

United Against Hatred and Discrimination

Promoting Peace, Human Rights and Dialogue Among Civilizations

A Year of Great Achievements in Space

Live, Learn and Participate: Sponsoring Refugees in Africa

# LAUNCHING OF THE BOOK

"Promoting peace, human rights and  
dialogue among civilizations"

22 November 2020



# A UNITED PATH FORWARD

Partnerships for a Stronger Future



We want Muslims and all other citizens to be aiding one another in this time of common challenge, without discrimination for religion, race, gender, or ethnicity.”

— His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa



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# Muslim World League

## Recent Activities in Review



**November 22**

The Muslim World League launched the book “Promoting peace, human rights and dialogue among civilizations.” The book is the culmination of a research project conducted in the context of the UN 100 Years of Multilateralism, the commemoration of the 75 Years of the United Nations. The launch ceremony took place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where a number of prominent guests gathered for the occasion.

The first batch of Umrah performers from abroad arrived in Madinah, including 135 visitors from Indonesia. The visitors arrived amid new precautionary measures and health protocols to prevent the spread of coronavirus.



**December 7**



**December 10**

Dr. Al-Issa participated in the virtual Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, focusing on building peace in a post-coronavirus world. “The COVID19 pandemic has emphasized the need for solidarity and cooperation,” Dr. Al-Issa said.

At the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers 47th Session in Niamey, Niger, the ministers paid special recognition to the Charter of Makkah. Secretary General Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimeen underlined the importance of the principles and outlined in the Charter, which were endorsed unanimously at the Makkah Conference in 2019. “The OIC welcomes the broad support the Charter of Makkah has received worldwide, particularly among senior religious scholars and leaders, celebrating its noble mission of promoting tolerance, moderation, understanding and mutual cooperation among peoples and states,” he added.



**December 16**



**December 17**

Dr. Al-Issa welcomed HE Dr. Mohamed Bechari, Secretary-General of the World Muslim Communities Council.

The MWL recognized World Braille Day by recognizing hafiz who have memorized the Quran using braille.



**January 4**

The MWL was recognized by the Saudi Education & Training Evaluation Commission for outstanding educational programs, including Arabic language programs. The MWL was also recognized for encouraging the inclusion of messages of tolerance and coexistence in curricula around the world.



**January 6**

Dr. Al-Issa spoke at a virtual event hosted by the Los Angeles World Affairs Council. He was introduced and interviewed by Rabbi Abraham Cooper, Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.



**January 11**

Dr. Al-Issa received His Eminence Mahmoud Dicko of Mali at the MWL headquarters in Riyadh. The leaders discussed the importance of strengthening national and religious harmony, and confronting the ideas of extremism.



**January 12**



**January 14**

Dr. Al-Issa met with Mr. Philippe Errera, Director General for Political and Security Affairs in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Ambassador to KSA, Ludovic Pouille.

Dr. Al-Issa met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Mohammad Hanif Atmar. They discussed issues of common interest and ways to continue cooperation.



**January 21**



**January 22**

Dr. Al-Issa welcomed the UN General Assembly resolution promoting a culture of peace and tolerance to protect religious sites in a statement on behalf of the MWL.

On International Education Day, the MWL recognized the importance of education in promoting tolerance, understanding and mutual respect. The MWL supports a number of educational programs around the world.



**January 24**





**January 25**

The Muslim World League launched a relief project in Northern Pakistan to distribute blankets, food and other necessities to families in need. The region has been impacted by extreme cold temperatures this winter season, so the MWL aid packages included warm blankets and fuel.

The new brand serves to convey the modern identity and translates its vision, mission, goals & values that carry mercy and peace to the world.



**January 25**

The Muslim World League welcomed Prince Faisal bin Salman, Governor of Madinah, to the opening ceremony of the International Exhibition and Museum of the Life of the Prophet Islamic Civilization. The museum is the first in a series of museums the MWL plans to open around the world. Last year, the MWL broke ground on a similar museum in Jakarta.



