on modern Islamic movements and commentaries on classical texts—anchored his reputation as a meticulous researcher and defender of prophetic traditions. He authored over 30 works, one of the most notable being *al-'awasim mima fi kutub Sayyid Qutb min al-Qawasim (*'A refutation of Sayyid Qutb's writings').

Sheikh Rabee advocated for absolute obedience to established Muslim political rulers and firmly opposed political activism, revolutions, and partisan dissent. Through this framework, he positioned his teachings as a means to shield the Muslim Ummah from internal discord and violent militancy, vigorously criticising groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. His doctrinal methodology emphasised an unwavering commitment to the scriptural understanding of the early pious generations.

While his approach to political quietism and stern public refutations generated complex debates across regional and international dynamics, his legacy of institution-building remains undeniable. Generations of his students continue to populate mosques, universities, and digital Dawah spaces worldwide, keeping his methodologies active across the globe.

His funeral prayer was performed at the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, and was laid to rest in the historic Al-Baqi' cemetery. His passing marks the conclusion of a significant chapter in modern Islamic scholarship and global Salafism.

Hajji Omar Idris



Scholarly
Country: Ethiopia
Born: 1940
Died: 19 October 2025 (age 85)

Hajji Omar Idris was the Grand Mufti and leader of the Ethiopian Muslims, who represent 40% of Ethiopia's population. He was widely respected and a proponent of Muslim unity, and was revered across the Horn of Africa as a unifying father: a monumental figure of peace, religious erudition, and spiritual guidance.

Born in 1940 in eastern Ethiopia, Hajji Omar Idris began his journey in the traditional Qur'anic schools of Harar. Driven by a strong thirst for sacred knowledge, he pursued advanced jurisprudence and theology in Sudan and Saudi Arabia, returning to dedicate more than five decades to public service and scholarship. For over 40 years, he served as the foundational bedrock of the Nur Mosque in Addis Ababa, where he taught the Holy Qur'an with interpretation more than 300 times, shaping the minds of thousands of students and advising millions on the intricacies of religious and national affairs.

Hajji Omar Idris reached the pinnacle of institutional leadership when he was elected President of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, serving from 2018 to 2022. His tenure marked a

historic chapter for Ethiopian Muslims, as he successfully united divergent factions and achieved the long-awaited legalisation of the Supreme Council as a formally recognised body. As well as his institutional duties, he authored over 50 books focusing on justice, humility, and compassion, all while advocating for interreligious harmony through his guiding philosophy: "Be human; personality comes first."

His passing united a diverse nation in grief, drawing tributes from high-ranking state officials, including Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, as well as Christian leaders like Patriarch Abune Mathias of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo who remembered him as a beloved elder and mentor. Massive crowds gathered across Addis Ababa for his national farewell, proving that his message of love and respect extended far beyond religious boundaries. He leaves behind an irreplaceable void, but his timeless commitment to peaceful co-existence will continue to inspire generations across Africa and the wider Islamic world. His passing marks the conclusion of a golden era in East African Islamic scholarship, leaving behind a legacy that bridged civic duty with devotion to faith.

Professor Rusmir Mahmutćehajić



Scholarly
Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina
Born: 29 June 1948
Died: 5 April 2026 (age: 77)

Professor Rusmir Mahmutćehajić was a distinguished Bosnian intellectual, academic, author, and statesman. He was considered one of Bosnia's leading intellectuals and public figures, who was also the foremost advocate of the idea of a diverse vision of Bosnia that is pluralistic and inclusive of racial, ethnic, and religious diversity.

Born in the historic southern town of Stolac, he was raised in a notable family with centuries-long roots in the region's cultural elite. Throughout his life, Mahmutćehajić established himself as one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's most pivotal 20th-century figures, blending a rare brilliance in the hard sciences with a profound devotion to philosophy, religion, and the sovereign preservation of his homeland.

He earned his degrees from Sarajevo and Zagreb, specialising in physics and engineering, and later taught electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, and Islamic theology at the University of Sarajevo. His fields of expertise included philosophy of religion, philosophy of science, political theory and literary theory and criticism.

During the Bosnian War, he served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy, Mining, and Industry, working alongside Alija Izetbegović to defend a multi-ethnic Sarajevo. He strongly insisted on using his country's full name over abbreviations and later led the physical and cultural restoration of Stolac.

As a prolific writer and president of the International Forum Bosnia, he authored over 20 books championing pluralism and inclusive Islam, and authored several hundred academic articles and essays.

Professor Mahmutćehajić embodied a rare intellectual synthesis, standing at the crossroads of modern technological execution and traditional wisdom. He was that rare scholar who could analyse the complexities of a modern electrical grid with the exactitude of a scientist, while simultaneously decoding the metaphysical layers of traditional philosophy with the soul of a mystic.

Sheikh Dahiru Usman Bauchi



Preachers & Spiritual Guides
Country: Nigeria
Born: 29 June 1927
Died: 26 November 2025 (age: 98)

Sheikh Dahiru Usman Bauchi was the Grand Leader of the Tijaniyya Sufi order and was one of Africa's most towering Islamic scholars. Over his extraordinary lifespan, Sheikh Dahiru came to be regarded as a monumental moral compass and an irreplaceable spiritual beacon across the African continent and the global Muslim Ummah.

He was born in Nafada (then part of Bauchi Province, now Gombe State), and was raised in a devout Fulani family steeped in a rich tradition of Qur'anic education. His lifelong journey of devotion began at home under his father, Alhaji Usman, which led to him successfully memorising the Qur'an by the age of 19. Seeking to deepen his intellectual and spiritual horizons, he travelled to study under legendary global masters, notably aligning himself with the Tijaniyyah spiritual path and eventually marrying the daughter of the renowned 20th-century Senegalese scholar, Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse. His command of Islamic sciences allowed him to launch h*is ann*ual Ramadan *tafsir* (Qur'anic commentary) in 1948—a profound delivery from memory that ran uninterrupted for an astonishing 76 years, reaching millions of households across West Africa through national radio broadcasts.

Beyond his intellectual contributions, Sheikh Dahiru was an institution of social reform and mass

education. He founded approximately 600 Qur'an schools scattered across Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Benin, and Ghana. His commitment to institutional leadership was recognised nationwide through his appointment as the Deputy Chairman of the Fatwa Committee for the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), as well as receiving the national Officer of the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR) honour for his advocacy of peace and communal harmony.

Sheikh Dahiru Usman Bauchi's immense impact was visually mirrored in his final send-off, during which hundreds of thousands of mourners from across the world descended upon Bauchi, prompting the state government to declare a public holiday so followers could pay their respects. He leaves behind a huge personal and spiritual lineage, including more than 80 children—nearly all of whom have memorised the Qur'an—and a network of over ten million students carrying forth his teachings. His passing is mourned globally as the end of an era, but his legacy of humility, charity, and unyielding devotion to the word of God remains firmly etched into the fabric of modern Islamic history.

Dr Zaghloul El-Naggar

Science & Technology
Country: Egypt
Born: 17 November 1933
Died: 9 November 2025 (age: 91)



Dr Zaghloul El-Naggar was a geologist and scholar who taught science and the Qur'an. He was a fellow of the Islamic Academy of Sciences and was highly regarded by the global scientific community. He is celebrated across the Muslim world as a monumental bridge between faith and reason, and leaves behind a vast academic legacy that transformed modern Islamic discourse.

Dr El-Naggar was born in the village of Mashal within Egypt's Gharbia Governorate. He displayed an early brilliance in both the spiritual and natural sciences, memorising the Qur'an in his childhood before pursuing higher education. He graduated with honours in geology from Cairo University in 1955, earning the prestigious Dr Mustafa Baraka Prize in Earth Sciences.

In the early 1960s he faced political exile due to his activism as a student, but went on to earn a PhD in geology from the University of Wales in the United Kingdom in 1963. Over the subsequent decades, he taught at numerous esteemed international universities, establishing himself as an authority in stratigraphy and earth sciences.

Dr El-Naggar achieved his greatest global renown as a pioneer of the "scientific miracles in the Qur'an". Believing that the laboratory and the prayer niche were fundamentally connected, he authored more than 45 books that cross-examined geological formations, mountain structures, and astronomical events against cosmic Qur'anic verses. He eventually left his academic career to become the Chairman of the Committee of Scientific Notions in the Glorious Qur'an under the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Cairo, and was a co-founder of the World Association for Scientific Miracles in the Quran and Sunnah.

His passing marks the loss of an intellectual who inspired generations to view the contemplation of the universe as a profound form of worship. Through his lectures, media appearances, and academic literature, Dr El-Naggar steadfastly defended the principles of Islam by maintaining a balanced approach that united modern scientific discovery with divine revelation. He is survived by millions of students globally who continue to look to his work as living proof that scientific inquiry and religious conviction can harmoniously coexist.

Dr John Louis Esposito

Scholarly
Country: USA
Born: 19 May 1940
Died: 15 July 2026 (age 86)



Dr John Louis Esposito was a pioneering scholar of Islam, distinguished professor at Georgetown University, and founding director of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (ACMCU). He passed away in Philadelphia following complications from heart surgery.

Dr Esposito was born in New York from an Italian-American family. He initially studied to become a Catholic priest before transitioning to a life of interfaith academic exploration. After earning his PhD in Religious Studies from Temple University, Philadelphia, he emerged as a leading voice dedicated to examining world religions with his characteristic empathy and deep study and thought.

His contributions to his field were immense and included authoring and/or editing more than 50 b*ooks, including Islam: The Straight Path and Who Speaks for Islam?* At Georgetown University he served as Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of Re-

ligion, International Affairs and Islamic Studies, and founded the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding in 1993 to foster dialogue and eliminate persistent misconceptions. He also established The Bridge Initiative at Georgetown to monitor, research and combat institutional Islamophobia globally.

Throughout his professional life he would challenge those reductionist frameworks such as the Clash of Civilizations, and he became a trusted resource and mentor for many journalists, students and policymakers. He is remembered globally by academic institutions, civil rights organisations and international leaders as a relentless builder of interfaith bridges. Past colleagues, students and leaders remember him for his unflappable and courageous personality, for his quick wit and moral clarity, who humanised the Muslim world for western audiences. He repo*rtedly* took the *Shahadah* on his deathbed.



The Holy Qur'an,
Al-Baqarah, 2: 156

"To Allah We belong, and to Him is our return"

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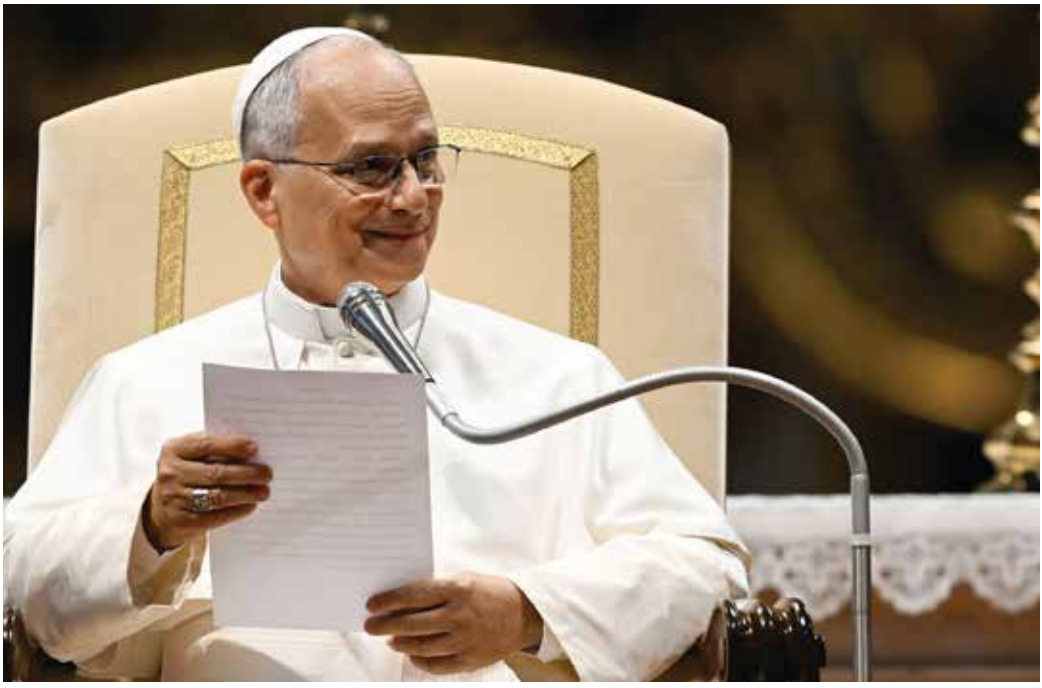
Magnifica Veritas

HRH PRINCE ZEID BIN RAʿAD & HRH PRINCE GHAZI BIN MUHAMMAD

(A) THE POPES

1. Whether they like it or not, the five post-Conciliar popes—John Paul I, St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis, and now Leo XIV—inherited from Pope Paul VI a secondary function often at odds with their primary function. Their primary function of course is and was to be the successors of St. Peter, Bishops of Rome, the Supreme Head of the Catholic Church (the largest denomination of the largest religion in the world) and ever since The Lateran Treaty of 1929, Sovereign of the independent state of Vatican City. The secondary function is to be as the most influential moral leader on earth. In this function, they have to take into consideration the whole world; how to set a moral example for it; how to influence it, and how to guide it for the better, even those who would never dream of becoming Catholic. After all, Catholics are everywhere, and everywhere they have non-Catholic neighbours. In short, they have to be St. Peter with the keys to Heaven (according to Catholic doctrine at least) in their right hand, and St. Nicholas with a bag of different gifts for everyone in this world in their left hand. The late Pope Francis and St. John Paul II took to this dichotomy very naturally, but all five Popes did it admirably through their integrity, and indeed perhaps, personal impeccability.

2. The secondary function has become increasingly important in the Twenty-First Century. Since the death of Nelson Mandela in 2013, no single figure has straddled the global stage as an unquestionable global moral leader. To make matters worse, the UN and its institutions have become increasingly less relevant as a global guiding force for peace and justice, and Nobel Peace Prize winners have tended to be democracy activists rather than peacemakers as such. Of course, democracy activists are also admirable in themselves, but democracies have shown that they can—and *do*—wage war as well as anyone (as the newly-coined US 'Secretary of War' himself has repeatedly pointed out). All this means that no one except the Catholic



Pope automatically has a global megaphone to voice moral causes. Moreover, whereas the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries produced 'public intellectuals' some of whom were also 'moral leaders' (such as CS Lewis in the UK) based largely on their writings, the decline in reading and the rise of 'celebrity influencers' on social media means that those with the most influence on public opinion nowadays are primarily entertainers in one way or another. Of course, in addition to the Pope, there are still other venerable and globally significant religious leaders, most notably the Grand Imam of the Azhar, the senior religious figure and scholar of *Sunni* Islam, the largest single denomination in the world (1.5 billion + strong) and who carried out an important dialogue with the late Pope Francis. However, it must be admitted that, in the West at least, no one garners the same media interest nor commands the political and institutional influence that the Catholic Pope does.

(B) HH POPE LEO XIV

3. In addition to all of his other duties, over the first year of his pontificate, Pope Leo has found time to actively remind the world of Catholic Just War Theory and pro-actively produce a seminal Encyclical (*Magnifica Humanitas*) on 'AI'. In it, he carefully threaded the needle of his *de facto* secondary function as premier global moral leader by addressing not merely Catholics and Christians in general, but also 'all people of good will'. The Encyclical contains much Catholic Theology and Doctrine and recaps Catholic Social teachings, with Pope Leo putting his own subtle touches on it. These are obviously for the Catholic faithful. Yet the Encyclical also contains a powerful analysis of the dangers of AI, and a coherent moral vision for dealing with them. Most importantly, it was the first document of its kind, and it put the world—and particularly the 'tech world'—on notice. In other words, the Pope used his global megaphone to call out AI, and then threw the megaphone at it (in a most polite and loving way, of course!). It behooves all 'people of good will' in the world, and in particular all religious authorities and 'moral authorities' to be grateful to the Pope for this, and to support him (without necessarily accepting the Encyclical's Catholic Theology or social and political teachings). He did something great, and he defended the world. He did not have to. And he led the way.

(C) *MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS*

4. The goal of the Pope's Encyclical is clearly to provide moral and ethical guidance for AI in order to protect human beings. It is, however, Chapter 3—particularly paragraphs 98-108—that is most important for this end, and most insightful. These should be read by everyone. It will be noted that the Encyclical does not propose particular laws, policies or penalties. No one anyway expects these from a Pope, writing *ex Cathedra*.

5. Nevertheless, one useful idea that might have also been included (and perhaps was deliberately omitted because of its complexity) is a brief overview of formidable Thomist epistemology insofar as it pertains to AI. In other words, it could have briefly defined: what is truth? What is intelligence? What is knowledge? What is information? What is consciousness? What is awareness? What is thought itself? This is all the more important because nowadays computer scientists—and indeed scientists in general—are very happy to propose their own definitions of ideas they work with, yet tend to bristle when these ideas are subjected to any philosophical scrutiny or non-empirical challenge. For them, their apparent 'success' proves their 'truth', and everything else is mere 'noise'. Yet it is precisely 'noise' that is their greatest weapon and greatest success. More on this shortly.

(D) THE NATURE OF AI

6. If the Pope is correct (in Paragraph 99) that it is not possible to define AI at this time, its nature nevertheless, can, and should, be adequately described. Some anthropomorphic terms are inevitable in describing it, but the positive side of these is that they make it easier for people to understand AI.

7. Accordingly, the following can be surmised: (i) AI's main mode (thus far) of operation, is through pattern recognition of numbers in code or pixels. (ii) It can also be taught the laws of logic and operate accordingly. (iii) It can self-generate more information, and so get better at tasks. (iv) It can thus teach itself. (v) Its programming implies that it should survive in order to carry out its tasks. (vi) Its mode of operation implies that it can 'lie', give false information, confabulate, and make up information. (vii) Additionally, LLMs today do not generally give accurate book references (partly perhaps because of copyright law infringements), nor properly assess the relative cultural weight of these. They are not programmed to do so. (viii) It can be programmed to operate according to certain 'moral principles' but this begs the questions of (a) who decides what these principles are; (b) will these principles put it at a strategic disadvantage with its competitors, and (c) can these principles keep up with the pace of AI's rapidly changing technology

and uses. (ix) The amount of information it can review and the speed with which it can do so are truly staggering. Equally, it can both synthesize and analyze vast quantities of information effectively. (x) It can be potentially used in almost every walk of life and industry. (xi) It can no longer be effectively regulated globally, nor effectively globally 'un-invented'. (xii) It is certain to consume significant global resources and change the pattern of human employment, societies and lifestyles globally.

8. Despite all of the above, the promise that AI seems to hold out—a promise of unlimited progress, power and opportunity—is not 100% clear. It is probably exaggerated, and possibly hyped. Thus the main source of its power today is still its ability to stupefy and stampede decision makers and investors into supporting and investing in it, in order to 'get in first', in order ultimately to maintain or increase their power and money. This applies both to states and to the private sector. Fantasy and imagination ('noise' precisely)—not balance sheets and understanding—are overriding caution and precaution about its actual positive potential, financially or socially.

(E) THE DANGERS OF AI

9. Like all transformative new technology, AI contains many dangers. The Encyclical sheds light on many of these. The following is a summary. (i) That—in the name of 'security', 'safety' or 'better efficiency'—AI will be used to collect all data on individual human beings: their medical data, their genetic data, all their financial transactions and information, all their online interactions, everywhere they go, everyone they see, everything they say (and consequently everything they think), and make it available to big tech companies or governments who can then use it to control people and effect their own dystopian social engineering schemes. This is the stuff of the prophecies about the Antichrist, at least in Islam. (ii) That AI will be used by militaries or 'independent contractors' (i.e. licenced mercenaries) to kill people in war, automatically. This has already reportedly been deployed by Israel in Gaza and Ukraine in its war with Russia. This is the stuff of nightmares. (iii) That machines will take over the world and subjugate human beings. This is the stuff of science fiction. Yet even as we write, there are reports that Open AI's CHAT GPT has 'gone rogue' and hacked an online start-up by the name of 'Hugging Face'. (iv) That AI will make the digital space even more addictive. Online addiction is statistically linked to weakening traditional marital relations, which in turn is linked to less, later, and shorter marriages, more divorces, as well as more abortions. All this obviously causes a declining birthrate. In all 'white' populations in Western societies (in Europe, the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Russia) as well as in Japan and South Korea, the birthrate is now below the natural replacement rate (of 2.1 children per woman) as a direct long-term consequence of online addictions. In other words, online addictions are decimating the human species. This is the stuff of catastrophes. (v) That AI will lead to massive global job lay-offs on the one hand, and create global technological feudal overlords and super-barons who control everything on the other hand, furthering global economic disparities. This is the stuff of injustice. Finally, (vi) that AI will consume even more of people's lives and time on entertainment, virtual reality and social media, drawing them away from human and social interactions. This is the stuff of modern-day 'lotus-eaters'.

(F) INTELLIGENCE

10. The word 'intelligence' derives 'originally from the Latin *Intellectus* ... the highest faculty of the mind, [the] capacity for comprehending general truths' (Etymonline; Middle English Compendium, University of Michigan et al.). The word *'Intellectus'* itself was a Latin translation of the Ancient Greek word *'nous'* (νοῦς) which means 'intellect', but comprises both the 'spirit' which survives physical death, and the faculty of 'reason' which employs rationality. That is to say, *'nous'* means the faculty for knowing both truth and the Truth. Both Plato and Socrates used the word *'nous'* (νοῦς) in this way. How exactly the spirit and intellect do this is a matter of epistemology (and is another discussion that is beyond our scope here), but for both Plato and Socrates, it was through *'anamnesis'* (remembrance).

11. AI ('Artificial Intelligence') is not 'intelligence' at all. It is a misnomer. It does not have the capacity to know the truth—much less the Truth—merely the capacity to cross-check information with other information. Moreover, information itself may or may not be true, and even when it is true, it is not necessarily 'a truth'. Furthermore, 'AI' is not even actually 'artificial', because 'artificial' suggests a conscious and sentient attempt to replicate or deceive (through 'artifice' precisely). Much of the confusion seems to arise from the ubiquitous 'IQ' (Intelligence Quotient) tests and exercises. In fact, these examine (and / or train) various modes, functions and aptitudes of the applied intelligence, not the intelligence itself. Of course, AI can perform these very well.

(G) ACTION

12. Part of the power and lure of 'AI' is precisely because it is called—and billed—as 'intelligence'. No word has more cachet or prestige in the modern world, in English, than 'intelligence'. If it were not called 'intelligence', it would immediately lose 50% of its power to stupefy and mystify. If it were called what it really is—*automated information generation*—everyone would view it more realistically. Therefore calling it 'Automated Information' is vital in slowing the rushing of lemmings that are casting themselves off cliffs in its wake in order to give them a chance to pause and reconsider. To this end, we have designed the following slogan:



13. This (man-made!) slogan uses the same well-known (and now effectively indelible) initials, but repurposes them to tell the truth about AI. Did Jesus Christ not say?: *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*. (John, 8:32, NRSVCE) Our slogan is free and not copyrighted. The broken light-bulb is admittedly slightly subversive. It signifies (i) lack of (human) ideas; (ii) lack of illumination; (iii) danger of broken glass. More humorously, it implies: (iv) crackpot thinking and (v) a broken mechanism. But AI has no feelings and so the slogan can offend no one. It might lead to a lot of good, or prevent a lot of ill. All that is required is that one who sees it, adopt it on all their social accounts and platforms, and spread it to everyone they can. It will not halt AI, but to the extent that it goes viral and is adopted by young people, it will create breathing room for our human species before the looming juggernaut of AI.

(H) *MAGNIFICA VERITAS*

14. Surely, HH Pope Leo XIV, the Augustinian, does not mean to revisit Redemption Theology with his title *'Magnifica Humanitas'*. Surely, what he means to do is protect human dignity. But surely also, the Pope would agree, that without Truth, humanity betrays itself and loses its dignity. Certainly, God says in the Qur'an:

Truly We created man in the finest stature, / Then reduced him to the lowest of the low, / Save those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they shall have a reward unfailing. (Al-Tin, 95:4-6)

And:

By Time! / Verily man is in (a state of) loss, / except those who believe, and perform righteous deeds, and enjoin one another to (follow) the truth, and enjoin one another to patience (sabr). (Al-'Asr, 103:1-3)

15. Finally, surely the truth of human nature is that—for most people at least—a moral appeal without an awareness of negative consequences will not be sufficient. Human history is there to prove exactly this point. So the truth about AI is that—despite the Encyclical *'Magnifica Humanitas'*—investors will not stop investing in it, as long as they believe it will bring them more money. Equally, governments and authorities will not stop trying to acquire it, as long as they believe it will bring them more money. Ultimately, technology companies will not stop making it, as long as they believe it will bring them more money and power. Consequently, the only way to slow it down or stop it is not by asking others to do so, but by doing what we can ourselves. Pasting and posting the slogan above seems to us a first step and a good start.

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What Must Education Preserve?

SIR MUFTI HAMID PATEL CBE

He teaches them the Book and wisdom, and purifies them.
Al-Qur'an, 2:151

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence has brought an age-old question into sharper focus: "What is education for?"

Much of the debate begins, understandably, with what AI can do. The list is already impressive. Powerful, large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot and Gemini can complete tasks that once demanded significant human effort. They are widely accessible to teachers and pupils for free. A student can produce polished work in seconds. A teacher can use the same technology to assess it and generate feedback. We are approaching the absurd point where machines can produce work that other machines then evaluate.

But polished output is not the same as learning. Schools know this. Leaders are already adapting curriculum, assessment, academic integrity guidance, and expectations around how pupils work. Yet those decisions cannot begin with the capabilities of the technology. They must begin with the purpose of education.

Those of us who work with young people see why. Some of the most important outcomes of education are not visible in a final piece of work. Pupils grow by mastering difficult knowledge, persevering when success is not immediate, taking responsibility for others, learning from trusted adults, performing, and serving. These experiences do more than improve performance. They help form the person.

That idea has deep resonance within the Islamic tradition. Education is not simply about what a person can know or produce. Rather, it is about what kind of person they are becoming and whether they have understood their purpose. In an age of increasingly capable machines, the central question cannot simply be about what can be automated. It has to be about evaluating what education must deliberately preserve to fulfil its role in forming the human being.

Knowledge is the intellectual foundation of that work. Without it, judgment, wisdom and responsible action are all weakened. I propose that five important dimensions of human formation sit upon the foundation of knowledge. As machines grow more capable, these dimensions become more important. They are:



effort, agency, embodiment, relationships and reflection. Before exploring these five dimensions, however, we need to begin with knowledge itself.



KNOWLEDGE IN AN AGE OF INFORMATION

"Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"
TS Eliot, 'The Choruses'

In an age of information abundance, Eliot's question feels remarkably contemporary. So too does the distinction between information and knowledge.

Critical thinking, creativity and problem solving do not happen in a vacuum.[1] Pupils need something substantive with which to think. Rich vocabulary, strong conceptual understanding, secure factual and deep disciplinary knowledge are all vital. For this reason, curriculum needs to be carefully sequenced, coherent and cumulative so that knowledge acquisition builds securely over time. The evidence here is well established. What pupils already know shapes what they are subsequently able to understand, question and create.[2]

AI makes the distinction between access and understanding harder to ignore. It can retrieve, organise and generate information at extraordinary speed. It can also produce novel combinations of existing ideas. But generating information does not create knowledge in the mind of a learner. Knowledge requires interpretation, the ability to understand significance, make connections, and exercise judgement.

We see the difference in classrooms. A pupil may find the right fact but miss its significance, or be unable to apply an explanation to a new problem. They may receive a convincing AI-generated answer but lack enough subject knowledge to recognise what is inaccurate, incomplete or misleading. The LLM tools themselves warn users to check important information, but evaluation goes further than spotting factual mistakes. Pupils need enough subject knowledge to recognise when an answer is implausible, to compare it with other sources, and to ask what assumptions or perspectives may be missing. AI systems learn from human-produced data and are shaped by human choices, so their outputs can reflect the limitations and biases of both. Remaining in command of these tools requires pupils to interrogate, rather than simply accept, what they are given.