**February 2**



# Reflecting on COVID-19 Relief

“Throughout the coronavirus global health crisis, the Muslim World League continues to provide humanitarian assistance to communities in need regardless of faith. We are all in this together and we should be extending the bridges of support to all in need.”

— H.E. Dr. Mohammad Al-Issa



**Students at the UNRWA Wadi Seer Training Centre in Amman, Jordan follow a lecture by their teacher.**

Source: UNRWA 2019

**Dr. Al-Issa met with representatives from Egypt last year, laying the foundation of friendship to facilitate a donation this year to help combat the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.**

## JORDAN

Education systems across the world have been disrupted by the coronavirus. The Muslim World League donated one million dollars to the United Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The donation will help continue the important vocational and technical training that the UNRWA provides in Jordan, including accounting, engineering and nursing.

## EGYPT

The Muslim World League cooperated with local government to support efforts to combat the coronavirus in Egypt. The MWL donated one million Saudi riyals to Egypt's Ministry of Health and Population for the purchase of critical equipment and supplies.

## MALAWI

The Muslim World League carried out a food basket project in Malawi to help the country cope with the coronavirus pandemic. The baskets contained foods that would provide essential nutrients. Food supplies

have been disrupted in many countries that are struggling to combat the coronavirus, and the MWL works directly in these countries to lessen these hardships and prevent hunger.

## SRI LANKA

The Muslim World League donated 1,250 food ration packs to help mitigate the impact of the coronavirus in Sri Lanka, distributing the critical aid through local police stations to ensure that it was distributed as efficiently as possible.

## AFGHANISTAN

In Afghanistan, the Muslim World League helped to alleviate the impact of the coronavirus by collaborating with the local government health agencies to purchase vital supplies. These purchases include medical supplies and educational materials. The MWL also distributed more than 4,000 food baskets in the country.

## SERBIA

The Muslim World League supported Serbia by donating money for necessary supplies and tools to aid



in their fight against coronavirus. The President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksander Vučić, expressed his gratitude to the MWL in a letter stating: “My gratitude is much higher as this help came unexpectedly. We are privileged because in the moments of the greatest challenge for the world, you showed concern for Serbia and we will forever uphold the expressed solidarity.”

**KOSOVO**

In Kosovo, the Muslim World League partnered with the local Red Cross to deliver food aid to individuals in need, helping to ensure that at-risk individuals had sufficient nutrition to confront the disease.

**GAMBIA**

In Gambia, the Muslim World League worked to supply the Al Salam Health Center with new medical equipment and furniture to improve the center’s capacity to serve the community. The supplies given by the MWL support the center’s general healthcare services to the community and help sustain efforts to combat the coronavirus.

**PAKISTAN**

The Muslim World League delivered crucial medical supplies to Pakistan to help the nation fight the coronavirus. The medical supplies included EKG monitors, oxygen devices, ventilators, pulse oximeters, medicines, and protective equipment.

“ My gratitude is much higher as this help came unexpectedly. We are privileged because in the moment of the greatest challenge for the world, you showed concern for Serbia and we will forever uphold the expressed solidarity.”

**SOMALIA**

The Muslim World League worked alongside the Ministry of Health to help provide for those working to combat the coronavirus in Somalia, presenting the Ministry of Health with medical supplies to be distributed amongst the workers on the front lines.



Food and medical supplies were distributed by Muslim World League volunteers in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Somalia and Kosovo to assist communities and governments with their COVID-19 response. The coronavirus pandemic serves as a reminder that we are one humanity and only by coming together and assisting each other in times of need can we make it through this crisis.



**The Muslim World League entered Phase 3 of COVID-19 support in Pakistan.**

This edition reflects on turmoil the world is enduring caused by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, but highlights the importance of international cooperation to build a better future for all. MWL Secretary General His Excellency Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa's efforts and the efforts of the Muslim World League as a whole—to encourage tolerance and mutual respect and among religions and condemn sectarian violence have continued virtually and from the MWL headquarters in Riyadh, with strict pandemic accommodations.

Like leaders in government, business, religion and media the world over, Dr. Al-Issa is using the technology to maintain the strong relationships the MWL has developed as leader of the MWL, to continue to encourage tolerance within Islam, and to direct the MWL's vital important humanitarian work.

In this issue, we cover the ways the MWL and Islam have supported the international pandemic response. The work of the MWL has continued because the pandemic caused a need for yet more humanitarian relief as people were forced to abandon jobs and business and supply chains for food and medicines were disrupted. The MWL stepped into the fray in a number of countries.

This issue highlights the important partnerships the MWL has formed with UN organizations. The MWL's Dr. Al-Mahjoob bin Saeed highlights the MWL's sponsorship of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights program "Live, Learn and Participate." The MWL and UN University for Peace launched a book entitled "Promoting Peace, Human Rights and Dialogue Among Civilizations," which won acclaim from several international leaders included in this issue.

The launch of a Mars probe by the United Arab Emirates and the formation of the Arab Space Cooperation Group by 14 nations inspired us to give a brief review of Islam's scientific tradition and the Arab world's involvement in space exploration and orbital communications.

In this issue we also take the opportunity to give the history of the national Islamic Center in Washington, D.C. The great mosque forms part of the monumental religious landscape of the American capital city, where religious shrines and national shrines call Americans and people the world over to visit and renew their faith in God and democracy.

**- The Editors**





# Norway: United Against Hatred and Discrimination

**His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa**

As the Secretary-General of the Muslim World League and President of Civilizational Rap-prochement Forums in a number of capital cities around the world, I want to emphasize several things. Firstly, in the Muslim world, and in the rest of the world that we share with our brothers, we hear predominantly moderate voices. Voices that advocate love for everyone and rejection of any form of hatred, discrimination and marginalization.

These are the prevailing voices that truly represent our religious, social and human values.

The other voices are extremist and isolated voices that only represent the hateful outlook of those who harbor such negative feelings.

The problem of extremism does not come from religious texts, nor the ideas of philosophers and sociologists. Nor does it derive from the different opinions, theories and lessons of history that we all respect.

But the problem lies in understanding these things, their application, and the ability to protect interpretations from distortion so that there are no cracks through which corrupted ideas can slip through. We need to protect their wonderful meanings from being misinterpreted.

The problem also lies in the ambiguity of some constitutions and laws, and the consequent exploitation of the freedoms that they grant.

This has allowed some beliefs and acts of hatred, discrimination and marginalization to march undetected under false banners.

Our world is in dire need of the logic and respect of comprehensive justice. This can only be achieved by promoting shared values that reject any form of hatred, racism and discrimination based on religion, race or any other such label.

Also, our world needs to effectively affirm that civilizational leaps in the realm of materialistic gains must be matched by civilizational leaps in moral values. Otherwise the outcomes pose a grave threat.



**MWL Secretary General His Excellency Dr. Al-Issa**

This is where the true story of peace begins.

Peacemaking is not the product of mere words. Nor does it come from creating bubbles that have no substance other than the passing sound they make when bursting.

Peacemaking does not require irrational theories. Nor appeals and slogans that further complicate matters. Nor dialogues unsupported by sincere and honest intentions and a deep awareness of the future.

In short, peace efforts must comprise tangible outcomes that effectively benefit humanity. They must enhance security, coexistence and cooperation, and strengthen fraternal bonds.

Celebrating a peace that is deceptive, fragile or superficial ultimately promotes and consolidates contrary principles at the expense of the true values of peace.

As for the haters and racists, we will never stoop to the level of their conscience when meeting them. We will meet them with love and benevolence, even if we reject their ideals and actions.