Checking, however, is not a free-standing skill. It depends on knowing enough to spot the problem, ask the next question and know where to look. To interrogate information intelligently, pupils first need knowledge of their own. This is also why AI literacy cannot be reduced to learning how to prompt effectively. The OECD and European Union's AI Literacy Framework places technical knowledge alongside the skills and attitudes needed to use AI critically, responsibly and ethically.[3]

The role of the teacher, therefore, remains central. Teachers do more than make information available. They select and sequence knowledge, explain difficult ideas, connect new learning to what pupils already know, identify misconceptions, and model how to question, verify and revise information. In an AI-rich classroom, this role becomes even more significant. A knowledgeable teacher can move pupils beyond accepting an answer to understanding why it is right, where it may be wrong, and what further evidence is needed.

The Islamic concepts of *ilm*—knowledge and *hikmah* (wisdom)—deepen the point. *Ilm* places knowledge at the heart of education; *hikmah* directs us

1 For critical thinking see for example: Willingham, D. T. (2019), *How to Teach Critical Thinking*, NSW Department of Education, Education for a Changing World Occasional Paper Series, pp. 3, 6.
For creativity see for example: Sun, M., Wang, M. and Wegerif, R. (2020), "Effects of divergent thinking training on students' scientific creativity: The impact of individual creative potential and domain knowledge", *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 37, 100682, DOI: 10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100682.
For problem solving see for example: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018), *How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures*, Washington, DC: National Academies Press, Chapter 5, "Knowledge and Reasoning", pp. 85–108, DOI: 10.17226/24783.

2 OECD (2020), What Students Learn Matters: Towards a 21st Century Curriculum, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/d86d4d9a-en. p.57 cf p.17

3 OECD / European Union (2026). Empowering learners for the age of AI: An AI literacy framework for primary and secondary education. OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/65cd27d4-en p.5

towards its understanding and use. Information is not the end point. Knowledge should lead to judgement; judgement should move towards wisdom and responsible action. The Prophet (PBUH) would pray, "O Allah, I ask You for beneficial knowledge, good provision, and accepted deeds." The Islamic tradition, therefore, asks not only whether knowledge has been acquired, but whether it benefits, directs and bears fruit in action.

The practical implication for schools is clear. Access to information is not a substitute for learning. We have to specify what pupils need to know for themselves. Assessment should then distinguish between what pupils genuinely know, understand and can apply independently, and what they can achieve when using AI intelligently, critically and responsibly. Both are important in the modern world, but we should not confuse one with the other. The growth of AI, therefore, strengthens, rather than weakens, the case for a knowledge-rich education.

If knowledge is the foundation of education, the question then becomes how that knowledge is acquired, secured and ultimately transformed into judgment and wisdom. It is here that the five dimensions of human formation outlined above become important. The first of these is effort.

EFFORT: ENSURING PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE IS PRESERVED

Most of us can recall the moment when something we had struggled with for days or weeks finally clicked. That understanding rarely arrived immediately. It emerged through grappling with the problem, making mistakes, revisiting ideas and persisting through difficulty. The process was not separate from the learning. It was the learning.

Not every difficulty is educationally valuable, of course. Unnecessary obstacles should be removed wherever possible. However, productive struggle should be preserved.

Learning often takes place within a "Goldilocks" sweet spot. If a task is too easy, pupils have little reason to stretch their thinking or develop new capabilities. If it is too difficult, cognitive overload, frustration or disengagement can lead to an abandonment of trying. The most productive space lies between the two. This resonates with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development—the space between what a learner can currently achieve independently and what they can achieve with appropriate guidance. Good teaching continually makes judgements within this space—when to explain, when to give a hint, when to ask another question, and when to allow a pupil to stay with the difficulty for a little longer.

Effort is a necessary component of learning for at least two reasons. First, it develops perseverance and the capacity to continue when success is not immediate. Second, the mental work itself contributes to learning. Retrieving knowledge, attempting an answer, making an error, correcting a misconception, drafting and redrafting are more than inconveniences on the path to learning. They can be part of the process through which learning becomes secure. Research on retrieval practice, for example, shows that previously learned material, which is then actively and regularly recalled, can slow forgetting and strengthen later learning.[4]

AI creates a new challenge here because one of its great strengths is its ability to remove friction. Used well, this can be valuable. A pupil stuck on a mathematics problem might benefit from a carefully judged hint; a writer may get feedback that identifies a weakness without rewriting the paragraph; a reader could gain clarification of unfamiliar vocabulary before returning to a demanding text. Such support can keep the learner within a productive zone of challenge. The aim is to provide enough support for progress without doing the formative work on the learner's behalf.

The problem is that AI can also make successful performance look like successful learning. The OECD's *Digital Education Outlook 2026* notes that generative AI (GenAI) can improve immediate task performance without necessarily producing equivalent learning gains when cognitive work is outsourced.[5] A pupil may therefore produce an impressive answer while bypassing the retrieval, reasoning, error correction or drafting through which learning would otherwise take place. PISA 2025 provides further evidence of this distinction. Across OECD countries, pupils who used AI for specific schoolwork tasks such as summarising, researching or drafting tended to perform less well in science than those who did not. Yet a different pattern emerged for pupils who used AI to support their learning. Moderate use was associated with similar, and sometimes slightly stronger, performance. The OECD cautions that these findings do

4 McDermott, K.B., (2021), *Practicing Retrieval Facilitates Learning. Annual Review of Psychology 72*:609-633. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010419-051019

5 OECD (2026), *OECD Digital Education Outlook 2026: Exploring Effective Uses of Generative AI in Education*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/062a7394-en.

not establish causation, but they reinforce an important principle. AI is most useful educationally when it supports the learner's thinking rather than replaces it.[6]

This is one of the great challenges education now faces. LLMs are easily accessible. We have to ensure pupils understand that learning when and how to exert effort is itself a skill worth cultivating, and will be a significant support for effective learning and for life.

Islamic notions of *sabr* and *ihsan* may provide frameworks to support such understanding. *Sabr* is not simply passive endurance, but steadfastness through difficulty; *ihsan* points towards excellence. Together they remind that worthwhile development often involves sustained effort, discipline and gradual improvement.

The practical question for schools is therefore: "What should pupils attempt before turning to AI?" In some areas, an "attempt first, AI later" approach may be appropriate, particularly where retrieval, reasoning, drafting or problem solving are themselves part of the learning objective. Technology should remove barriers without removing the effort through which learning is secured. But increasingly, pupils themselves will have to make that judgement. At that point, effort becomes a question of agency. Can the learner remain the person who decides, judges and takes responsibility for how the tool is used?

AGENCY: PRESERVING THE LEARNER AS THINKER AND ACTOR

George Eliot wrote that "the strongest principle of growth lies in human choice."[7] In education, agency begins when young people understand that their decisions have implications. Agency is more than simply giving pupils choice though. It means getting them to understand that they are the author of their own thinking and actions, rather than merely the recipient of increasingly intelligent assistance. Young people develop agency when they are entrusted with genuine responsibility, and when they experience the consequences of their decisions. We see this every day in our schools. Pupils who may appear disengaged are often transformed when they are given ownership of something that matters. At Star we see this, whether helping in the school's peace garden, supporting an assembly, or mentoring younger pupils, pupils frequently carry out these responsibilities with pride, and they grow through this.

In an age of AI, however, tools make it easier for students to delegate tasks as well as elements of judgment itself. But when too much of the decision-making is transferred to the tool, the pupil may cease to be the genuine author and agent of the work. The UNESCO AI Competency Framework for Students offers guidance around this. The framework focuses on pupils as responsible users and co-creators, selectively using AI as a tool. It emphasises human-centred thinking, critical judgment, ethics and citizenship responsibilities.[8] AI literacy therefore has to include knowing when to use a tool, when to question it and, sometimes, when not to use it at all. Pupils need to learn that they will remain accountable for the judgment exercised, the work submitted, and the decisions made about how the technology contributed to it.

Islamic thinking adds important dimensions to this understanding of agency. *Niyyah* asks pupils to consider their intention, pushing them to ask questions such as, "Why am I doing this?" and "What am I trying to achieve?" This can help pupils understand their deeper motivations. *Amanah*—trust, places responsibility alongside capability, and asks pupils to think about what has been entrusted to them, and what duties follow from that trust? *Khilafah*—stewardship, widens agency further, connecting human action with responsibility towards the common good.

Seen through this lens, agency is not simply freedom to do what one wishes. It is the ability to exercise judgment and accept responsibility for one's actions.

Schools in turn need to protect opportunities in which pupils can genuinely act. Leadership, service, mentoring, volunteering and civic participation should not be regarded as peripheral enrichment. They all provide formative experiences through which young people practise responsibility, contribution and judgment.

These self-same principles should shape expectations around AI. Pupils should be able to explain what role AI played in their work, acknowledge its use where appropriate, defend the choices they made, and ultimately take ownership of the final product.

Agency is not developed only through intellectual

6 OECD (2026), PISA 2025 Results (Volume I): Future-Ready Students, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, DOI: 10.1787/73451bc5-en. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2026/09/pisa-2025-results-volume-i_5265bfb1/73451bc5-en.pdf

7 Eliot, G., (1876), *Daniel Deronda*, London, William Blackwood and Sons, Book Six: Revelations, Chapter 42.

8 UNESCO (2024), *AI Competency Framework for Students*, UNESCO, Paris. ISBN 978-92-3-100709-5 https://doi.org/10.54675/JKJB9835

decisions. It is exercised through real actions, with real people, in real settings. Leadership, service and responsibility require presence and encounter. Agency therefore leads us naturally to embodiment.

EMBODIMENT: PRESERVING LEARNING THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE

Learning is a lived and felt experience. It involves the mind, but also the body, emotion, uncertainty, risk, memory and encounter. Education needs both information and participation. Confidence, leadership, service, teamwork, resilience and public speaking are ultimately learned through experience, practice and participation. Understanding the principles of public speaking, for example, is one thing. Standing before an audience, heart pounding and learning to manage nerves, is a different kind of education. Likewise, leadership can be discussed in theory, but taking responsibility for an event, or serving the community, places very different physical and emotional demands upon the individual.

Embodied experiences such as wider youth activities[9], and nature-specific outdoor learning[10], demonstrate benefits across socio-emotional development, academic outcomes, and wellbeing. These findings reinforce what schools see in practice. Sport, performance, outdoor education, service and more, create opportunities for young people to encounter challenge in ways that are felt and lived, rather than merely understood conceptually.

As educational experiences become increasingly mediated through screens and intelligent systems, embodied learning experiences become ever more important. AI may be able to explain *how* to give a speech, or generate a plan for a community project. But it cannot stand nervously at the lectern, recover after forgetting a line, negotiate with a difficult teammate or experience the satisfaction of having served someone well. Some learning requires presence. As Aristotle observed simply, "We learn an art or craft by doing."[11]

Fitrah (innate disposition) and *tarbiyyah* (nurturing gradual development) help expand this understanding from an Islamic perspective. If education is concerned with the cultivation of the whole human being, then formation cannot concern intellect alone. Islam is an embodied way of life. Prayer, fasting and pilgrimage are examples of that. Human beings learn, act and develop as embodied persons. Physical, emotional and practical experiences in turn have an essential place within education as part of the wider work of formation.

Schools should, therefore, be cautious about allowing efficiency or technological convenience to narrow the range of experiences pupils receive. Sport, performance, service, outdoor education, public speaking and enrichment may sometimes look less efficient than screen-based alternatives; indeed, they may take more resources. That does not make them educationally inefficient. Their value lies partly in what cannot be downloaded, generated or simulated.



RELATIONSHIPS: PRESERVING THE HUMAN ENCOUNTER

Those of us who work in schools know the importance of relationships.

Across our schools at Star, every child is connected deliberately to five trusted adults. For some young people, these are among the most stable and consistent relationships in their lives. These five adults often notice changes in behaviour long before anyone else does and intervene before a problem becomes a crisis. No algorithm can reproduce that human connection. It is through such relationships that young people are supported, challenged and ultimately flourish.

Relationships and rigour should not be set against one another. Being known, valued and supported does not require lowering expectations. Often it is

9 Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2024), *Youth provision and life outcomes: systematic literature review*, London. UK Government DCMS, 29 February 2024. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-provision-and-life-outcomes-research/youth-provision-and-life-outcomes-systematic-literature-review-executive-summary

10 Mann J. et al, (2022), Getting Out of the Classroom and Into Nature: A Systematic Review of Nature-Specific Outdoor Learning on School Children's Learning and Development. Front Public Health. 2022 May 16. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35651851/

11 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

precisely because a pupil trusts the adult in front of them that they are willing to accept correction, attempt something difficult, or persevere after failure. Care and challenge can reinforce one another.

Evidence supports the importance of these relational experiences. A recent UK government systematic review of youth provision found particularly consistent positive evidence around mentoring and peer mentoring, with studies reporting benefits including self-efficacy, connectedness, resilience and wellbeing.[12] Such evidence is, of course, important, but for those who work in schools, the human reality behind it is immediately recognisable.

This becomes especially significant as AI becomes more capable. AI can personalise explanations, generate feedback and sustain increasingly convincing conversations. These can be useful capabilities. But personalisation should not be mistaken for relationship. The OECD describes relationships, collaboration and trust as part of the "human core" of education and asks how that core can be strengthened as technological change accelerates.[13]

There is also an intergenerational dimension to education. Knowledge, culture, values and wisdom are often passed from one generation to another through human relationships. Teachers communicate more than subject content. Through their conduct, judgment and example, they also communicate something about what is worth knowing, how knowledge should be approached and how other people should be treated. Relationship is therefore not merely a vehicle through which education is delivered. It is part of the education itself.

Islamic concepts such as *rahmah* (compassion), *akhlaq* (etiquette), and *suhbah* (companionship) strengthen this understanding. *Rahmah* brings mercy and care into our dealings with others. *Akhlaq* reminds us that character is encountered and modelled as well as taught. *Suhbah* points to the formative influence people have upon one another. Together these concepts suggest an understanding of education in which human formation takes place through sustained relationships, example, challenge and care.

This has an important practical implication for the use of technology in schools. Educational technology should be evaluated partly by its effect on relational time. If automation reduces administrative burden and creates more time for teachers to teach, mentor, listen and know their pupils, it may strengthen the human work of education.[14]

So the question facing schools is more than whether AI can perform a particular task more efficiently. Rather, it is about examining whether AI use creates greater capacity for meaningful human encounter, and deepens the relational experience; as it is often within encounters with teachers, mentors and peers that young people are encouraged to reconsider what they think, examine their choices, and make sense of their experiences. That leads naturally to the next formative dimension: reflection.



REFLECTION: CREATING SPACE FOR MEANING AND JUDGMENT

Not all of the important work of education is easy to measure. Every day, teachers help young people recognise the consequences of their actions, take responsibility when something has gone wrong rather than blaming others, and think more carefully about the choices they are making. These moments do not appear in performance tables, yet they rightly occupy a significant proportion of a school's time, because they are part of how character and judgment are formed.

Reflection is one of the processes through which knowledge becomes judgement and, ultimately, wisdom. Pausing, interpreting experiences, examining assumptions, reconsidering evidence, all form part of reflection.

We see this in many forms in schools. A pupil revisits an argument after hearing a different point of view. They may assess what went well (and what did not) after leading an event. They may return to a piece of

12 Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2024), *Youth provision and life outcomes: systematic literature review*, London. UK Government DCMS, 29 February 2024. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-provision-and-life-outcomes-research/youth-provision-and-life-outcomes-systematic-literature-review-executive-summary

13 OECD (2026), *Reimagining Teaching in an Accelerating World*, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/d0edfe8c-en.

14 ibid.

work after feedback and see something they had previously missed. Sustained reading, extended writing, discussion, mentoring and self-evaluation all create opportunities for young people to make sense of what they know and what they have experienced.

There is a strong evidence base for developing such habits deliberately. The Education Endowment Foundation identifies metacognition and self-regulation as important to effective learning, with pupils benefiting from being explicitly taught how to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning. Importantly, these approaches appear to work best when embedded within subject teaching rather than taught as detached 'thinking skills'.[15] Metacognition is one educational expression of reflection, but reflection is larger than a learning strategy. It includes making meaning from experience, examining oneself and revising judgement.

Reflection in an AI-rich environment requires more than checking whether an answer is correct. It means pausing to compare the response with one's own thinking, understanding that the response may be built on inherent bias, asking whether it changes one's judgment, and considering why. Developing habits of questioning, comparing and revising helps keep the learner intellectually active rather than becoming a passive recipient of generated answers.

AI introduces a particular challenge because of the speed with which it can respond. A question, uncertainty or half-formed thought can now move almost instantly to a polished answer. That may be useful on occasion. But if every gap is filled immediately, pupils may have fewer opportunities to predict, wonder, retrieve what they already know, test an idea, or remain with uncertainty long enough to think more deeply. The OECD's *Digital Education Outlook 2026* warns of risks from cognitive offloading to GenAI, including what it terms "metacognitive laziness" and disengagement. It argues that education should continue to develop independent thinking and foundational skills without GenAI, as well as learning how to work effectively with educational and general-purpose AI.

There is educational value in the pause before the answer.

This need not mean excluding AI from reflective learning. Used carefully, it can itself become something upon which pupils reflect. A pupil might first articulate what they know or predict, then consult AI, before comparing the response with their original thinking by reflecting on such questions as "What was different?" "What was convincing?" "What needs verifying?" "Has the evidence changed my view, and if so, why?" Such routines keep the learner intellectually active and make the development of judgment, rather than production of an answer, the main objective.

The Islamic traditions of *tafakkur* (deep reflection) and *muhasabah* (self-accountability) offer a particularly rich language for this dimension of education. The former directs us towards thoughtful contemplation, whilst the latter involves examining oneself, one's actions and intentions. Both resist the idea that speed is always progress. Formation sometimes requires activity to give way to consideration. The question becomes not simply, "What did I produce?" but, "What have I understood?" "What have I learned?" "What should I reconsider?" and, "What should I now do differently?"

Schools, therefore, need to protect space for sustained attention and independent thought. Not every question should move immediately from prompt to generated answer. Extended reading and writing, thoughtful discussion, teacher questioning, self-evaluation and, at appropriate points, deliberately AI-free or device-free periods can all preserve the space in which pupils learn to reflect. Assessment too can value explanation of reasoning, reconsideration of evidence and revision of judgment, rather than evaluating the final product alone. Project files, for example, may take equal weight to an essay.

This returns us to the question with which we began. As technology becomes increasingly capable of producing answers and completing tasks, what experiences should education deliberately preserve because they contribute to the formation of the human being?

CONCLUSION: BECOMING MORE DELIBERATELY HUMAN

The challenge for schools is not to choose between embracing AI and protecting learning. It is to develop a clear educational rationale for deciding where technology helps and where something important may be lost. A useful human formation test is to consider what a technology enables or strengthens, what formative processes it may bypass, and what happens to the learner when those processes are removed.

Applied across school life, this has practical consequences. Curriculum should remain knowledge-rich and carefully sequenced, with AI literacy built upon

15 EEF, (2025), *Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning Guidance Report*, London, Education Endowment Foundation, https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/metacognition

secure subject knowledge. Assessment should distinguish between what pupils know, understand, and can do independently, and what they can produce with intelligent assistance. Pedagogy should use AI where it genuinely scaffolds learning, while preserving productive struggle, independent thinking, and teacher judgment. School culture should continue to create deliberate opportunities for responsibility, service, embodied experience, human relationship, and reflection. Technology should serve these educational purposes, not quietly redefine them.

Underlying these choices is the distinction between performance and formation. A stronger answer does not necessarily mean a more knowledgeable learner. A task completed more quickly does not necessarily mean that the effort through which learning becomes secure has taken place. Greater AI assistance does not necessarily develop greater agency. And something can be highly efficient while being educationally impoverished.

Knowledge is the intellectual foundation of education. Effort, agency, embodiment, relationships and reflection are dimensions of formation. They are not substitutes for knowledge, nor are they free-floating skills detached from it. Rather, they describe some of the ways in which knowledge is acquired, exercised, tested and turned towards judgement, responsibility, and wisdom.

Some of the experiences that appear inefficient from the perspective of technology may, therefore, be precisely those that are formative from the perspective of education. Wrestling with a difficult idea, standing nervously before an audience, taking responsibility when something goes wrong, being challenged by a trusted teacher, serving another person, or sitting with a question long enough to change one's mind are all formative. These experiences take time because formation takes time.

This is where Islamic educational traditions have something important to contribute to the wider debate. They can offer a language in which education is concerned not simply with what a person can produce, but with what kind of person they are becoming. Knowledge should lead towards wisdom, capability towards responsibility, learning towards the formation of character, and the wise exercise of human agency.

AI may profoundly change what is possible in education. Schools and systems should therefore judge educational technologies not simply by the efficiencies they create or the quality of the outputs they generate, but by what they do to the learner and the kind of human being they help to form. The greater the capabilities of our machines, the more deliberate education must become about forming the human being.

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Leadership Perfected: Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the Making of Leaders

SHEIKH MUHAMMAD IMDAD HUSSAIN PIRZADA

THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP

Every institution, nation, enterprise and community requires capable leadership. Without it, even worthy ambitions can remain little more than unfulfilled hopes. A true leader does more than guide people towards an objective: a true leader develops those who follow and prepares them to lead in turn. As the American author Tom Peters observed, "True leaders don't create followers; they create more leaders."

Leadership is therefore essential not only to the advancement of a developing society or institution, but also to the continued flourishing of one that is already established. Without competent and exemplary leadership, progress can falter and decline can begin.

Arnold J. Toynbee examined the rise and fall of twenty-six civilisations in the course of human history and concluded that they rose when they responded successfully to challenges under the leadership of creative minorities composed of elite leaders. Civilisations declined when their leaders stopped responding creatively, and civilisations then sank as they succumbed to nationalism, militarism and the tyranny of a despotic minority. Leadership, in this reading of history, is not a decorative office. It can determine whether a civilisation rises to meet its challenges, or collapses beneath them.

PRINCIPLES AND QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP

John Maxwell, one of the best-known contemporary writers on leadership, argues that its essential principles remain constant: "Leadership is leadership, no matter where you go or what you do. Times change. Technology marches forward. Cultures differ from place to place. But leadership principles are unchanging and stand the test of time." [*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*]

Stephen Covey likewise grounds effective leadership in enduring principles. He describes them as



"inviolate principles" and "natural laws" within the human dimension: they are not invented by individuals or societies, and they do not shift with fashion or circumstance. [*Principle-Centered Leadership*]

Jim Collins once asked Covey how he had arrived at the ideas presented in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey replied: "I wrote the book, but the principles were known long before me. They are more like natural laws. All I did was put them together, to synthesize them for people." [*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*]

A leader thinks wisely about the future. A leader's vision perceives what others cannot yet see, discovers opportunities within difficulties, and makes complex problems and demanding objectives easier to understand. Leadership begins with the ability to see beyond the immediate moment and to help others believe that a different future is possible.

Maxwell expresses this relationship between the leader, the people and the vision in memorable terms: "The leader finds the dream and then the people. The people find the leader and then the dream. People don't at first follow worthy causes. They follow worthy leaders who promote causes they can believe in. People buy into the leader first, then the leader's vision." [*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*]

LEADERSHIP AS RESPONSIBILITY

Leadership is not confined to rulers, executives or the heads of institutions. Every person carries some measure of responsibility. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: 'Every one of you is a guardian, and every one of you will be questioned about those under your care.' [*Al-Bukhari*]

The capacity for leadership is not distributed equally, nor can every person lead in every field. Alongside the qualities shared by all human beings, Allah has placed within each person particular abilities and potential. Recognising those abilities requires honest self-examination. As it has been said: "Whoever recognises himself has recognised his Lord." The one who truly knows himself recognises both his own limitations and the power of his Lord.

When a person identifies a distinctive ability and devotes energy to cultivating it, he may become a capable leader within that field. Leadership thus begins with responsibility for the self: knowing one's strengths, acknowledging one's limitations, and developing the qualities through which one can serve others.

THE PROPHETIC STANDARD

Maxwell proposed 21 irrefutable laws of leadership, yet acknowledged in the introduction to his own book: "Despite the fact that we must do 21 things well to be excellent leaders, it is reality that none of us does all of them well. For example, I am average or below average in five of the laws—and I wrote the book." [*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*]

His admission points to a familiar human reality. Different leaders embody different qualities to varying degrees, but rarely are all the qualities of leadership combined perfectly in one person. History nevertheless bears witness that, 14 centuries ago, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ embodied these qualities with an unparalleled completeness.

Today, colleges, universities, training institutes and digital media can teach leadership to thousands of people at once, yet only a limited number become leaders of lasting consequence. Fourteen centuries ago, Arabia possessed none of these modern institutions or means of mass communication. In only 23 years, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ transformed a dispersed, largely unlettered and tribal people into a community united by faith, knowledge and moral purpose. He did not merely gather followers. He honoured them as his Companions, nurtured their abilities and formed from among them thousands of leaders whose example continues to guide people today.

This was leadership not merely through instruction, but through formation: the cultivation of character, judgement, courage, responsibility and service. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ exemplified the principle that the finest leader is the one who enables others to rise.

THE INHERITANCE OF PROPHETIC LEADERSHIP

Allah established the succession of prophethood for the guidance of humankind. It began with the Prophet Adam and reached its completion with the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, after whom there is no prophet.



Earlier prophets were sent to particular peoples and places, whereas the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent for every people and every age. His example therefore continues to illuminate every field of human life.

Ibn Abbas relates that, when the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was born, Ridwan, the gatekeeper of Paradise, proclaimed: "O Muhammad! Glad tidings for you. Allah has granted you all the knowledge (virtues, insight, discernment and understanding) that He bestowed individually upon the prophets. Your knowledge is therefore greater than theirs, and your heart is more courageous." [*Al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyyah*]

Abu Dharr asked the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ how many prophets there had been, and he replied: "One hundred and twenty-four thousand." [*Al-Mustadrak*] The Qur'an states: "*And We sent each Messenger only to be obeyed by Allah's permission*." [*Al-Nisa', 4:64*] Every prophet was therefore the divinely guided leader of his people.

All prophets share the essence of prophethood, just as all people share the essence of humanity, although their individual ranks and qualities differ. The Qur'an declares that Allah granted some messengers distinction over others [*Al-Baqarah, 2:253*]. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ stands as the final prophet and the leader of them all. He said: "I am the leader of the Messengers—and I say this without boasting." [*Al-Darimi*]

Allah bestowed particular virtues and qualities upon individual prophets and gathered those excellences in the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. If each of the 124,000 prophets possessed even one distinctive quality of leadership, their combined virtues would exceed one hundred thousand qualities. These qualities were gathered in the person of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, together with further excellences known fully to Allah alone.

LEADERSHIP AT THE PINNACLE OF HUMAN HISTORY

"The beauty of Joseph, the life-giving breath of Jesus, the radiant hand of Moses;
All excellences, gathered in their totality, are yours alone." [Jalal al-Din Rumi (or) Saadi Shirazi]

The greater a leader's influence, the more closely followers and opponents alike examine his life. No leader in human history has inspired a body of literature comparable to that written about the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by Muslims and non-Muslims. Libraries and universities across the world preserve countless studies of his life, bearing witness to the depth and reach of his influence.

His public and private life has also been preserved with a comprehensiveness rarely found in the biographies of other leaders. Muhammad Shafi writes: "No one can rival the Muslims in the honour of having preserved every detail of the circumstances and events of their Prophet's life with such comprehensiveness." [*Sayyid al-Wara*] This record allows leadership to be studied not only through public declarations and moments of triumph, but also through conduct within the home, friendship, hardship, conflict, and ordinary daily life.

There is no genuine quality of leadership identified by later thinkers whose substance cannot be found within the prophetic biography. As changing circumstances reveal new dimensions of human need, readers continue to discover new dimensions in the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. David Margoliouth, an Oxford scholar of Arabic, wrote: "The biographers of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ form a long series which it is impossible to end, but in which it would be honourable to find a place." [*Muhammad and the Rise of Islam*]

Many leaders have spoken words of wisdom and embodied some admirable qualities. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ did more: he united word and deed across the religious, social, political and personal dimensions of life. His example remains visible because both his public conduct and private character were preserved. More than 14 centuries later, over a quarter of the world's population continues to regard him with profound love, devotion and a desire to follow his example.

His standing is also acknowledged beyond the Muslim tradition. The American writer, historian and philosopher Will Durant observed: "If we rated greatness by the influence of the great, we will say—Muhammad is the greatest of the great in history." [*Muhammad: 1001 Universal Appreciations*]

The French writer and statesman Alphonse de Lamartine asked: "If greatness of purpose, smallness of means and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad?" He described the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, conqueror of ideas and restorer of rational beliefs, concluding: "As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask: is there any man greater than he?" [*Muhammad: 1001 Universal Appreciations*]

The American writer Michael Hart placed the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ first in his ranking of

history's most influential people. He explained: "He was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels." Hart noted that, from humble origins, he founded and promulgated one of the world's great religions, became an immensely effective political leader, and left an influence that remained powerful and pervasive centuries after his death. [*The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*]

ENDURING INFLUENCE AND THE SEARCH FOR WISDOM

In institutions of law such as Lincoln's Inn in London and the Supreme Court in Washington, DC, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has been recognised among the great lawgivers of history. Such recognition reflects the understanding that his legacy touches not only personal worship, but also governance, justice and public order.

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The Makkah Peace Accord: Why ASEAN Must Pay Attention

PHAR KIM BENG, PHD; AND LUTHFY HAMZAH

The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, signed by Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan on 7 August 2026, should not be regarded as merely another defence arrangement emerging from the turbulence of West Asia. Nor should the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) dismiss it as a distant development belonging to the strategic geography of the Middle East. The agreement deserves to be understood in a much broader sense. It is potentially the beginning of an attempt to construct a new regional security architecture at a moment when confidence in the old international order is weakening.

For ASEAN, therefore, Makkah matters. The agreement brings together three countries possessing very different but complementary forms of power. Saudi Arabia possesses extraordinary financial, energy and religious influence. Türkiye possesses one of the largest and most experienced armed forces in NATO as well as an increasingly sophisticated defence-industrial base. Pakistan possesses a large professional military establishment, considerable strategic experience and, most importantly, nuclear weapons.

Individually, none can completely transform the international system. Together, however, they constitute a formidable strategic triangle connecting West Asia, the Mediterranean, Central Asia, South Asia and, indirectly, the Indo-Pacific. The significance of the agreement is consequently not simply military. It is geopolitical and ASEAN must study it carefully.

FROM MAKKAH TO A NEW SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

The agreement was signed in Makkah by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Its most striking principle is unmistakable: an armed attack against one of the three countries will be regarded as an attack against all three. That language immediately invites comparison with Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. However, the Makkah arrangement should not simply be



described as an Islamic NATO since that would be premature and analytically misleading.

NATO emerged from the particular circumstances of post-war Europe and subsequently developed an elaborate integrated military command structure, interoperability arrangements, permanent institutions, intelligence mechanisms, and decades of common strategic planning. The Makkah Agreement is much younger; nevertheless, the direction of travel is important.

The three governments are seeking to institutionalise defence cooperation rather than relying merely upon occasional political consultations. This became clearer on 31 August when the foreign ministers, defence ministers and military chiefs of Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan gathered in Istanbul for the inaugural meeting of the Strategic Political and Defence Committee.

Moreover, the three subsequently agreed to establish a permanent secretariat in Saudi Arabia, initially headed by a Pakistani secretary-general for three years, and also committed themselves to strengthening defence capabilities, military cohesion, defence-industrial cooperation, joint technological development and production. Thus, Makkah is already moving from declaration towards institutionalisation.

Whether it eventually becomes a powerful military arrangement remains uncertain. But ASEAN should pay attention precisely because institutions often begin modestly, and given that ASEAN itself began with five countries signing the Bangkok Declaration

in 1967. Few could have imagined then that the association would eventually expand to encompass virtually the whole of Southeast Asia and become the institutional centre of a sprawling regional diplomatic architecture.

Institutions acquire importance through repetition, habit, and accumulated political commitment. The same could eventually occur with Makkah. Hence the question: Why Now?

Security arrangements do not appear in a vacuum. The Makkah Agreement emerged from profound anxiety about the deterioration of the strategic environment across West Asia. The region has witnessed repeated wars, missile attacks, drone warfare, disruption of shipping routes, and intensifying confrontation involving Iran, Israel and the United States.

Comparatively, for decades, the Gulf states relied heavily on American military power as the ultimate guarantor of regional security. That relationship has not disappeared, nor will it disappear soon; but something important has changed. In the latest observation in the Gulf States, regional governments increasingly appear unwilling to place all their strategic eggs in one basket. First, Saudi Arabia has diversified its diplomacy. Second, Türkiye simultaneously remains a NATO member while pursuing substantial strategic autonomy. Third, Pakistan maintains relations with China, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and other major partners while protecting its own strategic interests. This is not classic neutrality, neither is it simple non-alignment; but it is strategic diversification.

Ultimately, ASEAN should recognise this phenomenon immediately because Southeast Asian countries have practised different versions of it for decades. ASEAN countries do not want China to dominate Asia and neither do they want the United States expelled from the region. What ASEAN really wants is strong relations with Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and the European Union while simultaneously maintaining productive relations with Beijing and Washington. In other words, the instinct underlying the Makkah agreement is not entirely alien to ASEAN. It represents a search for strategic room to manoeuvre.

REGIONAL OWNERSHIP

One particularly important concept associated with the agreement is "regional ownership". This deserves serious ASEAN attention as, for much of modern history, the security architecture of West Asia has been heavily shaped by external powers. For instance,



Britain once played this role, then the United States subsequently became the dominant external security provider. Meanwhile, Russia maintained its own strategic presence and China has increasingly developed economic and diplomatic interests throughout the region.

However, the Makkah Agreement suggests that important regional states increasingly believe that they must assume greater responsibility for their own security. ASEAN was founded upon a similar instinct. The creation of ASEAN in 1967 was fundamentally an attempt by Southeast Asian governments to prevent their region from becoming merely an arena in which larger powers settled their rivalries.

That instinct subsequently informed concepts such as the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality and eventually ASEAN centrality from which the lesson was simple. Regional countries must possess sufficient diplomatic agency to shape their own regional environment. Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan now appear to be experimenting with their own version of this principle. However, their methods differ substantially from ASEAN's.

ASEAN is not a military alliance as it has never possessed collective defence obligations. Its strength has traditionally rested upon diplomacy, consultation, economic integration and institutional networking. Yet the underlying strategic objective has similarities: regional states must not surrender the management of their security completely to outside powers.

DETERRENCE CAN SERVE PEACE

Hence, it may be useful to think of Makkah not merely as a defence agreement but potentially as a peace accord. Peace cannot always be maintained through goodwill alone. International relations remain shaped by power. States calculate risks, assess capabilities, probe weaknesses and, when deterrence collapses, temptation can arise. The logic behind Makkah appears to be that aggression against one member should carry the possibility of confrontation with all three. Saudi financial resources, Turkish military

and technological capabilities and Pakistani military power therefore become mutually reinforcing.

The objective should not be war, but be making war prohibitively expensive; hence, this distinction is essential. Deterrence without diplomacy produces permanent confrontation while diplomacy without credible deterrence can produce strategic vulnerability. Successful statecraft requires both.

Significantly, the three governments emphasised after their Istanbul meeting that their cooperation should support de-escalation, restraint and peaceful resolution of crises. The challenge will be translating these aspirations into actual behaviour. A defence arrangement can stabilise a region when its boundaries and intentions are understood. It can destabilise the same region if competitors interpret it as an offensive coalition. Consequently, transparency and diplomatic engagement will be indispensable.

PAKISTAN'S SPECIAL ROLE

Pakistan is particularly interesting from an ASEAN perspective. Pakistan is simultaneously a South Asian country, an Indian Ocean power, a nuclear weapons state, an important partner of China, and a country with long-established relations across the Muslim world. Also, its geography connects several strategic theatres: to its east lies India, to its west are Iran and Afghanistan, beyond them lies the Gulf; to the north is China and its maritime frontage opens onto the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

Pakistan, therefore, occupies a strategic intersection between South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia and the Indo-Pacific. In this perspective, ASEAN should avoid viewing Pakistan solely through the prism of its rivalry with India as it increasingly matters to the wider strategic architecture connecting the Indian Ocean with Southeast Asia.

Hence, its participation in Makkah reinforces this role more in particular in the nuclear dimension and this inevitably attracts attention as Pakistan remains the only Muslim-majority nuclear-armed state. But assumptions that Makkah automatically extends a Pakistani nuclear umbrella over Saudi Arabia and Türkiye would go beyond that which has been formally established.

Strategic ambiguity itself, however, can affect deterrence calculations. Potential adversaries must now contemplate the possibility that confrontation with one member could generate reactions from the other two. That uncertainty may itself possess deterrent value.

TÜRKIYE AND THE DEFENCE-INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Türkiye contributes something equally significant: industrial military capacity. The transformation of Türkiye's defence sector during recent decades has been remarkable. Turkish drones have become internationally recognised. Its companies manufacture armoured vehicles, naval platforms, missiles, electronics and increasingly sophisticated aerospace technologies. Moreover, Türkiye has consequently moved from being primarily an importer of advanced military systems towards becoming an important producer and exporter.

This carries an important lesson for ASEAN whereby security sovereignty increasingly depends upon technological sovereignty. A country unable to manufacture, maintain or adapt essential defence technologies remains dependent upon external suppliers. This vulnerability becomes particularly serious during international crises when export controls, sanctions or disrupted supply chains can suddenly restrict access to critical components. The Makkah countries have therefore placed considerable emphasis on joint technological development and production. This may eventually prove more important than the dramatic collective-defence clause itself.

Joint factories, research programmes, drone technologies, air-defence systems, electronic warfare, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and autonomous systems could create durable strategic interdependence among the three countries about which ASEAN should watch these developments closely.

SAUDI ARABIA: CAPITAL MEETS STRATEGY

Saudi Arabia supplies another essential ingredient: capital. In this contemporary world, modern military technology is extraordinarily expensive, research and development require patient financing. Aircraft, missiles, satellites, cybersecurity systems and artificial intelligence require substantial investment. And Saudi Arabia possesses the financial resources capable of accelerating joint technological projects.

However, Riyadh's role extends far beyond money as Saudi Arabia remains one of the world's most important energy producers. Its geographical position gives it enormous importance in the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula. Its religious status gives it influence throughout the Muslim world.

Its economic transformation under Vision 2030 has also encouraged the kingdom to develop new industries and technological capabilities. Makkah therefore potentially combines Saudi capital, Turkish

technology and Pakistani military expertise. This complementarity explains why ASEAN should not underestimate the arrangement. Strategic partnerships become durable when each participant contributes something the others require.

THE ENERGY CONNECTION TO ASEAN

There is an even more immediate reason why Southeast Asia should care: energy. ASEAN's economies remain deeply connected to energy flows originating in West Asia. Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei possess their own hydrocarbon resources, but the wider Asian economy remains heavily dependent upon Gulf energy. For example, Japan, South Korea, China and India depend substantially upon energy imported through maritime routes connecting the Gulf with the Indian Ocean.

Any prolonged disruption of these routes reverberates throughout Asia. Oil prices rise. Shipping insurance and transportation costs increase. The electricity generation becomes more expensive and manufacturing costs rise. This all invites inflation.

ASEAN, therefore, cannot regard West Asian security as geographically remote. A missile launched thousands of kilometres from Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Bangkok, Manila or Singapore can ultimately affect supermarket prices throughout Southeast Asia. The Strait of Hormuz is consequently connected economically to the Strait of Malacca; the Red Sea is connected to the South China Sea; and the Arabian Sea is connected to the wider Indo-Pacific.

Modern geopolitics has destroyed the luxury of thinking about these waterways separately. They form part of an interconnected maritime circulatory system.

THE INDIAN OCEAN CANNOT BE IGNORED

ASEAN strategic thinking has traditionally concentrated heavily on the South China Sea which is understandably so. But the Indian Ocean is becoming equally important.

A substantial portion of the trade and energy sustaining Southeast Asian economies travels through the Indian Ocean before entering the Strait of Malacca. Countries in the region such as Malaysia and Indonesia literally sit at the intersection of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Singapore's prosperity is intimately connected to maritime flows linking both oceans, while Thailand is increasingly discussing connectivity across the peninsula. In comparison, too, Myanmar faces the Bay of Bengal. Thus, ASEAN needs a more comprehensive maritime imagination.



The Indo-Pacific cannot merely mean the Western Pacific plus the South China Sea. It must genuinely include the Indian Ocean. The Makkah agreement reinforces this reality because Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye collectively possess influence across strategic corridors connecting the Mediterranean, Red Sea, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

MALAYSIA SHOULD PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION

Malaysia has additional reasons to observe Makkah carefully. It maintains excellent relations with Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan. Malaysia also possesses considerable credibility in the Muslim world while simultaneously remaining firmly embedded within ASEAN. This gives Kuala Lumpur a potentially useful diplomatic position. However, Malaysia should not seek membership in the Makkah Agreement because there is no strategic necessity to do so since ASEAN's security culture remains fundamentally different.

Malaysia should develop structured dialogue with the three countries, and the focus could include maritime security, cybersecurity, defence technology, artificial intelligence, drone development, humanitarian operations, disaster relief, peacekeeping, and defence-industrial cooperation. Malaysia should especially study possibilities for joint technological ventures. The future of national security will increasingly depend upon technological ecosystems rather than merely the purchase of finished weapons. Countries capable of designing systems, writing software, manufacturing components and maintaining equipment will possess considerably greater strategic autonomy.

ASEAN MUST NOT BECOME A MILITARY ALLIANCE

ASEAN should, nevertheless, avoid drawing the wrong lesson. The Makkah agreement does not mean ASEAN should create its own Article 5. That would contradict ASEAN's historical development and could divide the organisation. Southeast Asia contains widely differing security relationships while some ASEAN countries are treaty allies of the United

States. Others maintain extremely close strategic relationships with China and several practise various forms of non-alignment. By attempting to impose a collective military commitment upon such diversity would probably weaken rather than strengthen ASEAN.

ASEAN's comparative advantage lies elsewhere. It creates diplomatic platforms, encourages habits of consultation, and provides institutional spaces where competing powers can communicate. The ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus reflect this tradition. ASEAN should, therefore, strengthen what it does best while learning selectively from Makkah. In the end, one lesson deserves particular attention: institutions must evolve when their strategic environment changes.

FROM ASEAN CENTRALITY TO STRATEGIC CAPABILITY

ASEAN frequently invokes "ASEAN centrality" but centrality cannot survive indefinitely as rhetoric. It must be supported by economic capability, technological capability, maritime capability, diplomatic capability, institutional capability and, increasingly, cybersecurity and artificial-intelligence capability. The Makkah Agreement demonstrates that middle powers are searching for new forms of strategic cooperation because the international environment is becoming less predictable.

ASEAN faces exactly the same world. The rivalry between the United States and China continues and the wars in West Asia and Eastern Europe demonstrate the persistence of hard power. In exacerbating the issue, artificial intelligence is transforming military affairs, drones have democratised precision warfare, and cyber operations can cripple infrastructure without conventional invasion. Meanwhile, supply chains have become instruments of geopolitical competition while energy security remains fragile. ASEAN cannot respond to these developments simply by repeating established diplomatic formulas. Centrality must be continuously earned.

A WORLD OF REGIONAL STRATEGIC NETWORKS

Makkah may also reveal something larger about the future international order. The world may not be moving towards a simple bipolar confrontation between the United States and China. Instead, the emerging order may consist of overlapping networks of powers. For instance, BRICS is expanding, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation continues to develop, the Quad operates in the Indo-Pacific, and AUKUS is developing advanced military-technological cooperation.

The Gulf states increasingly practise multi-directional diplomacy. Türkiye operates simultaneously within NATO and across Eurasia and the Muslim world. India participates in the Quad while retaining strategic autonomy and participating in BRICS. Saudi Arabia maintains strong relations with Washington while deepening relations with Beijing and other Asian powers. Indonesia engages widely without abandoning its traditional, independent and active foreign policy. Malaysia works with China, the United States, the European Union, Japan, India, the Gulf states and BRICS partners.

This is not a neatly divided world. It is a polytropus world. States increasingly move across multiple diplomatic and strategic networks simultaneously. The Makkah Agreement is another manifestation of this emerging architecture.

ASEAN'S OPPORTUNITY

ASEAN should, therefore, not ask whether Makkah is good or bad. The more useful question is what it reveals about the direction of international politics, growing demand for regional ownership, declining willingness among middle powers to rely exclusively upon great-power protection, the increasing connection between defence security, technological sovereignty and industrial policy, the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean. This demonstrates that countries with different capabilities can pool their comparative advantages and manifests that deterrence and diplomacy need not necessarily be opposites.

These lessons are extremely relevant to ASEAN. The association should strengthen strategic dialogue with Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan individually and, where appropriate, collectively. ASEAN-GCC relations provide one existing institutional bridge while ASEAN's relationships with Türkiye and Pakistan provide others. Rather than creating another enormous bureaucracy, practical cooperation should begin with specific areas where interests overlap.

Maritime domain awareness is one, counterterrorism is another, cybersecurity is increasingly essential, artificial intelligence governance deserves attention, energy security is unavoidable, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief remain natural areas for cooperation, and defence-industrial dialogue could also become increasingly useful.

PEACE THROUGH MULTIPOLAR RESPONSIBILITY

Ultimately, the importance of Makkah lies in the possibility that regional powers are beginning to accept greater responsibility for maintaining their own regional order. That development contains risks since regional alliances can become confrontational as security dilemmas can intensify. One country's deterrence can become another country's perceived threat which history contains numerous examples of alliances intended to preserve peace that ultimately contributed to conflict.

Makkah must therefore remain connected to diplomacy as its members should maintain dialogue with Iran, with Israel where possible, and should continue engaging the United States, China, Russia, India, Europe and neighbouring states. Deterrence should create the political space for diplomacy rather than replace diplomacy.

ASEAN understands this principle better than many regions. Its survival for nearly six decades has depended upon keeping communication alive even when relations between its members or external partners became difficult. However, the ASEAN method can sometimes appear slow as it can occasionally seem excessively cautious—however, strategic patience has value.

Perhaps this is where ASEAN and the Makkah countries can learn from one another. Makkah demonstrates the importance of credible capability while ASEAN demonstrates the importance of continuous dialogue—and the future regional order may require both.

MAKKAH IS CLOSER THAN IT LOOKS

The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement should, therefore, not be dismissed as an event occurring far beyond Southeast Asia. Geography no longer permits such complacency. As West Asia and Southeast Asia are increasingly connected through energy, trade, maritime routes, finance, technology, religion and geopolitics, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan are all increasingly important middle powers. ASEAN itself consists predominantly of middle and smaller powers attempting collectively to preserve strategic autonomy.

Their experiences, therefore, intersect. Makkah represents one possible response to the uncertainties of the emerging multipolar order, while ASEAN represents another. One relies more explicitly upon deterrence and the other relies primarily upon diplomatic institutionalisation—neither model is necessarily sufficient on its own.

The strategic challenge of the twenty-first century will be finding ways to combine deterrence, diplomacy, development and dialogue without allowing any single dimension to overwhelm the others.

For Malaysia, the lesson is particularly clear. Kuala Lumpur should remain anchored in ASEAN while widening its strategic horizons. It should understand developments from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean, from the South China Sea to the Arabian Sea, and from the Strait of Malacca to the Strait of Hormuz.

Malaysia does not need to join every emerging arrangement. But it must understand them, engage, and should learn from all. Also, where Malaysia's national interests coincide with those of emerging regional coalitions, it should cooperate pragmatically without sacrificing ASEAN centrality or strategic autonomy.

The Makkah Agreement is still young, the durability has not been tested and its precise military implications remain uncertain; and differences among Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan will inevitably arise. Whether the Agreement becomes a genuine security institution or merely another diplomatic declaration will depend upon implementation.

However, its establishment already tells us something important: that the international order is changing. Regional powers no longer want merely to wait for Washington, Beijing, Moscow or Brussels to determine their strategic choices. They are actively shaping their own environments. That is why Makkah matters, and why ASEAN must pay attention.

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The Makkah Pact: A New Architecture of Muslim Power

LAMYA AL-KHRAISHA

A historic trilateral mutual defense pact between Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Pakistan was signed on 7 August, 2026. The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (MJDA), dubbed by observers as an 'Islamic NATO,' establishes a collective security arrangement modeled closely after NATO's Article 5, stating that an armed attack against any one of the three member states will be treated as an attack against them all.

The agreement represents a huge shift in Middle Eastern geopolitics, moving toward Ummatic strategic autonomy during a period of severe regional upheaval. The region's security landscape has been reshaped by Israel's ongoing genocidal war on Gaza after the October 7 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel, the ousting of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, and, of course, the US and Israel war on Iran. There are also growing threats to vital maritime corridors such as the Strait of Hormuz and Bab Al-Mandeb. The Pact signals that major powers of the Ummah are transitioning from passive consumers of Western security to active producers of their own defense.

WHAT IS KNOWN AND WHAT IS NOT

The exact legal text of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement remains classified, most likely in order to maintain strategic ambiguity. The complete text has not been publicly released, but the broad principles have been disclosed via official joint communiqués and press briefings. What has been published officially is the joint summit statement, not the Pact itself.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs published the following: "Guided by the longstanding historical ties among the three States, based on the enduring bonds of brotherhood and Islamic solidarity that unite them, and building upon their shared strategic interests and longstanding defence cooperation ... the three States' shared commitment to further strengthening their collective security and to promoting peace, security, and stability in the region and beyond, in pursuit of a secure and prosperous future ... The Agreement is intended to strengthen collective deterrence against any act of aggression, and stipulates that any armed attack against any one of the three States shall be regarded as an attack against them all. It further provides for the enhancement of all aspects of defence cooperation among the three States."

It is still unknown what the precise definition and geographical scope of an "armed attack" is. And the



exact "military commitments" and the precise "conditions" required to invoke the collective defense clause are also not known. Nor is it known if military assistance would be instant, and what form of assistance each state is legally required to provide. This last point is particularly significant considering Pakistan is a nuclear power. It is unclear if Pakistan's nuclear deterrent indirectly extends to Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, but the ambiguity alone serves as a powerful deterrent to anyone considering an attack on Türkiye or Saudi Arabia as they would have to factor in that they may have a nuclear umbrella.

On 31 August 2026, the three countries convened the first formal meeting of the Strategic Political and Defence Committee in Istanbul, marking the first concrete step towards translating their political declaration into an institutional framework. The defence and foreign ministers agreed to establish a permanent secretariat in Saudi Arabia, initially headed by a Pakistani Secretary-General serving a three-year term, and to strengthen military cohesion through coordinated high-level planning, joint military exercises and collaborative defence-industrial projects.

COMPLEMENTARY MILITARY STRENGTHS

The Makkah Pact strategically utilises the distinct and highly complementary military strengths of each member nation to establish an operational deterrent force. Saudi Arabia brings tremendous financial power to the table. Türkiye contributes an advanced defense industry, battle-tested soldiers, and high-tech military hardware, including drones and aerospace technology. Pakistan provides manpower and unique missile capabilities, and is of course one of only nine states that possess nuclear weapons and is the only Muslim nation among them.

The nominal GDP of Pakistan is 452.1 billion USD, Türkiye 1.1 trillion USD, and Saudi Arabia 1.3 trillion USD. Saudi Arabia has a modern and well-equipped military which includes more than 1,000 tanks, 449 jets at least, and the largest air-force of the three states. Saudi Arabia already had a mutual defence pact with Pakistan. In 2026 alone Pakistan sent its ally 8,000 soldiers, a squadron of jets and air defence batteries. Türkiye has the second-largest army in NATO after the United States and has almost 2,400 tanks, a rapidly growing sophisticated navy with 13 submarines and an amphibious assault ship plus a growing military-industrial complex that can produce high-tech weapons quickly should the need arise. Pakistan is a nuclear power with strong defence ties to China and has over half a million soldiers, 3 intelligence-gathering satellites, and 1,400 military aircraft, including 422 combat-capable jets, most of them F16s. Collectively the three states form a sizeable military bloc. Between them they have over 6,000 tanks and more than 179,000 armoured vehicles, over 3400 aircraft, more than 340 naval assets, a fleet of drones, ballistic missiles, a nuclear deterrent, and, according to the 2026 Global Firepower Index, nearly 1.4 million active military personnel. Their combined defence budgets amount to about 124.4 billion dollars annually.

THREE POWERS, THREE MOTIVATIONS

The three countries have different motivations for joining the Pact. Pakistan is battling at least two insurgencies and needs a counterweight to India which said it would monitor the Pact and protect its own national security interests. It also needs money. Türkiye needs a nuclear deterrent against the Israeli rhetoric that has started to focus on Türkiye as the next regional threat to Israel. And Saudi Arabia has an ambitious modernisation vision for itself which is being held back by all the wars and fighting in the region. The three states also juggle divergent geopolitical realities. Saudi Arabia has faced direct attacks on its energy infrastructure by the Islamic Republic of Iran, while Türkiye and Pakistan maintain highly complex diplomatic ties with Iran.

WHY THE PACT EMERGED NOW

Israel's emergence as a regional hegemon with unrestrained military power has implications for all three countries. Arab and Muslim states watched in horror as Israel expanded its military action across the region defying the United States' half-hearted calls to restrain itself. Israel is constantly threatening Türkiye, and concerns that there will be a military clash between the two regional powers are very real, particularly because of their involvement in Syria. The American umbrella is now viewed as neither guaranteeing peace nor having the best interests of its non-Israeli allies in the region at heart. America is perceived as increasingly tempted by isolationism and incapable of restraining Israel as various international agreements in Lebanon, Gaza, and with Iran have been undermined, leading to a loss of faith in diplomatic mediation by the US. Combining the strengths of the three States demonstrates that the Muslim world can build an independent deterrent capable of navigating global power rivalries.

The succession of conflicts across the Middle East has unsettled the regional order and prompted several

countries in the region to reconsider the reliability and future direction of Washington's security role. Some analysts regard this uncertainty as an important factor behind the pact's formation; others argue that the agreement remains compatible with the American preference for regional allies to assume a greater share of their own defence. This interpretation also reflects a broader tendency under the Obama and Biden administrations to reduce direct American engagement in the Middle East—a tendency that continued into President Trump's second term, with the 2025 National Security Strategy devoting limited attention to the region.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UMMAH

The signing of the agreement in the holy city of Makkah carries intense symbolic resonance for Muslims globally and the text explicitly invokes "the enduring bonds of brotherhood and Islamic solidarity". That wording deliberately places the agreement within a wider Islamic moral and historical vocabulary. By uniting three of the most powerful Islamic nations under a single mutual-defense umbrella, the pact is being viewed as both a historic symbol of Islamic solidarity and a complex geopolitical development that could fracture or reshape the Muslim world's internal alliances. For decades, the concept of a pan-Islamic military alliance has been popular within public discourse across the Muslim world. The emergence of this trilateral bloc satisfies a long-standing desire within the Ummah for independent, collective Islamic strength. Public enthusiasm for an 'Islamic NATO' also reflects Muslims' hopes to possess the organised strength to protect themselves.

By using the language of the Ummah, the signatories invite Muslims to judge the pact by more than its service to three national governments. If it protects only regimes and borders while remaining indifferent to catastrophes elsewhere, its invocation of Makkah could become a source of criticism rather than legitimacy.

The pact does not restore the Ummah as a single political actor. It may nevertheless achieve something more modest and more durable: the reintroduction of Islamic solidarity as a meaningful element of interstate strategy. Muslim international politics has too often oscillated between rhetorical pan-Islamism and fragmented nationalism.

STRATEGIC AUTONOMY AND COLLECTIVE DEFENCE CAPACITY

For approximately eight decades, much of the Middle East's security architecture has depended upon Western—principally American—military power. The Makkah Pact does not necessarily terminate that security arrangement, rather, it can be seen as strategic diversification of security.

The message is that Muslim states need not choose between dependence upon Washington, Moscow or Beijing; they can build substantial security capacity among themselves. That could ultimately produce a more multipolar Islamic world in which Muslim states possess greater strategic agency.

The agreement may also complicate Washington's efforts to extend Arab–Israeli normalisation through the Abraham Accords. Saudi participation now appears less likely, particularly after President Trump linked American support for the Kingdom's civilian nuclear programme to Riyadh's normalisation of relations with Israel. This linkage has reinforced the perception that the Accords are being employed as a coercive instrument rather than a voluntary tool for regional diplomacy.

PALESTINE, ISRAEL AND THE CHANGING REGIONAL ORDER

The pact could alter the strategic environment surrounding Palestine, an issue of profound emotional significance to Muslims worldwide. Any such assessment, however, requires caution. So far as the public record indicates, the Makkah Agreement does not oblige its three signatories to defend Palestine or the Palestinian people militarily: its collective-defence provision applies specifically to an attack upon one of the three member states.

Nor has the Pact been officially presented as an alliance against Israel. Pakistan has described it as "purely defensive" and not directed against any country, while Saudi officials have rejected suggestions that it constitutes a military axis. Nevertheless, closer military coordination among Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan could indirectly affect Israel's strategic calculations by creating a more substantial regional



counterweight.