All followers of religions, cultures and all other beliefs are our brothers in humanity, and we will further consolidate this brotherhood to

advance between the followers of religions and cultures, and between different ways of thinking in general.

These efforts help us build friendships between nations and peoples, a journey that I embarked on years ago by launching a number of practical and effective initiatives. I will continue on this path and never stop, God willing.

A recent example:

In August last year, I was honored to receive the request of His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka to come and help end the tension and mutual hatred between religious communities after the terrorist bombings in Colombo. The situation threatened to escalate and lead to dangerous complications.

After great effort, lengthy deliberation and dialogue, everyone came together as one, once again. The children and youth of Sri Lanka erupted in celebration, surrounded by their ethnically diverse religious and political leaders, in a historic festival.

Efforts such as this one reaffirm that the human instinct at its core is honest and innocent. And everyone loses whenever circumstances and evil voices alien to this pure instinct break through and morph into another state alto-



**Current Prime Minister of Norway, Her Excellency  
Ms. Erna Solberg**



**former Prime Minister of Norway His Excellency  
Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik.**

gether. This is true even if some delude themselves into believing they have won.

Earlier this year I visited the death camp in Auschwitz, Poland. I led a delegation of prominent Islamic scholars and thinkers from the Muslim world. We made this, first-ever, important visit on behalf of the scholars and people of the Muslim world.

The objective of this convoy, in which we were accompanied a number of our Jewish friends from the American Jewish Committee, and some of our evangelical friends, was to convey a message to the Muslim world and others. We are against the evil ideology that starts as a seed of hatred and racism, and evolves into the level of the Nazi atrocities.

We know that these efforts are at the core of our moral duty towards building peaceful and safe societies, and towards promoting a culture of love and respect, especially for future generations.

This is what we all must do.

We know that acts of good are more impactful, successful and sustainable when carried out collectively.

All forms of evil emanate from hatred, racism and marginalization.

Materialism deprived of any values, stems from selfishness, narcissism and hatred of others.

This selfishness, when fed, aims to conquer and humiliate others. And the victim is the peace of our world, the harmony of our societies and the future of our children.

We launched these effective initiatives to confront all forms of racism, hatred and marginalization around the world.

With soft power and soft power alone, we will continue to confront hate, with the help of God Almighty, whether it is targeting specific religions or certain races or anyone else. This includes Islamophobia, anti-Semitism or any other form of hate.

We have also confronted the insidious attempts to target certain groups around the world, such as those seeking to marginalize the role of women in the society.

Also, the criminal acts of human trafficking, especially those exploiting the difficult circumstances of women and children.

Nothing will make us happier in this life than making others happy, consolidating friendship between nations and people, and confronting anything that under-

mines these noble values. This is especially the case with all forms of hatred, racism and marginalization.

We have engaged in dialogue with a number of political and parliamentary leaders around the world to enact legislation that will criminalize all forms of hatred, racism, and marginalization.

We have also implemented a number of programs aimed at improving the efficiency of education around the world and enhancing the role of the family in order to teach those values to our children and youth.



Our world is in dire need of the logic and respect of comprehensive justice. This can only be achieved by promoting shared values that reject any form of hatred, racism and discrimination based on religion, race or any other such label."





## The Muslim World League and the UN University for Peace Publish New Model for International Cooperation

# Promoting Peace, Human Rights and Dialogue Among Civilizations

In November of last year, the Muslim World League and the United Nations University for Peace celebrated the publication of a year-long joint research project, entitled “Promoting Peace, Human Rights and Dialogue Among Civilizations,” featuring contributions from 32 prominent international religious, political, academic and media leaders. The project was conducted in the context of the UN 100 Years of Multilateralism, the commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the UN, and the 40th anniversary of the University for Peace.

To commemorate the publication, the MWL and UPEACE held a book launch event in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, featuring several of the contributors to the research project, which was recognized as an exceptional achievement at the international level, particularly as a model for cooperation and unified global vision for peace.