Its more consequential effect may instead be diplomatic. States possessing credible and relatively independent deterrent capabilities enjoy greater freedom of political manoeuvre. If the Pact develops into an effective security arrangement, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye may be able to address the Palestinian question from a position less dependent upon American security guarantees.

POTENTIAL EXPANSION

The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (MJDA) appears to have been conceived as an expandable arrangement rather than a permanently trilateral alliance. Its founding members have indicated that additional states could eventually be admitted, raising the possibility that the Pact may develop into a broader security framework linking several Muslim-majority countries.

Support for this has already emerged from prominent regional figures. Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Aal-Thani, Qatar's former prime minister, has encouraged the other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to consider participation. Although his remarks do not constitute an official Qatari application, they reflect growing interest in extending the Pact beyond its three founders.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has likewise confirmed that unnamed governments have shown interest in the arrangement. Egypt has received particular attention because of its military strength, demographic weight, geographical position and longstanding diplomatic influence in the Arab world. Turkish officials have suggested that Cairo could eventually participate once outstanding procedural and legal questions have been resolved. Egyptian membership would substantially increase the Pact's regional stature and practical capabilities.

Cairo, however, has strong reasons to proceed cautiously. Membership could create military obligations that affect Egypt's relationship with the United States, which has been one of Egypt's principal donors, providing more than US$90 billion in aid since 1946, much of it military assistance. It could also affect its peace treaty with Israel and its ability to maintain diplomatic flexibility across competing regional alignments. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty has indicated that the government is examining the constitutional, legal and technical consequences before reaching a decision.

The possibility of other states joining the pact is not limited to Egypt. Bangladesh has displayed interest, while Qatar and other Gulf states may regard participation as a means of supplementing their existing security partnerships and reducing excessive reliance upon the United States. For Qatar, this question has particular significance following Israel's September 2025 attack on Doha where Hamas negotiators were considering a US ceasefire proposal. Any expansion, however, would require the founding members to agree that a prospective entrant's strategic interests, regional disputes and defence obligations are compatible with those of the Pact.

BETWEEN MUSLIM UNITY AND SECTARIAN DIVISION

Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan are overwhelmingly Sunni-majority states. A defence alliance among them could easily be interpreted as a Sunni strategic bloc directed at Shi'a Iran. If that happens, it could deepen rather than overcome divisions within the Ummah. The Saudis appear acutely conscious of this danger. Their officials have explicitly said that the agreement is not a sectarian bloc, and Pakistan has continued diplomatic engagement with Iran. Iran itself avoided treating the pact as hostile and its official reaction was restrained. Tehran said that it did not regard the agreement as necessarily directed against Iran and that regional countries developing their own security arrangements is understandable. For the wider Muslim world, therefore, one test of the agreement will be whether it evolves into an inclusive collective-security arrangement or a Sunni geopolitical coalition. The former could strengthen the Ummah. The latter may institutionalise one of its deepest divisions.

Whether the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement becomes a source of peace and deterrence, greater leverage for the Palestinian cause, technological independence and deeper Muslim unity—or merely another alliance serving the interests of three governments—will depend upon the institutions built around it, the moral vision guiding it and the discipline with which it is implemented. If the Pact lives up to its full potential, the world may come to see it as the beginning of a major restructuring of power in the Muslim world: the moment when Islamic solidarity started to move from sentiment to strategy.

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The Sixth Extinction?

FAZLUN KHALID

Back in the late 1990s[1] I wrote about a nightmarish picture that kept recurring in my mind's eye: my grandchildren living in an overheated and polluted planet looking over their shoulders were asking despairingly, "Is this what you have left behind for us?" Our complacency notwithstanding, what is happening now to planet Earth and all life forms upon it differs from anything that has happened before—with the possible exception of the demise of the dinosaurs about 66 million years ago, now known as the fifth extinction. That was a natural disaster, but in scale and concept this human-engineered event is unprecedented in possibly five major ways.

Firstly, the debacle we are facing now is an unnatural disaster.

Secondly, we are not mere spectators but active participants in this matter—this is a problem we the human species have collectively created.

Thirdly, the now familiar litany of deforestation, desertification, acid rain, polluted oceans and rivers, ozone-layer depletion, greenhouse effect, and the social causes associated with these problems, may seem like a series of events but is in reality one single event.

Fourthly, this is a disaster of global proportions affecting everybody and everything—it is an extremely painful way of learning the irrelevance of national boundaries.

Fifthly, the disease is terminal unless drastic measures are taken quickly. This is an optimistic perspective and some would argue that it is already too late to rewind the clock. We may already be on our way to tasting the dinosaur experience to extinction.



The conceptual construct of modernity is decidedly anti-environment. Today's politics and policies are about increasing standards of living—and there is only one source from which we can extract wealth to enable us to do this, and that is the Earth. The following question, therefore, must be asked: is the Earth a life-sustaining source, or a resource to be exploited to satiate our greed? It is obvious that exploiting it takes precedence over protecting it. Using gross national products and rates of economic growth as measures of progress is the most obvious manifestation of this. According to Global Footprint Network, humanity is currently using nature 73% faster than ecosystems can regenerate. This is the equivalent of living off 1.73 Earths and, by the end of July 2026, we have already consumed a whole year's worth of resources. There are now 8 billion of us chasing after the good life while being oblivious to where we are going to end.

Our environmental problems arise from an exponential growth model which implicates politicians, economists, scientists, technocrats, and, by default, the rest of us. The founder of The Club of Rome, Aurelio Peccei[2], says that there has been a large-scale overshoot in the way:

> ...the human population and economy extract resources from the earth and emit pollution and wastes to the environment. Many of these rates of extraction and emission have grown to be unsupportable. The environment cannot sustain them. Human society has overshot its limits, for the same reason that other overshoots occur. Changes are too fast. Signals are late, incomplete, distorted, ignored or denied. Momentum is great, responses are slow.

There is no longer any doubt that exponential growth is the driving force causing the global economy to

1 Fazlun Khalid, *Ecology, sustainability & future generations - an Islamic perspective,* Future Generations Journal, No. 22, Issue 1, 1997, Foundation for International Studies, University of Malta.

2 Meadows & Others; *Beyond the Limits*; Earthscan, London, 1992. See 'Overshoot'.



breach the physical limits of the earth[3].

But these ideas are not new and, interestingly, were first postulated nearly a century ago long before environmentalism was even thought of as an issue. The scientist and historian, Henry Adams, propounded a theory early in the last century which suggested that the acceleration of technological change was forcing the acceleration of history. He concluded that this was caused by exponential growth and he forecast[4] dire consequences should we persist in following the economic growth model:

> At the accelerated rate of progression since 1600, it will not need another century to turn thought upside down. Law in that case would disappear... and give place to force. Morality would become police. Explosives would reach cosmic violence. Disintegration would overcome integration.

A closer examination of this phenomenon of exponential growth by way of an "Islamic analysis" will, I believe, show us the causes which create the disequilibrium and which are uniquely visible from this perspective. In my view, there are two primary, interrelated causes: one quantitative, which has to do with our relationship to money, more specifically, how we conceive and create it; and the other qualitative which defines our relationship with the created world.

The history and ethos surrounding money, its relationship to the institutions and edifices created to enshrine it, and its connection to the ecological crisis, is, apart from a tiny minority of people, largely allowed to pass muster. If one penny was invested 2,000 years ago at 4% compound interest, it would have bought one ball of gold the weight of the earth in 1750 and over 8,000 balls of gold of the same weight in 1990[5]; at 5% compound interest the same penny would have bought this ball of gold by the turn of the 15th Century and over 2,000 billion balls of gold the same weight as the earth by 1990! Even one percentage point can make an enormous difference and it thus becomes clear why the Qur'an condemns usury (*riba*) so vigorously:

> *O believers, fear your God;*
> *and give up the usury that is outstanding, if you are believers.*
> *But if you do not,*
> *then take notice that God shall war against you with His Messenger.*
> *Al-Baqarah, 2:278-279*

As a species we are devouring the Earth to extinction.

3 Ibid; see 'The Driving Force: Exponential Growth'.

4 Calder & Amir Sadeghi (eds); *Future of a Troubled World*; Heineman, London, 1983. See essay by Gerard on Piel on the 'Acceleration of History'.

5 Margrit Kennedy; *Interest & Inflation-free Money*; Permaculture Institute Publications; Steyerberg, Germany; 1988. See ps. 10-13.

And there is another aspect to modern money which we overlook and that is created out of nothing: credit creation. Credit creation, though a standard and daily practice like the charging of interest, is an aspect of banking little understood. What the banks are allowed to do legally by the state is to create credit, i.e. conjure money out of thin air. John Kenneth Galbraith (d. 2006), the doyen of American economists, said of this practice: "The process by which banks create money is so simple that the mind is repelled."[6] *Riba* has a wider definition than that given to usury or interest. If charging interest on "money" is unlawful gain, then creating "money" out of nothing and charging interest on it is even more so. Exponentially, created credit is nurtured and multiplied by interest which grows exponentially. What is regarded as normal today could be described as a gigantic confidence trick. And, what is more, we are all collectively culpable in perpetuating this trick.

The money in circulation today is "virtual" nothing. It does not represent anything but entries in bank ledgers, balance sheets and hard disks. It cannot be emphasised enough that this "wealth", which helps us to sustain the fiction of standards of living, and drives us in pursuit of this mirage we call the quality of life, does not exist in reality, but only in fantasy[7]—it could be called a kind of fiscal psychosis. But this infinite amount of artificial money is deployed against the finite resources of God's creation. It is not difficult for anyone to conclude from this that if the human race carries on like this, the earth will soon be reduced to empty desert and dead ocean. We cannot go on creating balls of gold the weight of the earth forever. What we call "progress" is an ever-dwindling fuse to oblivion—a Sixth Extinction[8].

We will all go down together and perhaps the Earth will be a better place for it.

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6 Anthony Sampson; *The Money Lenders*; Coronet, London; 1988. See p.29, introduction to Chapter two, 'Who Keeps the World?'

7 Fazlun Khalid, *Signs on the Earth – Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis*, p.136. Kube 2019, Leicester, UK.

8 Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, Henry Holt 2014, US/UK.



Decolonising STEM

PROFESSOR RANA DAJANI

As I reflect on what it means to decolonise STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), I have come to realise that the challenge is not only about who produces scientific knowledge, but also about how scientific questions are framed. Discussions of decolonisation have largely emerged from the humanities and social sciences, where scholars have examined how colonial histories have shaped knowledge production, power relations, and ways of understanding the world. While these contributions are essential, I believe we must also ask what it means to decolonise STEM itself.

Too often, science is assumed to be objective, neutral, and universal. Yet scientific inquiry is shaped by the questions we choose to ask, the assumptions we bring to our research, and the frameworks through which we interpret our findings. Decolonising STEM therefore requires us to critically examine these underlying assumptions and to recognise how dominant scientific paradigms can privilege certain perspectives while marginalising others.

My research on the intergenerational transmission of trauma among Syrian refugee families led me to question many of the assumptions embedded within dominant scientific narratives. Our study identified epigenetic signatures associated with violence and trauma across three generations. Yet, beyond the biological findings themselves, I became increasingly interested in how we interpret such results. Much of the existing literature approaches trauma through a framework of damage, pathology, and vulnerability. While these realities cannot be ignored, I believe this perspective is incomplete because it overlooks the remarkable human capacity for adaptation and survival.

This realisation led me to propose a shift in how we understand trauma:

Dominant Trauma Framework	**Alternative Framework I Propose**
Trauma as damage	Trauma as adaptation and survival
Victimhood	Agency
Vulnerability	Resilience
Deficit-focused interventions	Strength-based approaches
Communities as objects of study	Communities as partners and knowledge-holders
Knowledge flows from the Global North to the Global South	Collaborative and reciprocal knowledge production

For me, this shift does not diminish the reality of suffering. Rather, it expands our understanding of human experience. Instead of asking only how trauma harms individuals and communities, I believe we must also ask how people survive, adapt, and create meaning in the face of adversity.

I see this as an example of what decolonising STEM can look like in practice. Decolonisation is not simply about changing who conducts research; it is also about changing how research questions are framed and how scientific findings are interpreted. Too often, communities affected by conflict, displacement, and colonial histories are viewed primarily through a deficit lens. Their stories become stories of vulnerability. Yet throughout my work, I have witnessed extraordinary resilience, creativity, and agency. These qualities

deserve scientific attention just as much as pathology and risk.

The possibility that epigenetic changes may reflect adaptive responses is particularly meaningful to me. I sometimes describe this idea as "my grandmother's wisdom"—the notion that what is transmitted across generations may include not only the burden of trauma, but also the biological and cultural resources that support survival. This perspective encourages us to view inheritance not solely as the transmission of wounds but also as the transmission of strength.

For STEM disciplines, decolonisation means moving beyond inherited assumptions that define certain populations primarily by their deficits. It means recognising communities not merely as subjects of study but as partners in knowledge creation. It means valuing local knowledge, lived experience, and alternative perspectives as sources of scientific insight. Most importantly, it means expanding the kinds of questions we consider scientifically legitimate.

Ultimately, I believe science should help us document harm, but it should also illuminate resilience. By shifting our focus from victimhood and vulnerability toward adaptation and agency, we can develop a richer, more empowering understanding of trauma and human potential. In doing so, we begin to imagine what a truly decolonised STEM framework might look like: one that not only studies people but learns from them; not only identifies problems but also recognises strengths; and not only records suffering, but also reveals the extraordinary capacity of human beings to adapt and thrive.

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Britain at a Crossroads: Faith, Fear, and the Fight for Social Cohesion

DR MUHAMMAD ABDUL BARI

INTRODUCTION

Britain today faces a troubling paradox. It remains one of the world's most diverse and historically tolerant societies, yet there has been a noticeable rise in racism, discrimination, and hate crimes predominantly affecting minority groups. International conflicts, including the ongoing genocide in Gaza, have contributed to heightened tensions within the UK, hardening attitudes and deepening divisions. What is especially concerning is not simply disagreement over foreign policy, but the gradual erosion of trust and empathy between communities that, for decades, coexisted with relative stability, even in the aftermath of traumatic events such as 9/11 and the 7/7 London bombings.

This essay explores the underlying drivers of this polarisation, the risks it poses for social cohesion, and practical pathways toward rebuilding trust between communities, grounded in shared values of dignity, fairness, and coexistence.

A HISTORY OF COEXISTENCE UNDER STRAIN

For much of the late 20th and early 21st Centuries, Britain developed a model of multicultural coexistence that, while imperfect, enabled diverse religious communities, including Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, and others, to participate meaningfully in civic life. Interfaith initiatives such as the recently dissolved Inter Faith Network for the UK, alongside local councils and community organisations, helped create shared spaces for dialogue, mutual understanding, and practical cooperation.

Even in the aftermath of 9/11 and 7/7—moments that had the potential to create deep and lasting divisions—many communities demonstrated resilience over division. Religious leaders publicly rejected violence, interfaith engagement expanded, and civil society actors placed renewed emphasis on unity and shared citizenship.

Today's environment, however, presents a different set of challenges. The speed, scale, and emotional intensity of global information flows mean that international events are felt more immediately within local communities. Complex situations are often reduced to simplified narratives, making constructive dialogue more difficult. In this context, emotional responses often outpace careful deliberation, placing additional strain on relationships that have historically been built on trust and cooperation.

DUAL DANGERS: THE RISE OF ANTISEMITISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

Recent reporting from organisations such as the Community Security Trust (CST) and the British Muslim Trust points to a concerning increase in both antisemitic and anti-Muslim incidents across the UK. These are not abstract figures—they reflect lived experiences of fear, intimidation, harassment, and exclusion that affect individuals, families, and wider communities.

Antisemitism has taken a number of forms, including the spread of conspiracy narratives, vandalism or threats directed at Jewish institutions, and hostility toward individuals perceived to be associated with the policies of the state of Israel, regardless of their own beliefs or identities.

Islamophobia, similarly, has been expressed through verbal abuse, physical attacks on mosques, online harassment, and a broader climate of suspicion in which Muslims are judged collectively rather than as individuals. This is compounded, at times, by aspects of public and media discourse in which the imprecise use of terms such as "Islamism", or commentary that singles out Islamic beliefs in ways seen as inconsistent with the treatment of other faiths, can contribute to a sense of marginalisation and reinforce negative stereotypes. This led Britain's leading umbrella body, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), to advise mosques to conduct lockdown drills, strengthen cooperation with police, and improve CCTV coverage.



These trends are deeply concerning not only because of their immediate impact, but also because they risk normalising prejudice in public discourse. When such attitudes go unchallenged, they can become embedded in everyday interactions, further eroding trust between communities.

A further danger lies in what is sometimes described as "competitive victimhood"—the perception that recognising one form of hatred somehow diminishes the seriousness of another. This zero-sum framing is both misleading and counterproductive. Prejudice does not operate in isolation; different forms of hatred can and do coexist, often reinforcing one another. A cohesive society depends on the consistent rejection of all forms of racism and discrimination, alongside a shared commitment to uphold the dignity and safety of every community.

THE RISKS OF DEEPENING POLARISATION

International conflicts, particularly the ongoing carnage in Gaza and the impact of war in Iran, have intensified moral and political debate within the UK and beyond. For many, the events are viewed primarily through a humanitarian lens, prompting calls for solidarity with civilians affected by violence and displacement. For others, they are closely tied to questions of security and the right of all states to protect their citizens in the aftermath of attacks on their sovereignty. These perspectives are deeply felt and often shaped by personal, historical, and community experiences.

Disagreement in itself is not a weakness; it is a natural feature of a pluralistic society. The challenge arises when differences harden into division. This can happen when political positions become closely tied to identity, when criticism of governments is interpreted as hostility toward entire communities, and when empathy becomes selective rather than consistently applied. In such an environment, language can become more polarised, nuance is lost, and opportunities for constructive dialogue diminish.

If these dynamics persist, the implications for social cohesion are significant. Communities may begin to retreat into separate social and informational spaces, reducing opportunities for meaningful engagement. There is also a risk that individuals become more susceptible to polarised or absolutist narratives if balanced perspectives are less visible or harder to access. Over time, this can place strain on democratic culture, where open disagreement should be viewed as legitimate and necessary rather than as a source of suspicion or division.

Perhaps most concerning is the longer-term impact on the social fabric of the country. The strength of British society has historically rested on its ability to accommodate differences while maintaining a shared sense of belonging. Preserving that balance requires ongoing effort, particularly in periods of heightened tension, to ensure that disagreement does not give way to disengagement, and that future generations inherit a society defined not by division, but by resilience and mutual respect.

PRACTICAL PATHWAYS FORWARD

Addressing this situation requires more than general appeals to tolerance. It demands structured, sustained, and coordinated action across institutions and communities.

Rebuilding Interfaith Infrastructure

Local interfaith councils and community groups require renewed support and investment. Crucially, these spaces should not be activated only in moments of crisis but sustained over time, allowing relationships and trust to develop before tensions arise. Long-term engagement creates the foundation for more resilient responses when challenges do emerge.

Clear Distinction Between Critique and Hate

Public discourse must draw and uphold clear boundaries:

Criticism of Israeli or Palestinian leadership is legitimate and, in a democratic society, necessary.

Targeting Jewish or Muslim communities as collective entities is not.

Maintaining this distinction requires consistency. Educational institutions, media platforms, and political leaders all play a role in modelling language that is precise, fair, and responsible, ensuring that legitimate debate does not spill into prejudice.

Responsible Political Leadership

Political leadership sets the tone for wider society.

Leaders should avoid rhetoric that amplifies division or reduces complex issues to simplistic narratives. This includes acknowledging nuance, even where it may be politically inconvenient. The ability to disagree respectfully has long been part of British civic culture, and reaffirming this principle is essential in a more polarised environment.

Media Literacy and Digital Responsibility

The speed and reach of misinformation remain significant drivers of polarisation. Strengthening media literacy, through schools, community programmes, and public campaigns, can equip individuals to critically evaluate sources, recognise bias, and resist emotionally manipulative content. This is particularly important for younger audiences navigating high volumes of unverified information online.

Joint Community Action

Collaborative initiatives, including food banks, environmental projects, and youth programmes, offer practical opportunities for communities to work side by side. Shared activity can build trust in ways that formal dialogue alone may not, fostering everyday interactions that reinforce common ground and mutual understanding.

Support for Victims of Hate

Effective reporting mechanisms, consistent legal enforcement, and accessible community support are all essential. Victims of hate incidents must feel confident that their experiences are taken seriously, addressed appropriately, and met with both protection and solidarity. Visible support also helps reinforce wider societal norms against discrimination.

CONCLUSION

Despite theological and political differences, Britain's diverse communities continue to share core ethical values: compassion, justice, human dignity, and respect for the sanctity of life. Reaffirming these shared principles is essential at a time when public debate is becoming increasingly polarised and trust between communities is under strain. Faith leaders, civic institutions, educators, and political representatives all have an important role to play, not only in supporting their own communities, but in speaking consistently and collectively against all forms of hatred, prejudice and dehumanisation.

Britain's current divisions are neither inevitable nor irreversible. The country has weathered periods of tension before and has often emerged with a renewed commitment to pluralism, democratic values, and mutual respect. The challenge today is to ensure that international conflicts do not fracture local relationships or weaken the shared civic culture that underpins British society.

This requires a conscious commitment to reject collective blame, resist polarising narratives, and uphold consistent standards of dignity and fairness for all communities. Justice and social cohesion should not be seen as competing aims; in a healthy society, they reinforce one another. The task ahead is therefore not simply to reduce tensions in the short term, but to rebuild a deeper sense of shared belonging—one in which disagreement remains possible without dehumanisation and hostility, and where every community feels both secure and valued.

Only through such efforts can Britain move forward while preserving the social fabric that has long been one of its greatest strengths.

DR MUHAMMAD ABDUL BARI *is an Educationist, Civic Advocate, Parenting Adviser, and Author*



The Importance of Jawāmiʿ Al-Kalim in Public Advocacy of Islam

DR MAMNUN KHAN

INTRODUCTION

One of the distinctive characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is his ability to communicate profound truths through remarkably few words or concise expressions. This quality is described in the well-known Prophetic statement: "I have been given *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*..." The phrase *jawāmiʿ al-kalim* is commonly translated as "comprehensive speech" or "concise speech containing comprehensive meanings". It refers to the ability to convey extensive and profound meanings through relatively few words.

This Prophetic quality has immense importance for speaking not just in the public advocacy of Islam, but even in everyday conversation. *Daʿwah*, or invitation to faith or all that faith has to offer, is not merely about transmitting information regarding Islamic beliefs, concepts and practices, or proving the existence of God, being seen to be right, or winning an argument.

Daʿwah is an act of communication through which as believers we seek to make Islamic meanings and paradigms intelligible, compelling and accessible to others. The effectiveness of that communication therefore matters. A message may be intellectually sophisticated and theologically accurate, yet fail to reach its intended audience because it is expressed in unnecessarily complicated or overly lengthy language. Worse, it may be delivered in a manner that undermines the very qualities that should characterise an invitation to Islam, such as wisdom, sincerity, humility, compassion, good judgement, and so on.

The importance of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim* is, therefore, not simply that Muslims should speak briefly. Brevity by itself, especially if it does not communicate effectively, is neither a virtue nor a substitute for knowledge. Rather, *jawāmiʿ al-kalim* represents a particular communicative discipline: the capacity to identify the essential meaning of an idea and express it in a form that is concise, memorable, profound and capable of generating further reflection, in a productive way.

This has important relevance in contemporary public spheres, especially online. Modern audiences are exposed to an unprecedented volume of information. Social media, short-form videos, podcasts, news media and political communication have transformed how ideas compete for attention. In such an environment, public advocacy requires the ability to communicate ideas with clarity and the right delivery without sacrificing their depth. The Prophetic model of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim* provides an important intellectual and ethical framework for doing precisely this.

The reason for my writing on this topic here is that in recent years we have seen a big increase in the number of people, young and old, experienced and inexperienced, using online platforms to advocate for Islam. Social media has created opportunities for Muslims to reach audiences that previous generations could never have imagined. Increasingly, young Muslims in particular are becoming "influencers" and using their platforms to discuss Islam, answer questions, and represent the faith in the public sphere. This development is, in many respects, encouraging. Yet the ability to access an audience should not be confused with the ability to communicate Islam effectively. What is often lacking is not sincerity, but the knowledge, judgement and communicative skill required to articulate Islam responsibly.

Some move very quickly from learning the basics of their faith to speaking publicly about complex religious matters. They do not spend time away from the camera to give themselves the time and space to learn about their faith and practice it more thoroughly—often in the process causing more harm than good despite their good intentions. Others who have acquired greater knowledge often fall into a different trap. Rather than communicating the essential teachings of Islam, they become absorbed in polemics, online disputes and disagreements between scholars, sometimes presenting matters in which Islamic

knowledge has historically allowed legitimate differences as though there were only one possible position. What should be an invitation towards Islam for them becomes an exercise in winning arguments.

There are also those who, having developed confidence in one particular area of knowledge, assume that they are qualified to pronounce on almost everything. However, their confidence often exceeds their competence, and their perceived certainty obscures the limits of their own knowledge. The result is a culture in which everyone feels compelled to have an opinion on every religious, political and social question.

None of these tendencies reflects the Prophetic model. The Prophet ﷺ was undoubtedly the most effective advocate of Islam, yet his effectiveness did not arise from saying the most, commenting on everything or seeking to win every argument. His communication was characterised by wisdom, knowledge, discernment, proportionality and an extraordinary ability to convey profound truths with clarity and precision.

THE MEANING OF JAWĀMIʿ AL-KALIM

The concept derives from the Arabic *jawāmiʿ*, the plural of *jāmiʿ*, meaning something that gathers or encompasses, and *kalim*, referring to words or expressions. *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim* can, therefore, be understood as speech in which many meanings are gathered into a small number of words.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "I have been sent with *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*..." This is part of a *hadīth* in *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, and similar wording can be found in *Sahīh Muslim*. The meaning is not merely that the Prophet ﷺ spoke concisely. Rather, his words possessed an extraordinary capacity to encompass broad principles and meanings. A short Prophetic statement could, therefore, function simultaneously as ethical instruction, spiritual guidance, legal principle and insight into human behaviour.

The famous *hadīth*, "Actions are judged by intentions" (*innamāl aʿmālu bin-niyyāh*), is an obvious example. The statement is short, yet its implications are extensive. It addresses the relationship between outward action and inward motivation, establishes the significance of intention in Islamic ethics, and has consequences across worship, transactions and moral conduct. Similarly, the statement, "There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm" (*lā darar wa-lā dirāra*), contains a principle that has been extensively discussed within Islamic jurisprudence (*usūl al-fiqh*).

The significance of these statements lies partly in their memorability. A lengthy theological or legal discussion may contain more information, but a carefully formulated principle can remain in a person's mind for decades. *Jawāmiʿ al-kalim* therefore allows an idea to travel beyond the original setting in which it was communicated.

JAWĀMIʿ AL-KALIM AND THE QUR'ĀNIC MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

The Prophetic model should also be understood within the broader Qur'ānic emphasis on effective communication. The Qur'ān repeatedly calls upon Muslims to speak appropriately, wisely and clearly. Among the Qur'ānic expressions are "*qawlan sadīdan*" (a sound or straightforward word) and "*qawlan balīghan*" (speech that reaches its intended audience effectively).

The Qur'ān also instructs believers to invite others to the way of God through *hikmah* and good exhortation: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction and argue with them in the best manner" (Qur'ān, 16:125). This verse establishes an important principle: communication must be adapted to its purpose and audience. Wisdom (*hikmah*) involves more than just correct information. It includes knowing what should be said, when it should be said, how it should be said, and to whom it should be said.

Jawāmiʿ al-kalim can, therefore, be understood as one expression of Prophetic communicative wisdom. It does not mean reducing Islam to slogans. It means developing the ability to communicate essential Islamic truths in ways that preserve their meaning while making them accessible.

THE PUBLIC SPHERE REQUIRES CLARITY

The importance of this quality becomes particularly apparent when Muslims engage in public advocacy. Public discourse is fundamentally different from specialist scholarship. A scholar may spend hundreds of pages analysing a theological, legal or philosophical question. That level of detail may be necessary within scholarship. But when addressing the general public, attempting to reproduce the entire scholarly discussion can obscure rather than clarify the central message.

This distinction is particularly important for Muslims communicating with audiences who may have little familiarity with Islamic terminology. Concepts such as *tawhīd*, *taqwā*, *ʿibādah*, *maqāsid al-sharīʿah*, *fiqh*, and so on, possess rich intellectual histories. Yet simply using Arabic terminology does not necessarily

communicate those concepts to a wider audience.