At the launch, Dr. Al-Issa, Secretary General of the MWL, shared his appreciation for such a strong partnership with the UN for this project. The research, and resulting publication brought together a number of distinguished international bodies eager to contribute to global peace and harmony, addressing the growing challenges head-on to reach common goals.

“When effective dialogue expands and grows, our fears and misunderstandings shrink,” Dr. Al-Issa said in his opening remarks. “I have

always said and still do; that 10% of our human commonalities will bring peace and harmony to our world,” he added, stressing that “religious leaders, public and private institutions, including international foundations, bear a responsibility towards effective involvement in order to achieve our common aspirations.”

Dr. Al-Issa went on to say: “It is imperative to accomplish a civilized alliance that represents the true meaning of understanding, tolerance and cooperation among all. Additionally, we must enhance awareness towards faith in the design of difference, diversity and pluralism that pleases the Almighty and Exalted Creator.”

“History has taught us lessons and sounded warnings that prove, no victor will be declared in confrontations through clashes and civilized conflicts. This is to say, ideas can only be communicated and conveyed by means of wisdom and mutual respect.” Dr. Al-Issa explained.

The MWL carries a message of peace throughout its activities around the world, concentrating on spreading awareness about the importance of understanding the differences between religions and cultures, but that there are common human values that run throughout. Through its numerous partnerships, the MWL focuses on embracing human fraternity, and increasing cooperation to address some of the world’s most daunting challenges. The MWL supports human rights and basic human freedoms, recognizing that these freedoms should not be used to spread hate.



**Dr. Al-Issa addresses distinguished guests at the book launch event for “Promoting Peace, Human Rights and Dialogue Among Civilizations.”**

In his speech, Dr. Al-Issa discussed the Charter of Makkah, which was unanimously endorsed by more than 1,200 muftis and scholars and more than 4,500 Muslim intellectuals hailing from 139 countries, and representing all sects and religious denominations of Islam. The Charter was agreed upon at a historical meeting in 2019 that has been recognized important turning point in the consensus of scholars and thinkers of the Muslim Ummah. The Charter was also endorsed by the OIC Council of Ministers at their recent meeting in Niamey, Niger.

The book launch was moderated by H.E. Mr. David Fernández Puyana, Ambassador and Permanent Observer of the University for Peace to the UN in Geneva and UNESCO in Paris. He commented that this book highlights the actions of the United Nations, its agencies, programs and funds, in the fulfilment of the great principles that guide its multilateral actions. UPACE Rector Francisco Rojas expressed his pleasure with the excellence of the authors who contributed to this book, as well as the distinguished political and diplomatic personalities who collaborated on it.

During the presentation, H.E. Archbishop Mr. Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent

Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations Office in Geneva and other international organizations, stressed that brotherhood is essential. He said, “fraternity is not evoked as an abstract and consolatory aspiration, but as an effective and realistic criterion of coexistence.” He added that the inevitable consequence of abandoning the civility of encounter is to resort to the incivility of conflict.

H.E. Mr. Francisco Chacón, Ambassador of Costa Rica to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, commended and warmly congratulate the MWL and the UPEACE for this inspirational work that bridges people together and promotes a culture of peace, a cornerstone of Costa Rican Foreign Policy.

H.E. Mrs. Lubna Qassim, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations Office in Geneva and other international organizations said, “It is an honor and pride for me to have contributed to such an unparalleled initiative on peace and human rights.”

She mentioned the UAE’s model of tolerance

and inclusion, adding that this is critical time in the history of mankind to embrace our differences, and shared her hope that, through this book, we will engage in inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogues for peace and prosperity for all.

H.E. Mr. Alvaro Iranzo Gutiérrez, Ambassador of Spain to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, added that this research project, coordinated by the MWL and UPEACE deserves full support and dedicated consideration, as it thoroughly provides the intellectual backing that is so necessary to rise above perceptions of the past that thrive on divides.