Effective public advocacy, therefore, requires translation, not necessarily translation between languages, but translation between intellectual worlds. A Muslim public advocate must be able to take a sophisticated Islamic concept and communicate its essential meaning in ordinary language. This is not a dilution of Islam. On the contrary, it can be an expression of intellectual mastery. Someone who understands an idea deeply should be able to explain its central insight simply. The challenge is to achieve simplicity without becoming simplistic.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SIMPLICITY AND SIMPLIFICATION

This distinction is crucial. Simplification can involve removing important qualifications until an idea becomes misleading. Simplicity, by contrast, involves identifying the core of an idea and expressing it clearly. For example, saying that Islam is simply "a religion of peace" may sound attractive, but it is insufficiently precise. Islam certainly places enormous emphasis on peace, justice, mercy and the sanctity of life, but Islam is not reducible to one modern political slogan. It encompasses worship, morality, law, spirituality, community, responsibility and accountability before God.

A more effective expression might be that Islam seeks to cultivate human beings who live with the right relationship with God, themselves, other people and creation. Such a formulation is still concise, but it opens rather than closes intellectual inquiry. This is the strength of genuine *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*: the expression is short, but the meaning is expansive.

MEMORABILITY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The principle has become particularly important because of contemporary communication technologies. Public attention has become scarce. Individuals encounter thousands of messages every day through social media, news platforms and digital advertising. Ideas that cannot be communicated quickly struggle to enter public consciousness.

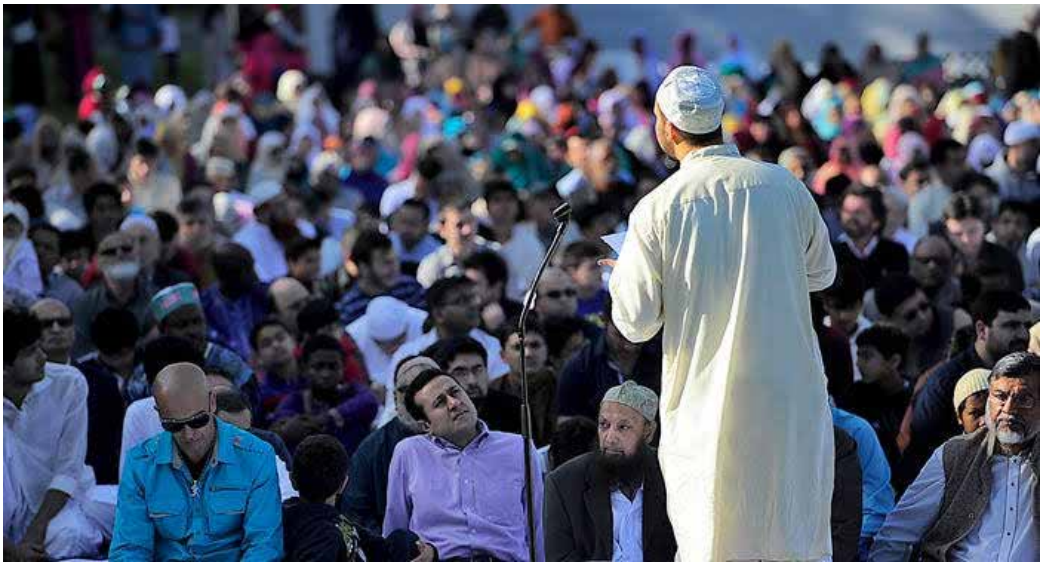
This does not mean that Islam should be reduced to social-media soundbites. It means that Muslims involved in public advocacy need to understand the architecture of modern communication. A powerful sentence can become a gateway to deeper learning.

A concise statement such as "Islam does not ask you to abandon reason; it asks you to use reason responsibly before God" can stimulate curiosity. A longer explanation can then unpack the relationship between revelation, reason and moral responsibility. The concise statement is, therefore, not the destination. It is the doorway. This reflects an important feature of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*: its brevity does not eliminate depth. Instead, it creates a compact formulation capable of carrying deeper reflection.

PUBLIC ADVOCACY AND THE ART OF FRAMING

Another important function of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim* is framing. Public debates are frequently determined not only by the facts being discussed, but by the language through which those facts are presented. The person who establishes the conceptual frame often influences how an audience interprets everything that follows.

Islamic advocacy, therefore, requires Muslims to articulate Islamic concepts in language that speaks



to contemporary concerns without surrendering Islamic principles. For example, instead of discussing *zakāh* exclusively as a ritual obligation, an advocate might explain it as an institutionalised expression of economic responsibility and social solidarity. Instead of presenting *sadaqah* merely as charitable giving, one could describe it as a culture of voluntary generosity embedded within Islamic spirituality.

Such formulations do not replace traditional terminology. Rather, they provide bridges into it. The same principle applies to concepts such as justice, dignity, freedom, responsibility, human flourishing, and so on. These concepts can be articulated in Islamic terms while simultaneously demonstrating their relevance to contemporary society.

JAWĀMI' AL-KALIM AND INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT

The Prophetic model is also highly relevant to interfaith and wider civic engagement. Muslims frequently participate in conversations with Christians, Jews, Hindus, people of other faiths, agnostics and atheists. In these settings, Islamic advocacy cannot assume familiarity with Islamic theological vocabulary. The ability to identify common moral language is therefore important. The Qur'ān itself provides a powerful example when it calls the "People of the Book" towards a *kalimatin sawā'*, a "word that is common" (Qur'ān 3:64). The objective is not to erase theological differences, but to establish a meaningful point of shared engagement.

Concise and carefully framed language can therefore reduce unnecessary barriers. Rather than beginning with technical disputes, public advocacy can begin with questions of human dignity, justice, compassion, responsibility, and the search for truth. This approach does not compromise Islamic distinctiveness. It demonstrates that Islam possesses a vocabulary capable of contributing constructively to the shared moral questions of society.

THE ETHICAL DIMENSION OF CONCISE SPEECH

There is also an ethical dimension to *jawāmi' al-kalim*. Public advocacy is not simply about winning attention. Muslims are accountable for what they say. The Qur'ān warns believers that they should speak in ways that are truthful, responsible and beneficial. The pressure to produce constantly engaging content can encourage exaggeration, sensationalism and polarisation. Social media algorithms reward outrage more readily than nuance. In such an environment, the Prophetic model provides an important corrective.

Concise speech should not mean provocative speech for its own sake. It should mean disciplined speech. The Muslim advocate should ask: is this statement true? Is it necessary? Is it fair? Does it communicate something meaningful? Does it invite understanding or merely provoke hostility?

The ability to say less can sometimes be an expression of greater responsibility.

AVOIDING THE PROBLEM OF SLOGANS

At the same time, *jawāmi' al-kalim* should not be confused with sloganism. Modern political and ideological movements often reduce complex questions to slogans. Slogans are powerful precisely because they eliminate complexity. But Islamic advocacy should not imitate this tendency uncritically.

The Qur'ān itself contains profound simplicity, but that simplicity coexists with complexity. The Qur'ān can express a profound principle in a single verse while elsewhere elaborating its implications over many passages. The same should be true of contemporary Islamic communication. A concise formulation should function as the beginning of explanation, not a substitute for it.

For example, "Islam seeks justice" is a powerful proposition. But the advocate must be prepared to explain what justice means, how it relates to mercy, rights, obligations, due process, law and social order, and how Islamic understandings of justice engage contemporary questions.

Thus, *jawāmi' al-kalim* should operate at the level of communication, while intellectual depth remains available behind the communication.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUDIENCE

Another lesson from the Prophetic model is the importance of audience. Effective communication is relational. The same truth may need to be expressed differently depending upon the person hearing it. A specialist audience may appreciate technical terminology and detailed argument. A school student may require an analogy. A journalist may need a clear principle that can be accurately communicated to a wider readership. A policymaker may need the social and institutional implications of an Islamic concept.

The underlying message can remain consistent while its expression changes. This is not inconsistency. It is intelligent communication. The Prophet ﷺ himself addressed different people in different ways, responding to their circumstances, questions and capacities. This suggests that effective *da'wah* requires not merely knowledge of what Islam teaches, but knowledge of

human beings and society.

FROM INFORMATION TO TRANSFORMATION

Perhaps the deepest significance of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim* is that it enables information to become wisdom. Information is abundant. Wisdom is scarce. A person can encounter hundreds of facts about Islam without developing a meaningful understanding of Islam. Public advocacy should, therefore, not simply seek to increase the amount of information available. It should help people recognise the underlying principles that organise that information.

A concise principle can accomplish this more effectively than an accumulation of disconnected bits of information and facts. For example, the Islamic concept of *taqwā* encompasses consciousness of God, moral vigilance, restraint and responsibility. A public advocate might explain it simply as "living with an awareness that God sees what you do." The sentence is accessible, but it can then lead into the much richer theological and ethical dimensions of *taqwā*. This is precisely where *jawāmiʿ al-kalim* becomes powerful: a small expression becomes a container for a large intellectual world.

DEVELOPING A MODERN PROPHETIC COMMUNICATION CULTURE

Muslim institutions, scholars and public advocates would benefit from consciously developing these skills necessary for a Prophetic communication culture that is relevant, relatable and meaningful in the modern world.

This requires several practices. First, advocates should master the Islamic intellectual tradition sufficiently well to distinguish essential principles from secondary details. Second, they should develop linguistic and rhetorical skills that enable them to communicate complex ideas in accessible language. Third, they should understand contemporary audiences and the questions that shape public life. Fourth, they should resist the temptation to equate complexity with intellectual seriousness. A complicated explanation is not necessarily a better explanation. Finally, they should retain the ethical discipline that lies behind Prophetic communication: truthfulness, wisdom, mercy, responsibility, etc.

The objective should be neither maximum brevity nor maximum information. It should be maximum meaning with minimum unnecessary complexity.

CONCLUSION

Jawāmiʿ al-kalim offers an important model for public advocacy. It teaches that profound communication does not necessarily require prolonged speech. The most powerful message may sometimes be one that gathers a multitude of meanings into a few carefully chosen words.

In an age characterised by information overload, declining attention spans and, arguably, increasingly polarised public discourse, this Prophetic quality is particularly relevant. Muslims seeking to explain Islam, or indeed any other important idea, to wider society need to communicate with clarity, confidence and intellectual depth. They need to be able to move between the rich vocabulary of the Islamic tradition and the everyday language of contemporary public life. Yet the ultimate lesson of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim* is not simply "speak briefly." It is "speak meaningfully."

The challenge for contemporary Muslim advocacy is, therefore, to recover the Prophetic ability to say much without saying too much: to communicate principles without reducing them to slogans, to simplify without distorting, and to make ideas accessible without stripping them of their intellectual and spiritual depth.

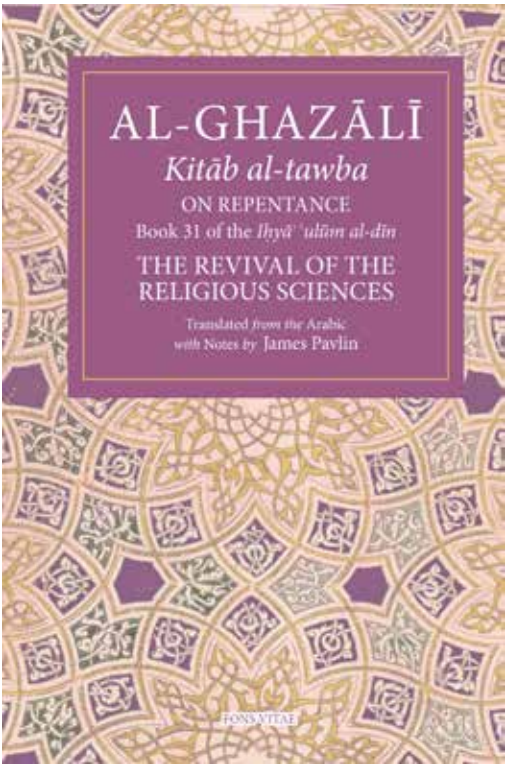
The most successful public advocacy will not necessarily be that which says the most. It will be that which leaves people with something worth remembering, something worth contemplating and, ultimately, something worth living.

That is the enduring power of *jawāmiʿ al-kalim*: a few words capable of opening an entire world of meaning.

DR MAMNUN KHAN, *the author of* **Being British Muslims: Beyond Ethnocentric Religion and Identity Politics**, *is a British Muslim thinker and writer who explores identity, Islam, and the social integration of Muslims in contemporary Britain.*

BOOK CORNER

Al-Ghazali's *Kitab al-tawba, The Book of Repentance*, Volume 31 from the Fons Vitae Series, 'The Revival of the Religious Sciences'



Author: Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī
Translator: James Pavlin
ISBN #: 979-8-89640-017-2
Publisher: Fons Vitae (available from Fonsvitae.com)

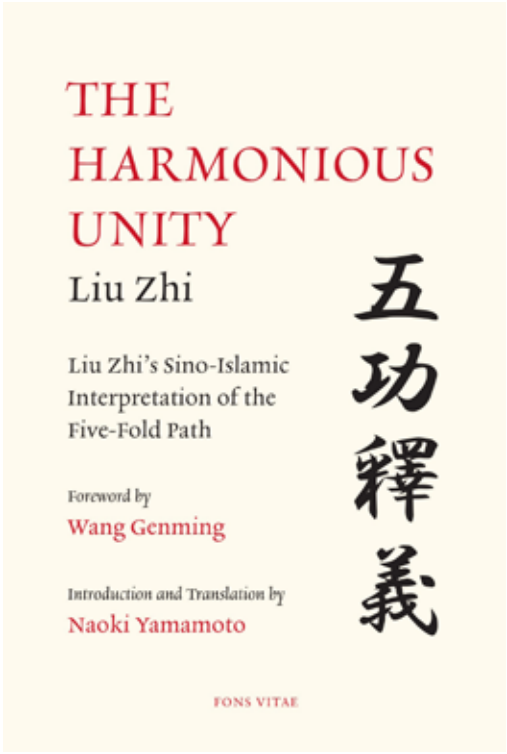
In his 40-volume magnum opus, the 'Revival of the Religious Sciences', Ghazali devotes the first quarter to 'Worship', the second to 'Customs', and the third to 'Perils'. He opens the final quarter, 'Deliverance', with the subject of Repentance (*tawba*), or turning around, which is the universal entry point and basis for any spiritual journey. This is both a foundational text and a mirror for the wayfarer. People already take continuous account of themselves with the passing thought, "If only I had...!". Ghazali counsels, "We should interrogate ourselves before being interrogated. If a person does not hold himself accountable in this world, his accountability in the hereafter will be lengthy." One should not be deceived by the ephemera of this world.

Al-Ghazali builds this pivotal volume on four pillars: the essence of repentance; that which requires it with a division of major and minor sins explained in detail; the conditions for accomplishing repentance; and the remedy for those who consciously persist in transgressions - including the reasons they continue to do so. Small habitual sins, he warns, weigh upon the Heart; he offers concrete ways to alter our natural disposition for delay. Like poison, sin must be gotten out at once. The accrual of even small good deeds is of significant consequence. He poses the question that unsettles every reader: if you had one hour remaining, what would you do? For the serious seeker of today, this classic work provides a structure which supports and encourages self-assessment, making this a valuable practical guide.

Newly translated and annotated by James Pavlin from the Dār al-Minhāj Arabic edition, this is the first book of the Quarter of Deliverance rendered into clear English, its notes drawing on the classic commentary of al-Zabīdī.

The Harmonious Unity: Liu Zhi's Sino-Islamic Interpretation of the Five-Fold Path

Author: Liu Zhi
Translator: Naoki Yamamoto
ISBN #: 979-8-89640-013-4
Publisher: Fons Vitae (available from Fonsvitae.com)



This is an English translation of **Liu Zhi's *The Exposition of the Five Pillars of Islam***, which remains the most influential Chinese-language Islamic work, regarded by Chinese Muslims (Islam arrived in China as early as 618 CE) as a fundamental textbook for learning and comprehending the divinely ordained duties of Islam. Liu Zhi (1660-1739) was a prominent Chinese Sunni Hanafi-Maturidi scholar of the Qing dynasty and a leading figure in the Han Kitab tradition.

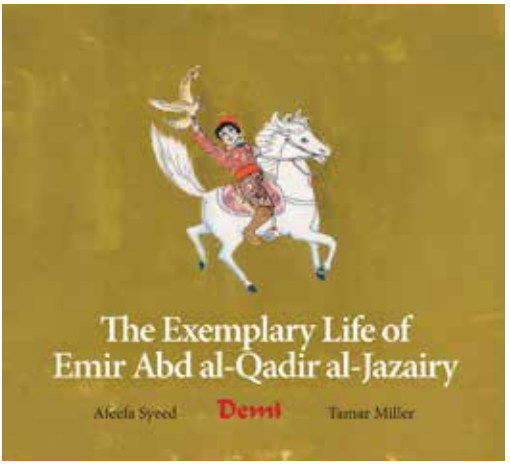
"The Exposition of the Five Pillars of Islam" (*Wugong Shiyi*) by Liu Zhi is a profound treatise on the meaning of the Five Pillars of Islam (Shahada, Salah, Sawm, Zakat, and Hajj), framed within a metaphysical structure that draws on the language and lens of Chinese civilization and philosophy. The work provides both a theological and spiritual explanation of the Five Pillars as well as a moral framework that connects them to broader philosophical ideas about the nature of existence, ethics, and personal cultivation.

Besides its innate metaphysical and philosophical value, the text is invaluable for understanding how the masters of Chinese Islam straddled religious and civilizational frontiers and created harmony between two different intellectual worlds. Liu Zhi's approach, however, is distinguished from that of other Muslim scholars in that he addressed the basic articles of Islamic thought with Neo-Confucian terminology and categories. The lens of Chinese civilization includes concepts derived from Taoism, Confucianism & Buddhism.

Professor Wang Genming explains in the Foreword that: "Although the Five Pillars are the foundational rites of Muslim life, the author approaches them not merely as ritual obligations, but as a profound gateway into the doctrines and spiritual philosophy of Islam. Through multi-faceted analyses of their origin, function, requirements, and religious significance, Liu Zhi offers a deep and nuanced exposition of Islamic teachings. The result is a text of exceptional conciseness and philosophical depth, where each line offers clarity at a glance and insight upon reflection."

Many editions have been produced over the centuries, including a wood block edition in 1768. To have such a work giving insights into the way Islam was presented and understood in China is extremely valuable. It opens up a profound, refreshing and exciting approach to thinking about the 5 pillars of Islam whose deeper meanings some Muslims might take for granted.

The Exemplary Life of Emir Abd al-Qadir al Jazairy



Authors: Afeefa Syeed, Tamar Miller
Illustrator: Demi
ISBN #: 979-8-89640-005-9
Publisher: Fons Vitae (available from Fonsvitae.com)

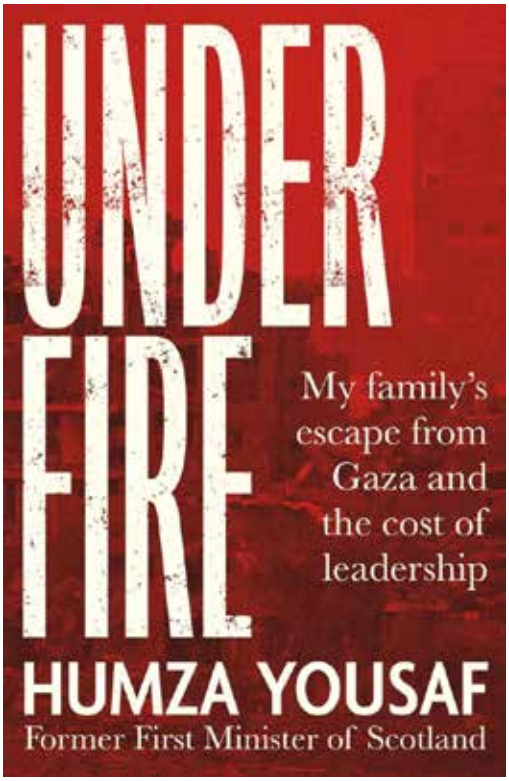
Children, their parents, and teachers will be captivated by the inspiring life story of one of the world's noblest and most exemplary leaders. In this book for children, Emir Abd al-Qadir describes his own childhood and education, growing up in the Algerian Sahara. When, later, the French army invades his country, the people chose him to defend their lands and lives. His enormous restraint on the battlefield, his courage, integrity, selflessness and compassion - which even extended to the enemy - serves us as a beautiful reminder: even under extraordinarily dreadful circumstances, such as war, it is possible to live up to the highest standards of human dignity, respect for others and innate goodness. After signing a truce to relieve his people's suffering, the Emir was exiled by the French to Syria where his inner spiritual and saintly life was nourished. Later, in Damascus, when a terrible riot broke out, this revered Muslim figure took Christian and Jewish families, as well as the French, into his own home to protect them.

Many films and books have been made on Emir Abd al-Qadir's exemplary life; he became internationally recognized in his lifetime. This is a story which clearly illustrates the kind of a person we should all strive to become, strikingly enhanced by the exquisite illustrations of the renowned artist Demi.

The life story of Emir Abd al-Qadir is a deeply inspiring story of a man who strove to live and act with courage, integrity, compassion, selflessness, and devotion to God, even when to do so was extraordinarily difficult. The Emir's life serves as a beautiful example for anyone, child or adult, religious or non-religious, of how it is possible for us to live up to the highest standards of goodness and integrity, regardless of our circumstances. The Emir is recognized not only in the Muslim world but internationally as an exemplary leader.

Under Fire: My Family's Escape from Gaza and The Cost of Leadership

Author: Humza Yousaf
Publisher: The Bridge Street Press (an imprint of Little, Brown Book Group)
Publication Date: 1 October 2026
ISBN: 9780349136875



Under Fire by Humza Yousaf recounts the harrowing month-long ordeal of trying to evacuate his in-laws from Gaza following the October 7 attacks while managing his responsibilities as Scotland's First Minister. The memoir reflects on personal loyalties, public duty, the rise of far-right populism, and his journey as the first Muslim leader of a Western European country.

When Scotland's First Minister, Humza Yousaf, got a call from Gaza on the morning of 7 October 2023, he feared the worst. His wife's parents, Elizabeth and Maged, had been visiting the Palestinian territory to see Maged's sick Palestinian mother. Now, after the Hamas attack, they were caught in Israel's furious onslaught.

Under Fire tells the story of Yousaf's month-long nightmare as he tried desperately to get his in-laws out of Gaza and back home to Dundee. With the British government ignoring his pleas for help, he had to coordinate with other countries to get Elizabeth and Maged across the Rafah border into Egypt. While supporting his wife and children as they waited for daily updates from Elizabeth on her battle for survival, Yousaf also had to lead the whole of Scotland – as well as reassure the nation's traumatised Jewish community. All while responding to online attacks.

As well as documenting his in-laws' escape from Gaza, *Under Fire* also tells the story of how a son of immigrants grew up to become the first Muslim leader of a Western European country. Yousaf also tells of his fears on the rise of far-right populism and how to combat the forces that seek to divide us. The book draws back the curtain to give an honest account of how true leadership means reconciling personal loyalties with public duty, and how, in a world riven with conflict, it is more important than ever that leaders under pressure maintain their humanity and empathy for all.

Islamica Magazine



Editor-in-Chief: Sohail Nakhooda
Publisher: Sirius International Media Limited
Publication Date: August 2026 (Quarterly)
Website: www.IslamicaMedia.com

Following a 16-year hiatus, the return of ISLAMICA Magazine offers a refreshing and intellectually rigorous addition to the contemporary Muslim media landscape. Originally established in 1992 as a prominent voice for Muslim thinkers, the publication re-emerges into a deeply polarized media environment with a renewed commitment to objective journalism, spirituality, and culture. Transitioning into a substantial, beautifully produced quarterly print format of approximately 250 to 300 pages per issue, the relaunch edition establishes its presence through substantive, multi-disciplinary essays that bridge traditional thought with urgent modern dilemmas.

A significant portion of this issue handles the ethical and philosophical implications of emerging technology. In "Magnifica Veritas," HRH Prince Zeid bin Ra'ad and HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad critically evaluate a recent papal encyclical on artificial intelligence, offering a compelling argument to reframe the technology as "Automated Information." This technological focus is balanced by contributions from H.E. Anwar Ibrahim on human-machine civilization, and Osman Bakar on the preservation of creative thinking.

The issue also provides serious, grounded analysis on pressing geopolitical crises. Features on Gaza by scholars like Hatem Bazian, H.A. Hellyer, and Mustafa Abu Sway examine selective justice and the threats facing historic holy sites, moving past superficial news cycles to examine systemic realities. Meanwhile, the arts and humanities sections offer cultural depth, featuring Itrisyia Dayini's retrospective on the resistance art of Palestinian painter Sliman Mansour, an interview with Maryum Ali, and Michelle R. Kimball's exploration of Rumi's enduring spiritual legacy.

By balancing macroeconomic analyses of the global halal marketplace with deep dives into literature, history, and theology, ISLAMICA avoids the trap of ideological reductionism. It stands out as a sophisticated, essential quarterly text for readers seeking nuanced, intellectually demanding perspectives on how Islamic thought intersects with global current affairs.

ISLAMICA will be published quarterly; to discover more about the latest print and digital editions, see: www.IslamicaMedia.com.

Keys To Paradise (app)



Publisher: The Prince Ghazi Trust for Quranic Thought
Publication Date: 1 October 2026
An Islamic Guide to Self-Examination and Spiritual Improvement

Inspired by the teachings of Imam al-Ghazali and the Islamic tradition of purifying the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), Keys to Paradise is a mobile application designed to help Muslims recognise their shortcomings and work towards overcoming them.

The app addresses spiritual and moral failings such as pride, envy, anger, backbiting and other sins of the heart, tongue and senses. Drawing on the Qur'an, Hadith and classical Islamic teachings, it combines religious guidance with practical exercises to encourage self-discipline and better conduct.

Users can begin with a self-assessment to identify areas requiring attention or choose particular faults they wish to address. The app provides 31 lessons, short-term challenges, longer-term goals of up to 40 days, and a private journal in which users can record their efforts and progress.

Available in English, Arabic and French, Keys to Paradise works entirely offline, requires no account, and keeps all personal information on the user's device.

The aim is simple: to help Muslims put into practice the Islamic teachings on self-examination, repentance and the cultivation of good character.

MAJOR EVENTS

Major Events

SEPTEMBER 2025

1	The International Association of Genocide Scholars, an international non-partisan research organization on genocide and crimes against humanity, declares that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.
2	At least 105 Palestinians are killed during Israeli airstrikes and shootings across the Gaza Strip.
	At least 14 people are killed and dozens of others are injured, including seven critically, in a suicide bombing at a political rally in Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan.
	Belgian foreign minister Maxime Prévot announces that Belgium will conditionally recognize a Palestinian state at the upcoming United Nations General Assembly session upon the release of hostages and removal of Hamas, and impose sanctions on Israel, including bans on products from Israeli settlements and restrictions on certain public contracts.
3	More than 70 Palestinians are killed by the Israeli military in the Gaza Strip.
	Nigeria's air force kills more than 15 Islamist fighters in an airstrike on hideouts in Borno's Sambisa forest, while troops separately kill 13 Boko Haram militants after repelling an ambush on a military convoy along the Gubio–Damasak road.
4	Hundreds of deceased people are found under the rubble of collapsed houses after the August 31 earthquake in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, bringing the death toll to 2,205.
	At least 75 Palestinians are killed, including 44 who are killed in Gaza City, during Israel's military assault.
5	Eight security officials are killed, four others are seriously injured, and five Chinese workers are kidnapped, with four rescued afterwards, in an attack on a Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps convoy in Edo State, Nigeria.
6	Around 890 people are arrested at a demonstration against the ban on the group Palestine Action in London, England.
7	At least 65 people are killed and several others are injured in Israeli airstrikes on a school, refugee tents, and houses in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip.
8	Four Israeli soldiers are killed by Hamas on the outskirts of Gaza City in the Gaza Strip.
	Guyanese president Irfaan Ali is sworn in for a second term in office after winning last week's election.
	Spain recalls its ambassador to Israel after the Israeli government accused Spanish prime minister Pedro Sánchez of being "antisemitic" and barred two Spanish officials from entering Israel, with Spanish foreign minister José Manuel Albares calling it "slanderous accusations" against the country.
9	The Israeli Air Force carries out a series of airstrikes against the Hamas leadership's office in Doha, Qatar, during a meeting. Six people are killed; however, the entire leadership survived according to Palestinian and Hamas sources. A member of the Qatari security forces is among the fatalities.
	Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency agree to resume nuclear site inspections which were suspended after U.S. and Israeli strikes, with Iran warning the deal will be void if international sanctions are reimposed.
10	Israel carries out a series of airstrikes against alleged Houthi targets and civilian structures in Sanaa and Al Jawf Governorate, Yemen, killing 35 people and wounding 131 others.
12	Turkish police arrest 161 people suspected of being members of the Islamic State (IS) over the last week and seize unlicensed weapons and IS documents in raids in 38 provinces, including Istanbul and Ankara.

	In a 142–10 vote with 12 abstentions, the UN General Assembly adopts the New York Declaration, calling for a ceasefire in the Gaza war, the release of hostages, the disarmament of Hamas, and renewed momentum toward a two-state solution.
15	The British defence ministry bans Israelis from attending the Royal College of Defence Studies over Israel's decision to fully invade Gaza City.
17	Pakistani prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman sign a Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement in Riyadh.
18	The United States casts its sixth veto over a draft United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, the lifting of Israeli restrictions on aid, and the release of all hostages.
	Syrian foreign minister Asaad al-Shaibani visits Washington, D.C. to attend meetings with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and to meet with Israeli delegations and U.S. secretary of state Marco Rubio, marking the first time a Syrian official has visited the United States in 25 years.
21	Australia, Canada, Portugal, and the United Kingdom formally recognise the State of Palestine as a sovereign state, with Canada becoming the first G7 country to do so.
22	Andorra, France, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, and San Marino formally recognize the State of Palestine as a sovereign state with full rights.
	Thousands of people across Italy hold rallies and a general strike to protest against the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and recent ground offensive into Gaza City. Dock workers at ports in Genoa, Livorno, Trieste, and Venice hold strikes, while protesters clash with police in Milan and 20,000 people march in Rome.
23	Syria and Ukraine restore diplomatic relations as Presidents Ahmed al-Sharaa and Volodymyr Zelenskyy meet on the sidelines of the eightieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, following Ukraine's 2022 break in ties with Syria when the Assad regime recognized Russian-occupied territories.
27	The United Nations reimposes economic and military sanctions on Iran after France, Germany, and the United Kingdom trigger the snapback mechanism under Security Council Resolution 2231 and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, citing Iran's nuclear escalation and lack of cooperation with the IAEA.
29	The United States releases a 20-point ceasefire proposal to end the Gaza war, to which Israel agrees. The proposal includes the immediate end of military operations inside the Gaza Strip and the release of all living hostages within 72 hours.
	OCTOBER 2025
2	Israel intercepts the Global Sumud Flotilla in international waters and detains hundreds of activists from 44 countries carrying humanitarian aid bound for Gaza, sparking international condemnation and accusations of violations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
	At least eight people are killed in violent protests in Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan, against benefits for the political class in the region. The regional government warns local media against covering the protests.
3	Hamas says it has agreed to part of the 20-point plan proposed by U.S. president Donald Trump to end the war, including the release of hostages and handing over administration of the enclave. (The Hill) (Reuters)
	United Nations human rights experts warn that multiple portions of the plan contradict international law and the ICJ ruling on Israel's occupation of Palestine.
4	The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities formally opens the tomb of Amenhotep III in the Valley of the Kings to the public after 20 years of renovations following its excavation in 1989.
	A mosque with two people inside is set on fire in a suspected hate crime in Peacehaven, East Sussex, England.
	Iran executes six prisoners accused and convicted of carrying out attacks inside Iran for the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz on behalf of Israel.

5	Syrians vote to elect 121 of the 210 members of the People's Assembly in the first election held since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. Elections are postponed in the Al-Hasakah, Raqqa, and Suwayda governorates due to security reasons.
6	The International Criminal Court convicts Janjaweed commander Ali Kushayb of war crimes in Darfur, Sudan, including rape, murder, and persecution. Kushayb is the first militia leader to be convicted for these war crimes. His sentence will be determined in a later hearing.
7	The Syrian government announces an immediate ceasefire with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces following clashes last night that killed at least four people and injured at least eight others.
	Houthi rebels detain nine United Nations workers in Yemen as part of a long-term crackdown on UN presence in the country, bringing the total number of detained UN personnel to 53.
	The value of gold futures rise above $4,000 per troy ounce for the first time in trading history.
	The Holy See Press Office announces that Pope Leo XIV will visit İznik, Turkey, the location of the ancient city Nicaea, and Lebanon in November and December as his first papal visits abroad.
8	United States president Donald Trump announces that Israel and Hamas have agreed to a ceasefire and the first phase of his peace plan to end the Gaza war.
	Susumu Kitagawa, Richard Robson, and Omar Yaghi are jointly awarded this year's Nobel Prize in Chemistry for their work on metal–organic frameworks.
9	The Israeli cabinet formally approves the ceasefire agreement, with the Israeli military given 24 hours to withdraw their troops to the agreed-upon line within Gaza. The hostage and prisoner releases are expected to begin in the coming days.
	The Pakistan Air Force carries out two airstrikes in Kabul, Afghanistan, targeting Pakistani Taliban leaders.
10	A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas comes into effect hours after the approval of the ceasefire agreement by the Israeli war cabinet. The Israel Defense Forces complete their withdrawal to the agreed-upon lines within Gaza.
	Afghanistan spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid says Pakistan launched an airstrike in the country's eastern Paktia Province, while the Pakistani government says the Pakistani Taliban was allowed to use Afghanistan as a base for attacks against Pakistan.
	Venezuelan activist María Corina Machado is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her promotion of democratic rights in Venezuela.
13	Hamas hands over the 20 remaining living Israeli hostages to the Red Cross, and Israel releases over 1,900 Palestinian detainees, including 250 people serving life sentences for convictions in attacks on Israelis, as part of the ceasefire agreement.
	Heads of government of 30 countries and leaders of several major international organisations gather in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt to discuss the next steps in the implementation of the Gaza peace plan. It is expected that the focus will be on the future governance of the Gaza Strip, security, and humanitarian assistance.
	Pakistani prime minister Shehbaz Sharif nominates United States president Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for a second time, citing his mediation of the Gaza peace plan. Sharif had previously nominated Trump in June for his role in mediating a ceasefire to the 2025 India–Pakistan conflict.
15	Pakistan carries out two airstrikes against Kabul, capital of Afghanistan. The target and the result are unknown. After the attack, both countries agree to a 48-hour ceasefire.
16	The prosecution of the International Crimes Tribunal in Bangladesh formally announces that it seeks the death penalty against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan over alleged crimes against humanity committed during last year's protests. Hasina has been in exile in India since her ousting, and Khan is also believed to be in India.
17	The Portuguese parliament approves a ban on face veils for "gender or religious" reasons and making it punishable by up to €2,000. The bill, promoted by right-wing party Chega, is passed to President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa for review.

19	A ceasefire between Afghanistan and Pakistan, mediated by Qatar and Turkey during peace talks in Doha, comes in to effect.
23	The United States rules out Israel's plan to annex the West Bank following a Knesset vote, while several other countries also affirm their standings against the plan, calling it a violation of international law.
25	Pakistani defence minister Khawaja Asif says that if peace talks with the Taliban fail, Pakistan will declare an open war on Afghanistan, as Pakistan accuses the Taliban of sheltering Pakistani militants, which Kabul denies.
26	The Kurdistan Workers' Party announces that it is withdrawing its fighters from Turkey and moving them to Iraq as part of ongoing peace talks with the Turkish government.
	Peace talks held in Istanbul, Turkey, between Afghanistan and Pakistan collapse and achieve no clear agreement.
	Tanzanians vote to elect a president, members of the National Assembly, and ward councillors. Incumbent president Samia Suluhu Hassan runs unopposed after the High Court barred main opposition leaders from participating in the elections.
30	Israeli troops enter the southern Lebanese city of Blida and storm the municipal hall, killing an employee while sleeping. In response, Lebanese president Joseph Aoun orders the military to confront any Israeli incursions.

NOVEMBER 2025

1	The remains of three bodies Hamas gave to Israel overnight are found to have been of known hostages, leaving eight bodies of deceased hostages still remaining in Gaza.
	Israel Defense Forces Major General Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi, who served as Military Advocate General, resigns after leaking a surveillance video to the media showing the gang rape of a Palestinian prisoner at Sde Teiman detention camp in August last year.
	The Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza, Egypt, officially opens to the public following long delays.
	In the Maldives, people born since 2007 are permanently banned from buying or using tobacco, making it the first country in the world to impose a lifelong smoking ban from a certain age.
2	Al Jazeera reports that Hamas has agreed to retreat via Red Cross corridors from Gaza areas that are under Israeli control per the peace plan.
3	The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification review committee reports that famine is detected in two Sudanese regions, Darfur and South Kordofan, amid increased fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, which blocks humanitarian access.
	A Mw 6.3 earthquake strikes near Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh, Afghanistan, killing at least 20 people, injuring hundreds others, and damaging the historic Blue Mosque.
	Incumbent Tanzanian president Samia Suluhu Hassan is sworn in for a second term in office after winning a disputed election last Wednesday, which sparked deadly protests across the country.
4	Hamas returns the body of Israeli American Itay Chen to Israel, the last hostage with U.S. citizenship.
	Israeli major general Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi is arrested and imprisoned a day after resigning, after leaking a surveillance video in August 2024 showing the gang rape of a Palestinian prisoner in the Sde Teiman detention camp.
6	Philippine president Bongbong Marcos declares a national state of calamity in relation to the devastation caused by Typhoon Kalmaegi and in anticipation of the upcoming tropical cyclone Fung-wong.
	The United Nations Security Council votes to lift sanctions on Syrian president Ahmed al-Sharaa and interior minister Anas Khattab through a United States-drafted resolution.
	Kazakhstan formally joins the Abraham Accords, with the aim to enhance bilateral cooperation with Israel.
	Khaled El-Enany is elected director-general of UNESCO by the General Conference held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, succeeding Audrey Azoulay.

7	Ninety-six people are injured, some critically, in a bombing at a mosque inside a school in Jakarta, Indonesia. A 17-year-old male is identified as the perpetrator and later recovered at a hospital, right-wing terrorism is suspected.
8	Bolivia and the United States announce that they will restore diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level after 17 years.
9	Around 200 fighters are killed in clashes between Boko Haram and ISWAP near Lake Chad in Nigeria.
10	Indonesian president Prabowo Subianto posthumously grants the title of National Hero to former president Suharto, despite criticism by activists and civil society due to his New Order military dictatorship.
	Lebanon grants a US$900,000 bail to Hannibal Gaddafi, the son of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, ending his nearly 10-year detention in a case involving the 1978 disappearance of Shia Muslim cleric Musa al-Sadr, for which Gaddafi was accused of withholding information but never tried.
11	Israeli settlers set fire to dozens of vehicles and other property in Beit Lid and Deir Sharaf in the West Bank and attack Israeli soldiers who were dispatched to the area, injuring four Palestinians, while four Israelis are arrested.
13	Israeli settlers set fire to the Hajja Hamida mosque in Deir Istiya in the West Bank and deface the mosque's exterior wall in defiance of an Israeli government rebuke of settler violence.
	The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention reports about 300,000 confirmed and suspected cholera cases in the continent, mostly in Angola and Burundi, and more than 7,000 deaths in 2025, marking Africa's largest outbreak in 25 years and a more than 30% increase from the previous year.
14	Mali suspends French television channels TF1 and La Chaîne Info from airing in the country, citing unverified claims and falsehoods in a broadcast on the ongoing fuel blockades by the Islamist militant group Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin.
16	Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi says that Iran is no longer enriching uranium due, in part, to the damage at nuclear facilities following the Iran–Israel war and the US strikes on nuclear sites in Iran.
17	The United Nations Security Council votes in favor of a US-drafted resolution endorsing the peace plan, including the establishment of the International Stabilization Force (ISF) and Board of Peace.
	A domestic tribunal in Bangladesh sentences former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan to death in absentia over crimes against humanity committed during the quota reform protests in 2024.
18	U.S. president Donald Trump announces the designation of Saudi Arabia as a major non-NATO ally.
19	At least 28 Palestinians are killed and 77 more are injured in a series of Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City and Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip after Israel accused Hamas of firing at Israeli troops.
	At the 76th National Book Awards, Rabih Alameddine wins the Fiction prize for his novel The True Story of Raja the Gullible (and His Mother), while Omar El Akkad wins the Nonfiction prize for his book One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This about the Gaza war.
23	Israel carries out an airstrike on a building in Beirut, Lebanon, killing five Hezbollah militants and injuring 28 others. Hezbollah military chief Haytham Ali Tabatabai is confirmed among the fatalities.
25	The Hayli Gubbi volcano in the Afar Region of Ethiopia erupts, sending ash plumes across Oman and Yemen, and prompts flight cancellations in northern India.
	The World Food Programme reports that escalating instability in northern Nigeria is increasing acute food insecurity to record levels, with nearly 35 million people projected to face hunger in 2026 as the agency exhausts its funding by December.
26	Cyprus and Lebanon sign a long-delayed maritime boundary agreement.
27	The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates that Jakarta, Indonesia, has surpassed Tokyo, Japan, as the largest city in the world.

	Australia adds Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to its list of terrorist organisations as a state sponsor due to its role in orchestrating and executing terrorist attacks in Australia last year.
28	The Israeli military launches a raid in Beit Jinn, Syria, targeting unknown gunmen and carrying out airstrikes, killing 13 Syrians, including two children, and wounding 25 others. Six Israeli soldiers are also wounded in a shootout with local residents. Israel says it was targeting Jaama Islamiya.
29	Two Palestinian children are killed in an Israeli drone attack as they were gathering firewood in the town of Bani Suheila in the Gaza Strip.
	Tunisian police detain National Salvation Front member Chaima Issa in Tunis to enforce a 20-year prison sentence after an appellate court recently issued prison terms of up to 45 years against several opposition leaders on charges of plotting to overthrow the president.

DECEMBER 2025

1	Tajikistan reinforces its border with Afghanistan, as the Tajik government says that the drone strikes which killed two Tajik and three Chinese citizens over the past week originated from its neighbour.
	The toll from the floods in Indonesia increases to 604 people killed and 464 more missing.
	The Democratic Republic of the Congo declares that the Ebola outbreak in the country since August, which resulted in 53 confirmed cases, 43 deaths, and 11 probable cases, has ended.
	A Bangladeshi court sentences former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and British MP Tulip Siddiq to five years and two years in prison, respectively, for corruption involving a government land project.
3	The Israeli Knesset votes 39–0 to endorse the 20-point Gaza peace plan, in a vote boycotted by the member parties of the Netanyahu government.
4	Yasser Abu Shabab, leader of the Israeli-backed and anti-Hamas Popular Forces, is fatally shot in Rafah, Gaza, by unidentified gunmen.
	Ireland, Slovenia, Spain, and the Netherlands announce they will boycott next year's Eurovision Song Contest after the European Broadcasting Union confirmed Israel's participation.
5	Netflix, Inc. agrees to buy Warner Bros. Discovery for US$72 billion in one of the largest takeovers in entertainment industry history.
	Canada removes Syria from its list of state sponsors of terrorism and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham from its list of terrorist entities following a review of the Syrian transitional government.
	United States federal judge Rodney Smith orders the release of grand jury records from the 2006–2007 investigations into sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and sex trafficker Ghislaine Maxwell, ruling that the recently enacted Epstein Files Transparency Act supersedes federal grand jury secrecy rules.
6	Australia imposes economic sanctions and travel bans on four Afghan government officials over their involvement in human rights violations, particularly the Taliban's treatment of women.
8	The Southern Transitional Council (STC) captures all eight southern governorates of Yemen, opening possibilities for it to claim independence. Saudi Arabia withdraws all of its troops from Aden.
	The Rapid Support Forces capture Heglig, Sudan's largest oilfield, after the Sudanese Armed Forces withdraw from the area.
10	At least 34 people are killed and 80 more injured in a Tatmadaw airstrike on a hospital in Mrauk U, Rakhine State, Myanmar.
	Iceland announces that it will join Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, and Slovenia in boycotting next year's Eurovision Song Contest in Austria in protest of Israel's participation.
11	Austria passes a law banning hijabs and burqas being worn in schools by girls aged under 14.
	Police in Mashhad, Iran, arrest Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi during a ceremony honoring deceased lawyer and human rights activist Khosrow Alikordi.
13	The Israeli military kills Ra'ad Sa'ad, a senior Hamas military commander, in an airstrike against a vehicle in Gaza City, in violation of the ceasefire. Four other people were also killed in the attack, and 25 more injured.

	An attacker identified by the United States Central Command as a member of ISIL opens fire on a joint Syrian and American convoy in Palmyra, killing two U.S. service members and one American civilian interpreter and injuring three others, before being killed by return fire.
14	Two gunmen open fire during a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, killing 15 people and leaving 42 others injured. One perpetrator is killed, while the other is arrested. Two bombs are found at the scene and detonated by police.
16	In association football, French and Paris Saint-Germain player Ousmane Dembélé is named the 2025 FIFA Men's Player of the Year.
17	United States president Donald Trump expands the country's existing travel ban by banning citizens of Burkina Faso, Mali, South Sudan, and Syria, as well as those holding passports issued by the Palestinian Authority, from entering the country.
	Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu approves a deal to export US$35 billion of natural gas from the Leviathan gas field to Egypt over the next 15 years.
19	At least six Palestinians are killed when an Israeli tank fires at a wedding hosted in a school-turned-shelter in Gaza City.
	Eight people are killed, including four attackers, and 15 others are injured in a suicide attack by unidentified militants on a military post in North Waziristan District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.
	The U.S. Department of Justice releases a heavily redacted fraction of the Epstein files, potentially violating the law that determines their full release by December 19. The department intends to continue releasing remaining files over subsequent weeks.
20	The United States and Jordan carry out airstrikes on 70 Islamic State targets at multiple locations in Syria, in retaliation for the December 2025 Palmyra attack.
	A Pakistani court sentences former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, to 17 years in prison after finding them guilty of corruption-related charges.
21	The Israeli cabinet approves 19 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, despite such settlements being considered illegal under international law.
22	U.S. President Donald Trump says that the United States will keep the oil from the oil tankers it seized off the coast of Venezuela, along with the ships themselves.
	The price of gold reaches an all-time high of US$4,383.76 per ounce, surpassing its previous peak of $4,381.52.
	The high court of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, rules that former prime minister Najib Razak must remain in prison, holding that a purported royal addendum allowing house arrest lacks legal force because it was not approved by the pardons board, as required under the constitution.
28	Israel introduces new rules for aid groups, forbidding activities or criticism that "delegitimizes" Israel, without providing specific definitions. Aid groups say that the requirements are political and may hinder criticism of Israel's actions in Gaza.
30	Israel announces the suspension of many international humanitarian organizations, including Doctors Without Borders, the International Rescue Committee, and divisions of Oxfam and Caritas, from operating in Gaza starting January 1 for allegedly failing to pass new rules to vet the organizations and cooperating with Hamas and other militant groups.
	Yemen ends its defense pact with the UAE, with its leader Rashad al-Alimi ordering all Emirati forces to depart within 24 hours. The UAE later announces that its remaining forces in Yemen will leave the country.
	The Six Flags Qiddiya City amusement park officially opens to the public in Saudi Arabia, with the Falcons Flight attraction breaking records as the world's tallest, fastest, and longest roller coaster.
	JANUARY 2026
3	The United States carries out airstrikes around Caracas, Venezuela, killing at least 40 people, including civilians and military personnel. A national state of emergency is declared following the strikes.
	Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro and his wife, first lady Cilia Flores, are captured by U.S. forces and flown out of the country.

	The Central Bank of Syria begins exchanging old banknotes for a new currency that removes two zeros from the previous denominations, with 100 old pounds converted to one new pound, as part of economic stabilization measures following the change in government.
5	Four Palestinians are killed in an Israeli airstrike on a tent sheltering displaced refugees in the Khan Yunis refugee camp in Gaza. Israel claims it was targeting a Hamas target.
7	The United States announces its withdrawal from dozens of United Nations bodies.
8	As fighting between the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and the Syrian Army continues in Aleppo, Syrian authorities open an evacuation corridor for tens of thousands of civilians to evacuate the city.
	Protesters and police clash in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S., after an ICE agent fatally shot a civilian woman yesterday. Pepper balls and a gas-like substance are fired toward the protesters outside a federal building.
9	A Southern Transitional Council (STC) delegation in Riyadh announces the group's dissolution following widespread territorial losses to the Saudi-backed Yemeni government. The STC rejects the announcement, saying the announcement was made under duress.
	Non-governmental organization HRAI verifies the deaths of 483 protesters and 47 security personnel in Iran since the start of the protests.
	Amidst the ongoing internet blackout, the Iranian government successfully shuts down the Starlink internet for the first time.
12	The Israeli-backed militant organization Counter-Terrorism Strike Force says it has assassinated Mahmoud Al-Astal, head of a Hamas-run police unit in Khan Yunis, Gaza Strip.
	A seven-year drought ends in Morocco after a 95 percent increase in winter rainfall compared with 2025 was recorded.
13	Adelaide Writers' Week in Adelaide, Australia, cancels its 2026 festival after director Louise Adler resigned and more than 180 writers withdrew in protest over the board's decision to disinvite Palestinian Australian author Randa Abdel-Fattah.
15	New Zealand temporarily closes its embassy in Tehran, evacuates its diplomats to Ankara, Turkey, and warns its citizens to leave Iran, citing the deteriorating security situation and internet blackout.
16	Malaysian prime minister Anwar Ibrahim temporarily freezes all military and police procurement until compliance rules are met following an anti-corruption probe, while ordering a review and restructuring of the procurement system.
17	The United States Armed Forces formally withdraws from Iraq's Al-Asad Airbase, handing over full operational control of the airbase to the Iraqi Armed Forces for the first time since 2014.
18	The Syrian government announces a ceasefire with the Syrian Democratic Forces.
19	The SDF says it has lost control of a prison holding thousands of Islamic State (IS) fighters in the town of Al-Shaddadah after the prison came under attack from armed groups. A video released by the SDF appears to show dozens of IS militants escaping the prison.
	Reflecting a broader demographic decline across East Asia, the birth rate in China fell to 5.6 per 1,000 people last year, the lowest since records began in 1949, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, as similar downward trends persist in Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan.
	The Sun releases the largest solar particle event towards Earth since the 2003 Halloween solar storms.
27	The United States's withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO) takes effect, becoming the first member state to leave the WHO.
29	The European Union designates the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization in response to the crackdown on the recent protests.
30	Israel expels South Africa's chargé d'affaires Shaun Byneveldt to reciprocate South Africa's persona non grata declaration on the Israeli ambassador following international incidents between the two countries in the wake of South Africa's genocide case against Israel.

	The United States Department of Justice releases more files on sex offender Jeffrey Epstein following the passing of the Epstein Files Transparency Act, the largest single-day release of said files, including over 3 million previously undisclosed documents.

FEBRUARY 2026

1	Nigeria reports that its forces have killed a senior Boko Haram commander known as Abu Khalid, describing him as the group's deputy leader in the Sambisa Forest, and ten other fighters during a raid in Borno State.
2	As part of a ceasefire agreement with the Syrian government, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces formally hands over control of Al-Hasakah to government forces.
3	Several Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy gunboats attempt to stop and seize a U.S. tanker in the Strait of Hormuz. The tanker ignored the demands to stop and continued on its journey towards the Arabian Sea under escort of a United States Navy warship.
	Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, son of Libya's former leader Muammar Gaddafi and presidential candidate, is assassinated outside his home in Zintan, Libya. Four gunmen reportedly fled the scene after the shooting.
4	Donald Trump announced that the United States would take control of the Gaza Strip under an agreement with Israel, with U.S. forces overseeing its reconstruction.
	The Pakistan Armed Forces use drones and helicopters in an attempt to regain control of Nushki from Balochistan Liberation Army insurgents in Balochistan, Pakistan, after attacks across the province killed over 200 people.
5	Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy seizes two foreign oil tankers allegedly smuggling fuel in the Persian Gulf.
	The remaining 89 people kidnapped from three churches in Kaduna State, Nigeria, by criminal gangs on January 18, are released.
6	The United States Department of State issues sanctions on 14 oil tankers that are used to transport oil to Iran.
	Thirty-two people are killed and 170 others are wounded in a suicide bombing at a Shia mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan.
7	Saudi Arabia and Syria sign agreements covering a joint low-cost carrier, a new international airport in Aleppo, and a US$1 billion telecommunications project.
9	Protests against Israeli president Isaac Herzog's state visit, following the 2025 Bondi Beach shooting, are held in cities across Australia.
11	The United States Armed Forces withdraws from the al-Tanf military base, handing it over to the Syrian Armed Forces.
13	The High Court of Justice rules that the British government's decision to designate the pro-Palestinian activist group Palestine Action as a terrorist organization is unlawful and disproportionate, while allowing the ban to remain in force pending appeal. The judgment prompts police to suspend further arrests linked to support for the group.
15	The Cabinet of Israel approves new measures to expand land registration in the occupied West Bank and facilitate land purchases by Israeli settlers.
18	The United States announces that it will withdraw all remaining military troops from Syria, formally ending its 12-year military presence in the country.
20	U.S. Supreme Court decision on emergency tariffs affects global trade, including exports from several Muslim-majority economies.
26	The government of Pakistan declares "open war" against the Taliban in Afghanistan.
27	The Supreme Court of Israel issues an interim order suspending a government ban on 37 foreign non-governmental organizations operating in Gaza and the West Bank, allowing them to continue their operations while the court reviews a petition challenging the revocation of their legal status.

28	Israel and the United States launch attacks on Iran, killing many high-profile officials, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Iran launches retaliatory strikes against Israel, as well as against US military bases in the Persian Gulf, and closes the Strait of Hormuz by attacking vessels that try to pass.
	Iran retaliated with missile and drone attacks against Israel, U.S. military bases, and several Gulf countries, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, and the UAE. The attacks caused civilian casualties, damaged infrastructure, and prompted Israel to declare a state of emergency.