H.E. Mr. Larbi Djacta, Chair of the International Civil Service Commission and Under-Secretary General of the United Nations, underlined the message that international civil servants have a special calling: to serve the ideals of peace, respect for fundamental rights, economic and social progress, and international cooperation. He added that UNESCO is the lead agency within the UN System in promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue within the International

Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures. He expressed his hope that the Culture of Peace and tolerance inspire their daily work within the United Nations System.

H.E. Mr. Patrick Simonnet, Ambassador and Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, outlined that the EU remains one of the largest contributors to the UN and will continue working side by side with UN diplomats, funds, agencies and programs to push solutions through dialogue and negotiation. "The members of the European Union believe that the world needs to be governed by approved rules and standards such as those applied by the United Nations. At the present time, global challenges require a multilateral approach more than ever before," he said.

Dr. Al-Issa concluded the event, recognizing Mr. Mohamed Levrak, Special Adviser for H.E. Al-Issa and Deputy Representative of the Muslim World League in Geneva, for his contributions to the project.





# INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR TOLERANCE

The true Islam believes in love and compassion. Our faith requires us to respect and find common ground with others. Any true religion would espouse these attitudes. On November 16, International Day for Tolerance, the Muslim World League stood alongside leaders from faiths and cultures around the world in support of this sacred mission.

Last year His Excellency Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa brought together more than 1,200 Muslim figures, representing 27 sects and more than 139 countries to agree the Charter of Makkah, a groundbreaking document that commits us all to put aside our differences and stand together as one human race.

At the same time, we are building bridges and seeking to find common understanding with

all religions and peoples. As our world shrinks, different communities are interacting and intermingling like never before. We have reached a crucial moment, where mankind can return to conflict or choose to build unity and cooperation between us. Tolerance is the only viable path for humanity.

While religious leaders increasingly stand united, we still see regular reminders that hatred and extremism persist, as recent attacks in France and Austria have shown. That is why the MWL has called for an all-out effort to confront the vile ideology that fuels these crimes.

Working as one to reject violence and embrace tolerance, we know that together we can build a better world.



His Excellency Sheikh  
**Dr. Mohammad Abdulkarim Al-Issa**  
Secretary General of the Muslim World League

**United, we can defeat those wish to divide us. And through cooperation**



## HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

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The Muslim World League believes wholeheartedly in our duty to promote the human rights of all people. In our mission to create peace and solidarity between cultures and religions, we recognize that protecting human rights is central to building a more just world. On December 10, the MWL recognized Human Rights Day by standing alongside the UN and calling for all countries to make human rights development central to building back from COVID-19.

In the midst of a global pandemic the world's most vulnerable people become even more vulnerable, and we must all work together to stand up for them. The Muslim World League is working to provide access to clean, safe water for communities struggling with hardship around the world. We are supplying food, safeguarding education, and providing healthcare to those most in need.

## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN SOLIDARITY DAY

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Solidarity sits at the heart of the Muslim World League's mission. Whether by supporting those less fortunate or standing up against hatred of those different to ourselves, we must all stand together to make a better world. On International Human Solidarity Day on December 20, the MWL committed to redoubling our efforts to combat hate and work to support those suffering the most in our world.

In these challenging times, the MWL is working to mitigate food insecurity and ensure everyone has access to safe, clean water. We are also working to ensure young people in impoverished and war-torn communities have the opportunity to receive basic education. We are providing aid to Palestinians in Jordan, and to Rohingya in Bangladesh. In Central Africa and Syria, the MWL is working ceaselessly to support refugees fleeing conflict.

We also strive every day to defeat extremism and

Education is one of the most fundamental rights than all people should enjoy, and good education is essential to proliferating respect for human rights. That is why the MWL funds educational programs in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. In November we partnered with the UN University for Peace to publish a new book promoting human rights for all.