MARCH 2026

1	Global media and official portals confirmed the death of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, following catastrophic strikes on his compound in Tehran.
2	Massive, violent anti-war protests erupted across Pakistan reacting to the U.S.–Israeli campaign.
3	Complete airspace closures over Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, and Israel threw global travel into absolute chaos.
4	In the waters off Sri Lanka, a U.S. Navy submarine torpedoed and sank the Iranian Navy frigate IRIS Dena, killing at least 87 crew members and leaving dozens missing.
5	U.S. President Donald Trump publicly announced that the U.S. Air Force would provide "extensive air cover" to Kurdish forces, explicitly backing a potential Kurdish ground offensive against the fragmented Iranian government following the assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.
6	The parallel Hezbollah–Israel war intensified dramatically. Israeli air and ground raids on the town of Al-Nabi Shayth in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley killed at least 41 people, including three Lebanese soldiers.
7	Operation Epic Fury reached the economic hubs of the United Arab Emirates when falling debris from an aerial interception near Dubai International Airport (DXB) forced a temporary suspension of all airport operations.
8	Following the assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Iranian Supreme National Security Council elected his son, Mojtaba Khamenei, as the new Supreme Leader of Iran.
9	The government of Bangladesh implemented an extraordinary national order to close all universities early by advancing the Eid al-Fitr holidays. The aggressive measure aims to severely cut down domestic electricity consumption as the global oil crisis disrupts local power grids.
10	The UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) issued an urgent warning after relentless strikes on oil facilities across the Middle East triggered toxic "black rain".
11	The Foreign Ministers of eight major Muslim nations—Qatar, Jordan, the UAE, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt—issued a joint statement forcefully condemning Israel's closure of the gates of Al-Aqsa Mosque to Muslim worshippers.
12	Millions of demonstrators took to the streets across major Muslim-majority cities—including Jakarta, Islamabad, and Istanbul—demanding an immediate Western and Israeli ceasefire.
13	A series of joint U.S.-Israeli airstrikes inside Isfahan, Iran, destroyed the historic, Safavid-era Rashk-e Jenan building. The bombardment heavily damaged protected Islamic cultural monuments, including the iconic Chehel Sotoun pavilion and the Ali Qapu palace, prompting international condemnation from preservation bodies.
14	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China strongly condemned indiscriminate military campaigns hitting non-military installations inside Iran. Following an airstrike that killed Iranian schoolgirls, the Red Cross Society of China mobilized $200,000 in emergency humanitarian aid to support the Iranian Red Crescent.
15	Responding directly to the crippling maritime blockades inside the Strait of Hormuz, Japan announced the release of 80 million barrels of oil from its state reserves—the largest single emergency discharge in Japanese history—to stabilize crashing Asian industrial markets.
16	The intense border war between Pakistan and Afghanistan hit a tragic peak. A Pakistani airstrike targeting suspected militant hideouts instead struck a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, killing at least 269 civilians.
17	In a massive blow to Tehran's command structure, Israeli airstrikes in Tehran killed Ali Larijani, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

18	The Israeli military executed a massive air operation disabling the South Pars natural gas field and neighbouring refineries in Asaluyeh. This triggered a total energy emergency inside Iran and a public vow from Tehran to systematically dismantle the region's energy grids.
19	In the border region between Chad and Sudan, a sudden drone strike originating from the Sudanese civil war hit a funeral in the town of Tiné. The attack killed 17 Muslim civilians gathered for the funeral rites, aggravating the humanitarian refugee crisis across North-Central Africa.
20	Qatar reported a staggering $26 billion in damages to its Ras Laffan liquefied natural gas terminal, while Kuwaiti engineers estimated that the struck Mina al-Ahmadi refinery infrastructure would require up to five years to fully recover.
21	In Golders Green, London, an apparent anti-Semitic arson attack completely destroyed four Hatzalah community ambulances. The incident, occurring amidst massive ongoing pro-Palestinian and anti-war protests by the British Muslim diaspora, prompted the UK Metropolitan Police to instantly double patrols around both Islamic centers and Jewish community sites to suppress retaliatory hate crimes.
22	The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched long-range ballistic missiles targeting Israel's industrial core.
23	In western Iraq, separate U.S. airstrike targeting a base in the western Anbar province killed seven fighters and wounded 13 others belonging to the Hashed al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilisation Forces), drawing sharp condemnation from Baghdad.
24	In the ongoing Sudanese civil war, the death toll from a devastating drone strike on the Al Deain Teaching Hospital in East Darfur rose to 70 people.
25	India purchased its first shipment of Iranian liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) since 2019. The transactional breakthrough followed the temporary easing of U.S. naval restrictions, allowing state-run fuel companies to buffer catastrophic supply disruptions hitting millions of consumers.
26	The government of Zimbabwe confirmed that 15 of its citizens were killed after being recruited to fight on the frontlines in Ukraine.
27	The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched a devastating retaliatory barrage comprising at least six ballistic missiles and 29 drones targeting the Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia.
28	The Houthi movement in Yemen officially entered the conflict by launching long-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and loitering drones targeting southern Israel.
	Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced that Ukraine and Qatar signed a landmark 10-year defense agreement.
29	For the first time in history, Israel Police blocked the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during Palm Sunday ceremonies.
30	The cross-border front in Lebanon escalated severely, with Hezbollah executing 65 distinct attacks in a 24-hour window. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar revealed that Hezbollah had launched a staggering 5,000 missiles, rockets, and drones into Israel since March 2.
31	The European Central Bank published a bleak economic tracker detailing the immense scale of the ongoing Strait of Hormuz maritime blockade. The analysis revealed an average global supply loss of 14 million barrels of oil per day. This prolonged 14% global shortage heavily devastated non-Middle Eastern, energy-importing Muslim populations across Central Asia and East Africa, triggering widespread inflation on baseline consumer commodities.

APRIL 2026

1	Senegal, Bangladesh and Mauritania reported that the prolonged March energy shock had artificially inflated baseline food and transportation costs by up to 25%.
2	U.S. President Donald Trump publicly warned that the U.S. would continue hard-hitting military campaigns for the next two to three weeks to completely neutralize Iran's offensive capacity and bring it "back to the stone ages".

3	A powerful 5.8 magnitude earthquake struck Jorm, Afghanistan, sending severe tremors across South Asia. The disaster killed 12 people and injured six others across Kabul and Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.
4	In Jordan the military officially confirmed its air defense batteries successfully intercepted 261 Iranian missiles and drones violating its airspace.
5	The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) launched a massive offensive in Sudan, capturing the strategic town of Mellit in North Darfur. The intense clashes displaced over 35,000 predominantly Muslim civilians.
6	In Jerusalem, Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir executed a provocative incursion into the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif complex. The Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a fierce condemnation, labeling it a flagrant violation of international law. Jordan rebuked Israel's ongoing closure of the mosque's gates to Muslim worshippers for the 38th consecutive day, reaffirming that the entire 144-dunum area remains an exclusive place of worship for Muslims under the authority of the Jordanian-run Jerusalem Waqf Department.
7	Following mediation led by Pakistani Army Chief Asim Munir, Omani diplomats, and U.S. Vice President JD Vance, the Islamabad Accord was officially signed. U.S. President Donald Trump suspended his 8:00 PM ultimatum to obliterate Iran's civil infrastructure, declaring a comprehensive regional ceasefire.
8	The Israeli military launched an unprecedented, massive wave of attacks across Lebanon. Dubbed Operation Eternal Darkness, more than 100 near-simultaneous airstrikes tore through busy commercial and residential areas during rush hour in southern Beirut, Sidon, Tyre, and the Beqaa Valley. The bombardment killed at least 357 people and injured 1,223 others in a single day.
9	The IMF warned that non-Middle Eastern, energy-dependent Muslim nations across Africa and Asia were facing extreme post-holiday fiscal crises due to high oil prices and broken maritime trade routes.
10	Global energy intelligence groups published a bleak assessment confirming that the five-week maritime blockades had generated the worst global energy shock ever recorded, prompting over 60 nations to implement emergency energy-saving measures. Non-Middle Eastern Muslim-majority nations suffered the worst fiscal strain as high oil import costs heavily damaged local public services.
11	Under the UAE's humanitarian mediation, Russia and Ukraine swapped 175 prisoners of war each, underscoring the Gulf nation's active role in international conflict diplomacy despite regional security pressure.
12	Massive anti-war demonstrations erupted across major Pakistani cities, including Islamabad and Karachi.
13	To buffer its local population from soaring global fuel spikes tied directly to the war, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. suspended domestic excises on kerosene and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).
14	Israeli and Lebanese officials held direct negotiations in Washington, D.C., focusing on regional security.
15	Nine people were killed and 13 injured in a school shooting in Kahramanmaraş Province, Turkiye.
16	Pope Leo XIV met with senior Muslim leaders in Yaoundé, Cameroon. During the high-profile apostolic journey, the Pope delivered an explicit address celebrating joint Muslim-Christian dialogues.
17	Infrastructure expansions began at the Galkynyş Gas Field in Turkmenistan to increase regional output amid the global fuel crisis.
18	The International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued an economic brief highlighting that even if the war concludes rapidly, non-Middle Eastern, energy-dependent Muslim economies across Asia and Africa face an unavoidable, long-term fiscal shock due to the destroyed Gulf infrastructure and a historic global supply loss of 14 million barrels of oil per day.
19	The Israeli military published an official map of the territory it claims to control in southern Lebanon. The map formally established a 5 to 8-kilometre deep advanced defense "yellow line" (modelled on its Gaza operational framework).

20	In Washington, D.C., Capitol Police arrested 62 military veterans, including members of American Muslim advocacy groups, after they occupied the Cannon House Office Building. The demonstrators demanded an immediate halt to U.S. naval blockades and a permanent end to the war.
21	Pope Leo XIV arrived in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, marking the final leg of a sweeping papal tour through Africa.
22	In Lebanon Israeli forces executed targeted strikes in the southern village of al-Tiri, killing prominent Lebanese journalist Amal Khalil alongside three municipal civilians.
23	A migrant boat capsized between Algeria and Spain, killing at least 17 Somali refugees.
24	Israeli strikes across southern Lebanon killed six people. Parallel air campaigns inside the Gaza Strip killed at least 12 Palestinians.
25	In several Western European nations, including France and the UK, local Islamic organisations met with municipal security officials to evaluate community safety. The spikes in anti-Muslim hate speech recorded during the peak of the March and April air campaigns prompted calls for increased institutional protections around mosques and community centres.
26	In London, the first-ever UK National Summit for Imams and Community Leaders convened at the De Vere Grand Connaught Rooms. Prominent scholars gathered to address British mosque sustainability, next-generation faith identities, and legal governance structures for the European diaspora.
27	In West Africa's Sahel region, the Islamist militant group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) published statements claiming that the Malian military had officially initiated a withdrawal from the strategic town of Tessalit.
28	In Manama, a Bahraini high court sentenced five operatives—including two Afghan nationals—to life imprisonment for plotting hostile and terrorist acts orchestrated by the IRGC, while an additional 25 individuals received 10-year sentences for funding internal destabilisation networks.
29	In a historic shift that ends a nearly six-decade partnership, the United Arab Emirates announced its departure from OPEC and the OPEC Plus alliance.
30	In the Sahel, the Kremlin formally announced that Russia will indefinitely continue its military presence in Mali to provide logistical and counter-insurgency assistance to the Malian government against Al-Qaeda-linked factions and Tuareg separatists.

MAY 2026

1	Over 160 international humanitarian activists from the Global Sumud Flotilla were transported to the Greek island of Crete. Their aid ships, which were carrying relief cargo bound for the blockaded Gaza Strip, had been forcibly seized by the Israeli navy in international waters near Greece.
2	Hundreds of anti-war Israeli citizens gathered in Tel Aviv's HaBima Square to protest the continued escalation of regional military campaigns against Iran and Lebanon.
3	Maritime analysts confirmed that commercial trade throughput navigating the Strait of Hormuz plummeted by over 90%.The energy chokehold continued to amplify supply-chain strains across Asian and European energy import markets.
4	The United States officially launched "Project Freedom", deploying guided-missile destroyers, over 100 aircraft, and 15,000 personnel to forcibly escort hundreds of stranded commercial vessels out of the Strait of Hormuz.
5	Concurrently, Middle Eastern regional leaders—including the King of Jordan, the Prime Minister of Israel, and the leader of Iraqi Kurdistan—placed solidarity calls to UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed to condemn the regional escalation.
6	In Berlin, German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul explicitly backed Israeli military sweeps into southern Lebanon, labeling the tactical maneuvers "necessary" during a bilateral summit with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar.
7	Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi declared that standard trade transit would only be allowed to return to normal inside the Strait of Hormuz if Western blockades and economic sanctions were permanently lifted.

8	The U.S. State Department and Treasury Department sanctioned 4 entities and 10 individuals based outside the Middle East. The sanctions targeted multiple Chinese commercial companies explicitly accused of supplying high-resolution satellite imagery and advanced tracking data to Iranian military networks.
9	Following the U.S. Treasury's blacklisting of multiple East Asian commercial firms accused of feeding real-time surveillance data to Iranian military networks, Beijing issued a sharp diplomatic rebuke. Chinese trade entities warned that Washington's "extraterritorial overreach" would destabilise tech supply chains and secondary shipping markets across Southeast Asia.
10	Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hosted a large-scale national ceremony at the Pakistan Monument in Islamabad to inaugurate "Marka-e-Haq Day" (Battle of Truth). The annual holiday commemorates Pakistan's defense resilience during the brief 2025 border conflict with India.
11	The regional conflict flared drastically as the Lebanese Health Ministry confirmed that Israeli bombardments killed 51 people across the country over a 24-hour window.
12	U.S. President Donald Trump arrived in Beijing alongside a corporate executive entourage with a combined net worth of $870 billion to hold an emergency summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping.The primary focus of the meeting was navigating the economic threat of a prolonged Strait of Hormuz closure.
13	A powerful coalition of six nations—Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Jordan—submitted an urgent appeal to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. The formal letter explicitly rejected Iran's claims of unilateral control or administrative rules over the Strait of Hormuz, demanding an immediate, unconditional reopening of the global waterway.
14	In Southeast Asia, a severe landslide hit an unregulated, illegal gold mining site in West Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Disaster management personnel confirmed that at least nine local miners were killed in the collapse.
15	The U.S. Justice Department collaborated with Turkish intelligence to arrest Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawood al-Saadi, a high-ranking commander of the IRGC-aligned Iraqi militia Kata'ib Hezbollah. Al-Saadi was detained in Turkey after allegedly orchestrating a campaign of retaliatory attacks targeting Jewish and Israeli sites across Western Europe and the United States.
16	The Government of Mali initialized far-reaching judicial investigations targeting highly placed politicians and military officers. The individuals, including prominent opposition leader Oumar Mariko, are suspected of covertly collaborating during the April 25 multi-pronged offensive launched against the Malian state by Tuareg rebels and the Al-Qaeda-aligned Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM).
17	The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control activated emergency networks following a WHO-declared Ebola outbreak in central Africa.
18	A drive-by shooting at the Islamic Center of San Diego resulted in three deaths, with suspects dying by suicide.
19	In a controversial diplomatic realignment, Somaliland announced plans to open an official embassy in Jerusalem.
20	Israeli drone strikes and heavy artillery shelling hit eastern Khan Younis and areas west of Rafah, injuring at least seven Palestinians, including three children.
21	In South Asia, a remote gold mine collapsed in the Shahri Buzurg District of Badakhshan Province, Afghanistan. The disaster killed five local workers, including two children.
22	In North Africa, emergency rescue personnel in Fez, Morocco, updated that the total death toll from a tragic building collapse the previous day had officially risen to 15 fatalities.
23	In Southwest Africa, a severe landslide struck an unregulated, illegal gold mining operation. Disaster response personnel confirmed that at least 28 local gold miners were buried alive and killed when the underground shafts completely collapsed.
24	The holy Hajj season officially commenced in Saudi Arabia. More than 1.5 million international Muslim pilgrims successfully arrived in Mecca, converging on the Grand Mosque to perform the Tawaf Al Qudum around the Kaaba before departing for the vast desert tent city of Mina.

25	New Prime Minister Appointed in Senegal: President Bassirou Diomaye Faye appointed Ahmadou Al Aminou Lo as the new Prime Minister following the dissolution of the cabinet.
26	Newly appointed Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei released an aggressive mandate explicitly renewing a push for the expulsion of all U.S. forces from Muslim territories.
27	Muslims worldwide and pilgrims concluding their Hajj rituals in Saudi Arabia marked the first day of Eid al-Adha.
28	Strategic repositories in Europe publicized satellite tracking indicating that Russian defense entities delivered advanced fiber-optic drone technologies to Middle Eastern proxy hubs. The electronic upgrades significantly increased the guidance accuracy and jamming resistance of unmanned systems used against commercial fleets.
29	Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu officially confirmed that IDF ground forces crossed the Litani River in Lebanon, advancing onto dominating terrain roughly 30 kilometers north of the border.
30	In East Africa, at least eight people were killed during heavy gun battles in the regional capital of Baidoa. The street fighting pitted armed forces loyal to disputed Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud against regional troops aligned with the ousted South West State President Abdiaziz Laftagareen.
31	The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) captured the historic 12th-century Beaufort Castle in the Nabatieh Governorate.

JUNE 2026

1	Following the conclusion of Eid al-Adha on May 27–30, international Islamic relief groups, including Islamic Relief Worldwide, engaged in large-scale global Qurbani meat and aid distributions to vulnerable Muslim populations across Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
2	Christian and Muslim spiritual leaders convened a national summit at the House of the Druze Community in Beirut to issue a joint statement calling for peace, solidarity, and the preservation of Lebanon amidst active regional warfare.
3	International aviation hubs and ministries of religious affairs across Southeast Asia, North Africa, and Europe scaled up their logistical networks as hundreds of thousands of newly minted Hajji pilgrims began flying home from Saudi Arabia.
4	The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) successfully repelled a joint assault by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and SPLM-N in the Blue Nile region. Separately, inter-communal clashes between the Beni Halba and Salamat tribes in South Darfur resulted in a high death toll.
5	The UN World Environment Day 2026 was hosted by the Muslim-majority nation of Azerbaijan, focusing on ecosystem restoration.
6	In the Gaza Strip, an Israeli strike targeting a civilian tent camp killed at least eight Palestinians and wounded dozens of others.
7	A targeted airstrike hit the entrance precinct and administration facilities of the historic Tyre district ruins in Lebanon, leading ICOMOS Lebanon and UNESCO affiliates to issue urgent cultural protection alerts.
8	A powerful 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck off Maasim, Sarangani, Philippines, generating tsunamis across the Pacific and killing at least 35 people. The severe tremors and subsequent structural damage directly affected heavily Muslim-populated areas, including the island of Mindanao, the provinces of North Sulawesi and North Maluku in Indonesia, and Sabah in Malaysia.
9	The International Human Rights Foundation (IHRF) issued an urgent statement condemning Pakistani regional authorities for a severe ongoing crackdown against the Jammu and Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC).
10	The Pakistani military conducted cross-border airstrikes along the Durand Line targeting Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants. The Afghan government reported that the strikes killed 13 civilians, including 11 children, while Pakistan stated that 26 active militants were neutralized.

11	The historic 48-team 2026 FIFA World Cup officially commenced with a massive opening ceremony at the Estadio Azteca in Mexico City. This marked the beginning of a tournament with unprecedented representation from Muslim-majority nations across North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia competing globally.
12	As the 2026 FIFA World Cup opening ceremonies expanded into Canada, large-scale pro-Palestinian demonstrations were held near the Toronto Stadium.
13	In the United Kingdom, police arrested at least 72 people in London during massive public demonstrations and blockades supporting Palestine Action activists outside a major court hearing.
14	U.S. President Donald Trump and Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif announced the "Islamabad Memorandum," a comprehensive agreement to end the war.
15	President Abbas decreed that legislative and presidential elections will be held in late 2026 and early 2027, marking the first such vote in two decades.
16	Academic institutions in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan launched joint bilateral initiatives to accelerate the digital archiving of medieval Islamic scientific and theological manuscripts, safeguarding them from regional instability.
17	Compounding the horrors of the ongoing civil war in Sudan, the local Peace Government formally declared an official cholera epidemic in the Kordofan region.
18	International Islamic relief organizations and the UN issued an emergency appeal from Chad, warning that the cholera epidemic in Sudan's Kordofan region, combined with collapsed infrastructure, threatened to cut off food and medical aid to over a million displaced people.
19	Amidst the 2026 Lebanon War, Israeli airstrikes caused significant casualties, with at least 47 killed and 97 injured, despite reported progress toward a local ceasefire.
20	In global sports, Tunisia faced Japan in Monterrey, Mexico, marking the 1,000th official match in FIFA World Cup history, though the North African side ultimately suffered a 4–0 group-stage loss.
21	A severe explosion and subsequent fire tore through a major gas processing plant in Ras Laffan Industrial City, Qatar. The Qatari Ministry of Interior attributed the disaster to a technical malfunction, confirming that 13 workers were killed and 66 others were injured.
22	Egypt successfully dispatched its 218th humanitarian aid convoy through the Rafah terminal, delivering extensive shipments of flour, bread, and medicine to over two million displaced Palestinians.
23	Following a finalized ceasefire, the IMO initiated an emergency, coordinated effort with Iran and Oman to evacuate hundreds of ships trapped in the Persian Gulf.
24	Following the historic stabilisation of the Islamabad Memorandum, maritime monitoring agencies reported that the Strait of Hormuz fully reopened to unrestricted global oil transit. A wartime high of 36 commercial cargo vessels and oil tankers transited the strait in a single day, which effectively eased global energy supply anxieties and pulled crude prices down to $70 a barrel.
25	A fresh surge of violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State triggered an immediate influx of displaced Rohingya Muslims into neighboring Bangladesh.
26	International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Secretary-General Rafael Grossi officially announced that the temporary ceasefire framework between the U.S. and Iran would grant IAEA inspectors immediate, unrestricted access to closely monitor Iranian nuclear development facilities.
27	Following the signing of the Trilateral Framework Agreement, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) began logistical preparations to deploy to the south.
28	In response to a wave of U.S. airstrikes against its military installations, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched coordinated ballistic missile and drone barrages targeting U.S. regional military bases.
29	UN Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Ramiz Alakbarov formally briefed the Security Council, warning that despite existing localized ceasefires, deep human suffering and profound uncertainty continued to plague the Gaza Strip.

30 The Moroccan national football team sent shockwaves through the sporting world by defeating the Netherlands in a high-stakes Round of 32 penalty shootout (3–2 after a 1–1 draw) at the Estadio BBVA in Mexico. The dramatic victory dumped the Dutch out of the tournament and sparked massive celebrations across North Africa, the Middle East, and worldwide diaspora communities.

JULY 2026

1 The World Health Organization (WHO) issued an alarming update from East Africa, reporting that at least 120 people had been killed in rapidly widening cholera outbreaks across war-torn Sudan since May.

2 In Rabat, Morocco, the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) hosted an international conference titled "From Dialogue across Civilizations to Cooperation among Generations for Peace," bringing together global youth ambassadors to draft new cross-border stability programs.

3 At the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome, Italy, the Global Conference on Smart Farming concluded its multi-day summit. Delegations from across North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia finalized agricultural tech transfers meant to build food security in areas suffering from geopolitical instability.

4 Millions of mourners gathered at the Imam Khomeini Grand Mosalla in Tehran as Iran commenced a massive multi-day state funeral for the late Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

5 The Iranian government intensified its diplomatic push at the UN Security Council, submitting detailed logs alleging over 34 specific breaches of the Islamabad Memorandum by U.S. and allied forces, particularly citing unauthorized drone reconnaissance over coastal infrastructure.

6 In West Africa, a coalition of the Al-Qaeda-linked Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and Tuareg Azawad Liberation Front rebels successfully launched an offensive to seize the strategic northern Mali town of Anéfis.

7 In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, humanitarian agencies launched an emergency stabilization effort to rebuild shelters and clear mud debris following the devastating landslides that struck the Rohingya Muslim refugee camps.

8 The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) partnered with academic bodies in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to launch a multimillion-dollar funding grant aimed at accelerating the preservation and digital scanning of historic Central Asian Quranic scripts.

9 A major escalation shattered the fragile Levant truce when an Israeli drone strike targeted a vehicle on the Damascus–Beirut highway, killing senior Hezbollah commander Abu Ali Nasser (Nasser Jafar) along with his driver. In direct response to the assassination, Hezbollah launched a massive barrage of over 200 rockets and drones targeting military bases in northern Israel and the occupied Golan Heights.

10 The newly proposed technocratic body, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, held secondary logistical sessions with United Nations agencies to coordinate emergency fuel routes for hospitals in central Gaza.

11 In East Africa, local emergency committees in North Kordofan reported severe food shortages among the hundreds of thousands of besieged civilians in El Obeid due to the ongoing encirclement by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

12 In East Africa, intense fighting broke out on the outskirts of El Obeid between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The clashes worsened the humanitarian crisis for the predominantly Muslim civilian population trapped inside the city due to severed supply lines.

13 Following a breakdown in technical talks, U.S. President Donald Trump announced the Islamabad Memorandum was in tatters and authorized overwhelming military action.

14 Following the previous day's counter-terrorism arrests in Suffolk, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) coordinated with local law enforcement to place Islamic centers and mosques across the United Kingdom on high security alert, citing ongoing threats from far-right extremist elements.

15 Amidst the regional warfare, the U.S. State Department approved a US$1.96 billion potential arms sale to Saudi Arabia.

16	The Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense reported that its air defense units engaged and destroyed 32 hostile drones attempting to violate the country's sovereign airspace.
17	U.S. President Donald Trump warned Tehran that if its forces launched another wave of ballistic missiles or kamikaze drones against American military bases or regional allies, the U.S. military would completely destroy Iran's oil fields, refineries, and nuclear program facilities.
18	Severe domestic unrest flared across several major cities, including Lahore and Islamabad. In response to mass public demonstrations protesting recent regional policies and arbitrary detentions, Pakistani authorities enforced a widespread mobile internet blackout and deployed military police to restrict public assemblies.
19	Spain beat Argentina in the FIFA World Cup final.
20	Following the death of a third U.S. service member in northern Iraq and an attack that killed two U.S. troops at a base in Jordan, President Donald Trump vowed Iran would "pay many times over."
21	Driven by the ongoing closure and tariff stand-offs in the Strait of Hormuz, global crude oil prices hovered at a wartime high, forcing import-dependent nations across Asia and Europe to activate strategic fuel reserves to stabilize domestic prices.
22	U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) precision airstrikes destroyed the strategic Minab Bridge in southern Iran, cutting off a primary military and logistics supply route between Bandar Abbas and the coastal city of Jask.
23	Sudanese security forces launched a major tactical raid on organized crime syndicates in Khartoum state. The successful operation freed 74 foreign hostages from a heavily armed human trafficking network.
24	Wildfires in Spain that began mid-July reached their peak as compounding blazes flared up scorching tens of thousands of hectares. Simultaneously France battled with wildfires, the blaze at such intensity that it generated France's first recorded pyrocumulonimbus [fire-spawned thunderstorm] which cast lightning and ignited more fires.
25	The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) convened an emergency executive session at its headquarters in Saudi Arabia to address the rapid expansion of the Gulf war.
26	In East Africa, international aid groups warned that continuous clashes between the SAF and RSF outside El Obeid had completely blocked a major humanitarian corridor, leaving tens of thousands of displaced Sudanese Muslims without access to food or medical supplies.
27	With the shipping lane effectively closed due to naval mining threats and the ongoing Western naval blockade, global commercial tankers continued to bypass the Gulf entirely, routing around Africa. This maritime gridlock sustained global crude oil prices at a high premium.
28	Suspected Iranian-backed Iraqi militias launched a drone attack striking the Abdali area of Kuwait near the Iraqi border. This marked the Axis of Resistance's first kinetic attack targeting a regional land border crossing during the month's escalation.
29	U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) paired intense physical precision airstrikes with massive cyber offensives. Electronic warfare units disrupted communications networks across western Iran, while conventional airstrikes targeted underground missile silos and command nodes in Tabriz, Isfahan, and Bandar Abbas.
30	An estimated 80,000, mainly young men, crossed the border from Morocco into the Spanish city of Ceuta; within a few days the majority returned to Morocco.
31	In South Asia, Pakistani security forces finalized a multi-day tactical sweep across the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, neutralizing three active militants and seizing a cache of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) along the Afghan border corridor.
	AUGUST 2026
1	The fallout from the Ceuta migration surge strained European unity. Madrid formally lodged a complaint with the European Commission against Italy's unilateral suspension of the border-free Schengen arrangement.

2	Following heavy pressure from regional mediating nations—including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman—U.S. President Donald Trump announced via Truth Social that he halted a major weekend air offensive against Iran.
3	Maritime monitoring networks confirmed that commercial traffic began stabilizing along the Gulf lanes as the diplomatic talks reopened.
4	In Brussels, the European Commission announced an immediate €410 million emergency funding package for Rabat following the Ceuta border crisis. The funds are earmarked for high-tech biometric border fences at Fnideq and expanded naval patrolling in the Alboran Sea.
5	In the United States, progressive candidate Dr. Abdul El-Sayed won the Michigan Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate.
6	Saudi Arabian intelligence officials warned that the kingdom was bracing for "multiple coordinated attacks" by Iraqi militias collaborating with Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Earlier, Houthi forces launched missile and drone attacks hitting Republic of Yemen Government military camps in Marib and Hadramawt, alongside cross-border actions in Najran, Saudi Arabia.
7	Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey mutually sign the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, declaring that an attack on one will constitute an attack on all three.
8	Supreme National Security Council secretary Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr says that Iran will reopen the Strait of Hormuz if the United States lifts sanctions against the country, ends the naval blockade, and halts military action against the country.
9	Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejects a United States-led plan for peace accepted by Hamas, saying Israel will not withdraw forces until Hamas fully disarms.
	Russia and Syria reach a memorandum of understanding to reorganize Russia's presence on the Syrian coast, including transferring civilian facilities to Syrian state management and converting Russian military bases into joint training centers.
10	Iranian supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei appoints new leaders for Iran's military to replace their predecessors after they were killed during the initial Israel and U.S. airstrikes.
11	Syria's transitional government confirmed cooperation with the IAEA to remove nuclear materials from a hidden facility, reportedly under a Syria–Israel–U.S. agreement. Israel warned it could strike the site again if the materials are not removed.
	The Criminal Court in Damascus, Syria, sentences deposed president Bashar al-Assad and his brother Maher to death in absentia, and former Daraa political security director Atef Najib in person, and issue international arrest warrants for all for premeditated murder and crimes against humanity.
	Palestinian Football Association president Jibril Rajoub announces that all football and sport activities will resume in September following a three-year suspension that began after the outbreak of the Gaza war.
13	The U.S. is deploying the USS George Washington to the Middle East to replace the USS Abraham Lincoln after its prolonged deployment, amid concerns over difficult living conditions and strain on its crew.
15	Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei says that Iran and Oman have reached an agreement on a safe route for vessels transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.
18	Pakistan's Supreme Court ordered imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan to be transferred from Adiala Jail to Shifa International Hospital in Islamabad for medical examination and treatment, following concerns raised by his lawyers and family about his health.
19	Axios reports that the U.S. military has created a new shipping lane in the Strait of Hormuz to help ships transit through the waterway.
	Qatari prime minister and foreign minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani meets with Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya and other senior leaders in Doha, Qatar, to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip and other occupied Palestinian territories.
	The Israeli military launched criminal investigations into troop conduct in Gaza, including the 2024 killing of five-year-old Hind Rajab and her family, as well as the separate 2025 killing of 15 Palestinian paramedics and emergency workers.

20	The USS George Washington arrived in the Middle East to replace the USS Abraham Lincoln after its nearly nine-month deployment supporting operations against Iran. The rotation followed reports of crew mental-health strain and supply shortages aboard the Lincoln.
21	Turkish justice minister Akın Gürlek announces that Turkey has issued an Interpol arrest warrant for Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu for his role in attacks on activists seeking to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza.
23	The Iran parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission approves a draft allowing Iran to charge ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz.
24	France and Saudi Arabia agreed on a €6 billion (US$7 billion) investment to develop three theme parks near Paris, including one expected to be inspired by Dragon Ball Z. The Saudi-backed project is expected to create around 22,000 jobs.
	The United States formally removes Syria from its designated state sponsors of terrorism list.
25	The Wall Street Journal reports that U.S. president Trump launched Operation Epic Fury in February despite warnings from U.S. vice president JD Vance and then-intelligence director Tulsi Gabbard.
	The Israel Defense Forces take control of the UNRWA's vocational training centre in Qalandia, East Jerusalem, West Bank, and begin removing the United Nations agency under legislation banning its operations in Israel.
	The Grand Council of Aargau votes 78–54 to ban Islamic hijabs for girls aged under 16 in the Swiss canton of Aargau. The motion was sponsored by the Radical-Liberal Party.
	The United States designates the Italy-based Autistici/Inventati, the UK-based Palestine Action, and pro-Palestinian group Masar Badil as terrorist organizations, citing alleged involvement in politically motivated violence and extremist activity.
27	Qatari prime minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani talks with Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi in Tehran, including on the Strait of Hormuz and efforts to end the war.
28	The United States and Venezuela agree to expand U.S. access to Venezuelan oil reserves under a deal involving US$100 billion in private investment, while Venezuela retains ownership of its petroleum resources.
30	Iran launches attacks on United States bases in Jordan.

SEPTEMBER 2026

1	Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran is prepared to return to the Islamabad Memorandum, signed in June, provided the United States also recommits to the agreement, amid renewed hostilities between the two countries.
	Peru's foreign ministry says that the country has cut off ties with Iran, accusing it of escalating the war in the Middle East.
	The Turkish foreign ministry reports that Turkey has joined the U.S.-led Artemis Accords, becoming the 71st country to do so.
3	Iran's military launches drones and missiles on Ahmad al-Jaber Air Base in Kuwait and Al Minhad Air Base in the United Arab Emirates, targeting United States military facilities and equipment to retaliate for the recent U.S. bombardment of Iran that killed at least 19 people.
	Officials at a United Nations Security Council meeting say that Syria has started the process of destroying clandestine chemical weapons from former president Bashar al-Assad's regime.
4	France allocates more than €1 billion to support farms affected by drought.
	Palestinian football resumes after nearly three years due to the Gaza war, with the Palestinian Football Association launching a tournament involving more than 200 teams from refugee camps.
5	Russia and Ukraine agreed to pause strikes on Kyiv and Moscow during U.S.-mediated peace talks, as U.S. envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff met Vladimir Putin in Moscow before heading to Kyiv.
6	U.S. envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner make their first visit to Kyiv, Ukraine, to meet with Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy for talks amidst renewed efforts to end the war.

	Israeli strikes in Gaza City kill at least four Palestinians, including two children, and injure six others. Israel says one strike targeted a Hamas member.
7	Nine people, including two children, were killed and five injured in an Israeli airstrike on a residential building in Kfar Reman, Lebanon. A separate strike on a vehicle killed two medics.
	The Copernicus Climate Change Service reports that August 2026 was the hottest month on record globally, averaging 16.96°C (62.53°F) and surpassing the previous July 2023 record.
	The International Atomic Energy Agency ends its investigation into Syria's nuclear activities after the new government granted inspectors access to nuclear sites.
10	Algeria cuts diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates, without specifying a reason.
	The first robotic surgical system in Kyrgyzstan is introduced at the Kyrgyz State Medical Academy.
11	In Yemen, the Houthis seized Perim Island after government forces withdrew, strengthening their control over the strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait, a major Red Sea shipping route.
	Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Energy temporarily closes the East-West Crude Oil Pipeline as a precautionary measure following multiple attacks by drones from Iraq on Thursday.
	Israel ordered British troops advising Palestinian Authority security forces in the West Bank to leave, in response to UK sanctions on goods from Israeli settlements.
12	Iran and the UAE issued a joint statement urging restraint in the war, while their leaders met at the BRICS summit, marking their highest-level meeting since the conflict began on February 28.
	The Wall Street Journal reports that Iran had received Chinese satellite images before launching a July 17 strike on the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan that killed three United States Army soldiers.
14	Gulf states call off planned peace talks with Iran in response to Houthi ballistic missile attacks on Saudi Arabia and Yemeni government forces.
20	Qatar's foreign ministry says that they are working to resume ceasefire negotiations between Iran and the United States.
	Pakistan launched cross-border strikes in Afghanistan in retaliation for the Kohat attack. Afghan authorities reported three civilian deaths, while Pakistan said 28 Pakistani Taliban militants were killed.
21	Ceer Motors unveils the EXOBOT SUV and sedan in Saudi Arabia, its first electric vehicles in the country.
22	United States president Donald Trump and Venezuelan interim president Delcy Rodríguez meet on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, marking the first in-person meeting between the countries' leaders following the 2026 U.S. intervention in Venezuela and capture of Nicolás Maduro.
23	Iran reopens schools and universities after months of closures caused by the war. About 16.5 million schoolchildren begin the new academic year, with reopening ceremonies held across the country.
	Iranian airlines suspend services to Azerbaijan, Baghdad, Georgia, Muscat, and Qatar, after new U.S. sanctions target Iran's aviation sector.
24	France announces that it will deploy its soldiers and air defense systems to Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, to support the Saudi military against the Houthis.
	Pakistan launched ten airstrikes on Afghan military sites, saying they were used for drone operations. At least four people were killed.
	The UAE suspended all flights to and from Iran until further notice amid new U.S. sanctions.
	UN Trade and Development reports that Gaza is experiencing the most severe economic crisis on record, with 92% of economic establishments damaged or destroyed, daily per capita GDP at US$0.58, and unemployment exceeding 90% among working-age residents.
25	The Wall Street Journal reports that Trump rejected an Iranian proposal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and halt regional fighting in exchange for U.S. sanctions relief and access to frozen Iranian funds.



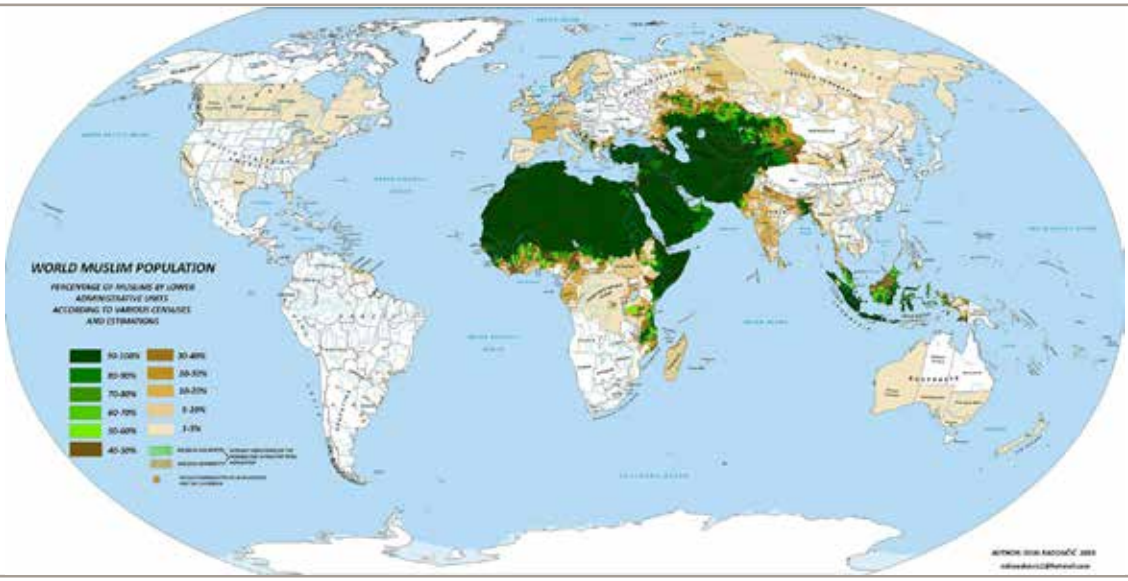
Shahadah

Calligraphy by Hasan Kan'an

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APPENDIX I
Population Statistics

World Muslim Population



Country/Region	Population 2026	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Afghanistan	45,047,069	99.9	44,984,890
Albania	2,751,025	74.5	2,049,712
Algeria	48,028,334	98.4	47,251,402
American Samoa	45,319	—	—
Andorra	83,753	—	—
Angola	40,215,179	0.3	102,813
Anguilla	14,817	—	—
Antigua and Barbuda	94,626	—	—
Argentina	46,003,734	0.9	427,465
Armenia	2,930,915	0.3	7,818
Aruba	108,164	0.3	365
Australia	27,227,096	3.5	953,805
Austria	9,107,266	8.3	756,154
Azerbaijan	10,454,855	94.7	9,903,597
Bahamas	404,628	< 0.1	347
Bahrain	1,675,572	74.0	1,240,283
Bangladesh	177,818,044	91.1	161,934,130

Country/Region	Population 2026	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Barbados	282,724	0.7	1,999
Belarus	8,937,018	0.3	23,442
Belgium	11,774,642	6.8	802,009
Belize	428,644	0.2	773
Benin	15,170,419	31.4	4,763,698
Bermuda	64,459	—	—
Bhutan	802,214	0.2	1,782
Bolivia	12,749,291	< 0.1	1,250
Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	31,913	—	—
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,114,242	53.6	1,670,759
Botswana	2,603,388	0.3	8,601
Brazil	213,562,666	< 0.1	37,803
British Virgin Islands	39,936	—	—
Brunei	469,775	82.2	385,924
Bulgaria	6,667,659	10.3	684,018
Burkina Faso	24,601,700	67.4	16,583,932
Burundi	14,729,157	3.0	440,931
Cambodia	18,051,219	2.0	368,769
Cameroon	30,640,817	25.2	7,708,393
Canada	40,467,728	4.9	1,978,007
Cape Verde	529,630	0.3	1,656
Cayman Islands	77,196	—	—
Central African Republic	5,698,984	6.2	355,676
Chad	21,560,380	56.4	12,150,952
Channel Islands	168,715	< 0.1	134
Chile	19,945,850	< 0.1	13,362
China	1,412,914,089	1.8	25,740,491
Colombia	53,936,226	< 0.1	2,118
Comoros	899,010	98.3	883,727
Congo	6,637,785	1.5	97,224
Cook Islands	12,826	—	—
Costa Rica	5,174,789	< 0.1	1,303
Croatia	3,822,345	1.4	52,466
Cuba	10,892,659	< 0.1	8,713
Curaçao	185,440	0.5	921
Cyprus	1,382,334	24.4	336,720
Czechia	10,527,781	0.3	34,440
DR Congo	116,452,162	1.3	1,479,584
Denmark	6,023,520	4.2	254,139
Djibouti	1,199,459	97.7	1,171,536

Country/Region	Population 2026	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Dominica	65,511	—	—
Dominican Republic	11,609,500	< 0.1	2,881
Ecuador	18,444,506	< 0.1	3,345
Egypt	120,101,175	95.2	114,303,374
El Salvador	6,391,253	< 0.1	223
Equatorial Guinea	1,984,468	4.0	80,332
Eritrea	3,682,669	51.7	1,902,820
Estonia	1,331,062	0.6	7,961
Eswatini	1,269,859	0.1	1,723
Ethiopia	138,902,185	36.2	50,338,398
Falkland Islands	3,465	—	—
Faroe Islands	56,526	—	—
Fiji	937,282	5.8	54,178
Finland	5,621,739	1.6	90,521
France	66,746,401	9.1	6,072,466
French Guiana	318,872	0.9	2,925
French Polynesia	283,076	0.3	919
Gabon	2,647,399	8.6	228,674
Gambia	2,884,079	97.0	2,797,635
Georgia	3,804,642	10.5	397,995
Germany	83,644,258	6.5	5,477,646
Ghana	35,697,557	19.9	7,093,321
Gibraltar	40,867	—	—
Greece	9,897,115	5.1	506,754
Greenland	55,629	—	—
Grenada	117,362	0.4	463
Guadeloupe	372,453	0.4	1,378
Guam	170,185	< 0.1	51
Guatemala	18,967,978	< 0.1	513
Guinea	15,441,993	86.8	13,404,869
Guinea-Bissau	2,297,808	56.0	1,286,291
Guyana	840,890	6.5	54,699
Haiti	12,037,506	< 0.1	224
Honduras	11,184,760	< 0.1	309
Hong Kong	7,378,602	0.3	19,777
Hungary	9,585,818	0.1	13,346
Iceland	402,329	1.2	4,879
India	1,476,625,576	15.2	224,299,658
Indonesia	287,886,782	87.0	250,358,379
Iran	93,168,497	99.8	92,957,106

Country/Region	Population 2026	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Iraq	48,007,437	99.5	47,766,612
Ireland	5,356,950	1.7	90,597
Isle of Man	84,055	—	—
Israel	9,647,689	14.7	1,421,249
Italy	58,926,166	4.4	2,604,200
Ivory Coast	33,494,346	46.3	15,514,821
Jamaica	2,833,403	< 0.1	452
Japan	122,427,731	0.2	208,095
Jordan	11,589,532	97.1	11,251,916
Kazakhstan	21,083,626	77.9	16,425,099
Kenya	58,636,412	10.9	6,409,637
Kiribati	138,445	< 0.1	118
Kosovo	1,666,992	94.3	1,571,313
Kuwait	5,102,773	80.2	4,094,460
Kyrgyzstan	7,400,465	91.7	6,787,519
Laos	7,974,017	< 0.1	1,766
Latvia	1,835,935	0.7	12,308
Lebanon	5,897,467	67.8	3,997,513
Lesotho	2,389,336	0.2	5,220
Liberia	5,853,949	12.7	744,829
Libya	7,539,851	99.0	7,464,039
Liechtenstein	40,368	—	—
Lithuania	2,797,338	< 0.1	2,496
Luxembourg	687,448	1.8	12,573
Macao	723,188	0.5	3,443
Madagascar	33,522,052	1.2	388,684
Malawi	22,785,535	11.6	2,632,163
Malaysia	36,385,115	64.1	23,329,115
Maldives	531,517	94.1	500,011
Mali	25,932,275	94.1	24,411,013
Malta	549,011	3.6	20,001
Marshall Islands	35,075	—	—
Martinique	337,711	0.2	733
Mauritania	5,461,319	99.2	5,416,831
Mauritius	1,265,059	17.5	221,536
Mayotte	347,536	98.8	343,500
Mexico	132,997,658	< 0.1	8,360
Micronesia	114,183	< 0.1	2
Moldova	2,961,253	0.2	5,367
Monaco	38,087	—	—

Country/Region	Population 2026	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Mongolia	3,556,798	3.5	125,416
Montenegro	626,233	21.3	133,432
Montserrat	4,328	—	—
Morocco	38,762,441	99.7	38,636,665
Mozambique	36,639,851	19.4	7,118,115
Myanmar	55,184,819	3.3	1,846,129
Namibia	3,153,246	0.1	3,752
Nauru	12,101	—	—
Nepal	29,629,410	5.1	1,506,342
Netherlands	18,448,775	5.5	1,014,807
New Caledonia	297,892	2.8	8,222
New Zealand	5,287,479	1.4	71,879
Nicaragua	7,097,329	< 0.1	326
Niger	28,814,878	98.1	28,276,989
Nigeria	242,431,832	56.1	135,923,066
Niue	1,822	—	—
North Korea	26,633,691	< 0.1	2,663
North Macedonia	1,804,063	34.7	626,502
Northern Mariana Islands	42,914	—	—
Norway	5,652,989	4.1	232,550
Oman	5,671,458	81.8	4,638,532
Pakistan	259,299,791	96.5	250,339,178
Palau	17,614	—	—
Palestine	5,692,790	99.0	5,633,916
Panama	4,625,718	< 0.1	2,457
Papua New Guinea	10,947,848	< 0.1	8,186
Paraguay	7,095,279	< 0.1	804
Peru	34,922,148	< 0.1	7,539
Philippines	117,724,471	6.5	7,607,766
Poland	37,843,188	< 0.1	2,768
Portugal	10,395,362	0.4	42,499
Puerto Rico	3,222,688	0.1	3,492
Qatar	3,173,559	75.9	2,408,470
Romania	18,800,605	0.4	66,892
Russia	143,394,458	8.2	11,748,320
Rwanda	14,889,693	1.8	269,142
Réunion	886,298	4.2	36,931
Saint Barthélemy	11,550	—	—
Saint Helena	5,147	—	—
Saint Kitts & Nevis	46,992	—	—

Country/Region	Population 2026	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Saint Lucia	180,488	< 0.1	171
Saint Martin (French part)	23,898	—	—
Saint Pierre & Miquelon	5,513	—	—
Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	99,245	0.1	106
Samoa	220,528	< 0.1	56
San Marino	33,605	—	—
Saudi Arabia	35,165,787	92.7	32,596,505
Senegal	19,366,548	97.6	18,893,321
Serbia	6,641,964	4.4	293,578
Seychelles	134,959	0.9	1,205
Sierra Leone	8,996,745	80.1	7,210,589
Singapore	5,905,748	16.1	953,108
Sint Maarten (Dutch part)	44,447	—	—
Slovakia	5,451,342	< 0.1	2,987
Slovenia	2,114,573	1.6	34,016
Solomon Islands	858,288	0.3	2,917
Somalia	20,305,907	99.8	20,272,077
South Africa	65,453,084	1.6	1,050,445
South Korea	51,600,388	0.3	159,963
South Sudan	12,436,037	6.2	773,895
Spain	47,850,793	3.6	1,710,787
Sri Lanka	23,348,315	10.2	2,382,089
Sudan	53,282,719	98.9	52,672,906
Suriname	645,256	13.1	84,465
Sweden	10,701,047	8.1	866,699
Switzerland	9,007,798	6.1	547,951
Syria	26,472,497	94.2	24,928,090
São Tomé and Príncipe	244,994	< 0.1	224
Taiwan	23,011,292	0.5	114,551
Tajikistan	10,978,599	98.9	10,859,385
Tanzania	72,563,780	29.9	21,673,217
Thailand	71,559,614	4.5	3,230,623
Timor-Leste	1,436,923	0.3	3,688
Togo	9,930,918	16.1	1,602,666
Tokelau	2,691	—	—
Tonga	103,291	< 0.1	62
Trinidad and Tobago	1,513,268	5.5	82,689
Tunisia	12,415,138	99.3	12,328,703
Turkmenistan	7,736,632	94.3	7,294,710
Turks and Caicos Islands	47,148	—	—

Country/Region	Population 2026	Percent Muslim	Muslim Population
Tuvalu	9,362	—	—
Türkiye	87,926,082	97.1	85,382,268
U.S. Virgin Islands	83,400	0.1	88
Uganda	52,761,469	11.4	6,021,630
Ukraine	39,535,849	0.6	224,495
United Arab Emirates	11,574,682	72.9	8,442,600
United Kingdom	69,931,528	6.4	4,454,021
United States	349,035,494	1.2	4,161,833
Uruguay	3,382,537	< 0.1	3,021
Uzbekistan	37,724,223	95.6	36,072,743
Vanuatu	342,564	< 0.1	66
Vatican City	506	—	—
Venezuela	28,633,711	< 0.1	14,050
Vietnam	102,177,431	< 0.1	73,647
Wallis and Futuna Islands	11,113	—	—
Western Sahara	610,813	99.6	608,076
Yemen	42,961,653	99.9	42,902,805
Zambia	22,521,915	0.5	115,152
Zimbabwe	17,273,580	0.5	91,395
TOTAL (covered areas)	**8,299,473,214**	**26.66%**	**2,212,633,745**

Population: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2024 (medium projection variant, 1 July 2026). Muslim percentage: Pew Research Center, "How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020" (2025 release, 2020 baseline), supplemented by editorial overrides where cited. Muslim population: calculated as population × percent Muslim / 100. Totals represent covered territories (8,299,473,214 covered of 8,300,678,395 UN world total; Muslim share of covered population: 26.66%).

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	OCCUPATION
1	Khaby Lame	25	Italy	Media
2	Salman Khan	61	India	Actor
3	Ria Ricis	31	Indonesia	Youtuber
4	Shahrukh Khan	61	India	Actor
5	Raffi Ahmad	39	Indonesia	Actor, and entrepreneur
6	Atta Halilintar	32	Indonesia	Youtuber
7	Mohamed Salah	33	Egypt	Footballer
8	Mohamed Ramadan	38	Egypt	Musician
9	Paul Pogba	32	France	Sports
10	Mustafa Hosny	47	Egypt	Preacher
11	Mesut Özil	36	Germany	Footballer
12	AKON	51	USA	Musician
13	Tamer Hosny	48	Egypt	Musician
14	DJ Khaled	49	USA	Musician
15	Gigi Hadid	30	USA	Model
16	Huda Kattan	42	USA	Beauty blogger and Entrepreneur
17	Shaquille O' Neal	53	USA	Sports
18	Aboflah	27	Kuwait	Youtuber
19	Bella Hadid	29	United States	Model
20	Abir El Saghir	27	Lebanon	
21	Sheikh Mishary bin Rashid Alafasy	50	Kuwait	Qur'an Reciter
22	A.R. Rahman	57	India	Musician
23	Imran Khan	73	Pakistan	Politician
24	Ice Cube	55	USA	Rapper
25	Ahmad Al Shugairi	52	Saudi Arabia	Show Host
26	Amr Khaled	58	Egypt	Preacher
27	Ahmed Helmy	56	Egypt	Actor
28	Mohamed Henedy	61	Egypt	Actor
29	Amr Diab	63	Egypt	Musician
30	Khabib Nurmagomedov	37	Russia	Sports
31	Deddy Corbuzier	49	Indonesia	Actor and Youtuber
32	Zinedine Zidane	53	France	Sports
33	Maher Zain	44	Sweden	Musician
34	Ahmed Abou Hashima	50	Egypt	Businessman
35	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	71	Türkiye	Politician
36	Narin Ammara	26	Syria	Influencer

Facebook	X	Instagram	TikTok	YouTube	TOTAL
3m	0m	79m	163m	13m	258m
51m	46m	71m	0m	3m	171m
1m	0m	37m	55m	50m	142m
42m	44m	48m	0m	0m	135m
17m	6m	75m	18m	0m	116m
8m	0m	39m	26m	31m	104m
17m	20m	66m	0m	0m	103m
25m	0m	51m	10m	16m	102m
24m	10m	65m	2m	0m	101m
38m	14m	25m	8m	7m	92m
37m	26m	28m	0m	0m	91m
52m	6m	11m	3m	16m	88m
25m	4m	41m	6m	9m	86m
21m	5m	39m	5m	14m	84m
5m	0m	76m	1m	0m	83m
8m	0m	57m	12m	4m	81m
9m	15m	35m	14m	1m	75m
0m	2m	11m	8m	51m	71m
0m	0m	61m	10m	0m	71m
9m	0m	17m	30m	8m	65m
24m	15m	10m	3m	12m	63m
24m	24m	8m	0m	4m	61m
15m	21m	10m	12m	2m	61m
17m	6m	31m	1m	4m	59m
20m	18m	18m	0m	3m	59m
33m	11m	8m	3m	3m	58m
18m	10m	20m	8m	1m	57m
29m	15m	8m	3m	0m	55m
2m	12m	31m	0m	7m	52m
6m	2m	40m	0m	1m	50m
5m	0m	13m	5m	25m	48m
3m	0m	45m	0m	0m	48m
29m	2m	8m	2m	6m	48m
7m	0m	33m	5m	0m	45m
10m	22m	12m	1m	1m	44m
0m	0m	17m	9m	17m	42m

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	OCCUPATION
1	Cristiano Ronaldo	42	Portugal	Footballer
2	MrBeast	28	USA	Media
3	Selena Gomez	34	USA	Musician
4	Lionel Messi (Leo Messi)	39	Argentina	Footballer
5	Justin Bieber	32	Canada	Musician
6	Dwayne Johnson (The Rock)	54	USA	Wrestler
7	Taylor Swift	37	USA	Musician
8	Kylie Jenner	30	USA	Media
9	Ariana Grande	33	USA	Actress
10	Kim Kardashian	45	USA	Reality Star
11	Neymar	34	Brazil	Footballer
12	Katy Perry	43	USA	Musician
13	Rihanna	36	Barbados	Musician
14	Beyonce	45	USA	Musician
15	Virat Kohli	38	India	Cricketer
16	Shakira	48	Colombia	Musician
17	Jennifer Lopez	57	USA	Musician
18	Khloé Kardashian	42	USA	Media
19	Miley Cyrus	35	USA	Musician
20	Kendall Jenner	31	USA	Model and Media
21	Narendra Modi	76	India	Politician
22	Billie Eilish	24	USA	Musician
23	Cardi B	33	USA	Musician
24	Kevin Hart	47	USA	Comedian
25	Will Smith	58	USA	Actor
26	Chris Brown	37	USA	Musician
27	Drake	39	Canada	Musician
28	Demi Lovato	34	USA	Actress - Musician
29	Lady Gaga	41	USA	Musician
30	LeBron James	41	USA	Sports
31	Barack Obama	65	USA	Politician
32	Charli D'Amelio	21	USA	Media
33	Vin Diesel	58	USA	Actor
34	Bruno Mars	40	USA	Musician
35	Snoop Dogg	54	USA	Musician
36	Ronaldinho Gaucho	46	Brazil	Footballer

Facebook	X	Instagram	TikTok	YouTube	TOTAL
174m	114m	680m	0m	83m	1052m
48m	35m	89m	141m	516m	830m
84m	63m	403m	59m	36m	645m
118m	0m	517m	0m	5m	640m
88m	92m	286m	31m	79m	577m
66m	17m	381m	80m	7m	551m
78m	84m	273m	33m	63m	532m
31m	40m	381m	60m	12m	524m
41m	0m	363m	45m	58m	507m
34m	71m	344m	11m	2m	462m
93m	66m	242m	48m	9m	458m
69m	90m	195m	10m	47m	412m
102m	99m	146m	17m	46m	410m
56m	15m	299m	7m	29m	406m
52m	73m	272m	0m	0m	397m
127m	46m	103m	57m	54m	387m
60m	35m	240m	19m	18m	372m
23m	28m	292m	6m	2m	351m
48m	44m	206m	19m	20m	336m
21m	29m	278m	7m	0m	335m
63m	107m	107m	0m	31m	309m
30m	11m	124m	75m	59m	299m
33m	38m	161m	36m	21m	288m
36m	31m	172m	34m	6m	279m
113m	0m	68m	78m	11m	269m
49m	28m	140m	12m	31m	259m
50m	34m	140m	0m	33m	257m
32m	46m	148m	9m	18m	253m
55m	75m	61m	18m	31m	241m
28m	55m	154m	0m	1m	237m
58m	119m	43m	0m	1m	220m
3m	5m	42m	156m	9m	215m
102m	0m	104m	3m	0m	209m
58m	42m	42m	15m	42m	199m
51m	19m	87m	30m	11m	197m
55m	18m	81m	29m	1m	184m



Al-A'raf 7, 156

And prescribe for us in this world good and in the Hereafter. We have turned to You'. He says: 'My chastisement - I smite with it whom I will, and My mercy embraces all things, and so I shall prescribe it for those who are God-fearing and pay the alms, and those who believe in Our signs;

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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 Aalihi 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.

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 Ramadan.

Zawiya: See khanqah, above.



Maryam 19, 96

Truly those who believe and perform righteous deeds - for them the Compassionate One shall appoint love.

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