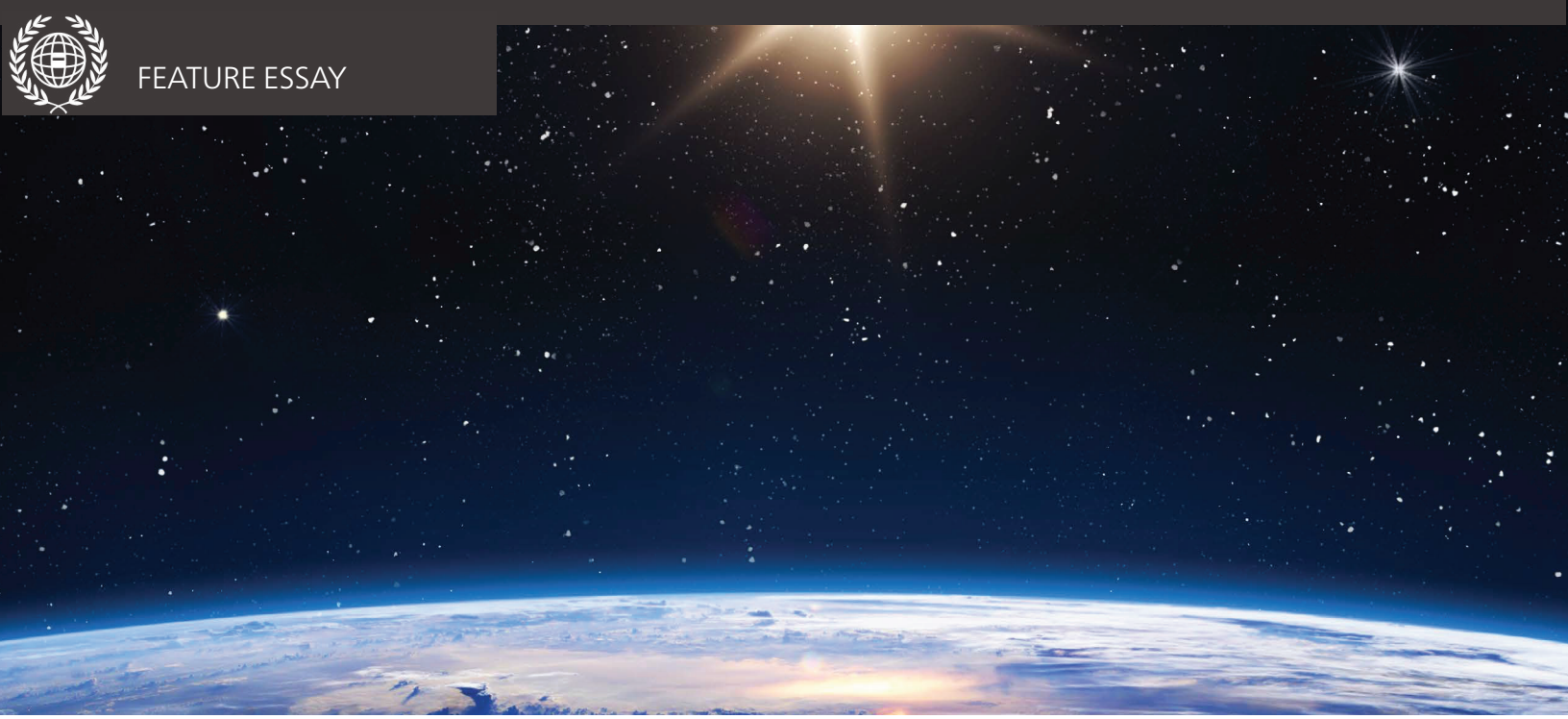
When we launched the groundbreaking Charter of Makkah, we made the defense of human rights central to our thesis. We wished to create a universal agreement within Islam to combat extremism and reject hate, no matter a person's specific religious doctrine. Such values can only be built on a foundation of respect for human rights.

stand up to injustice, something we can only do by working together. Last year the MWL brought leaders from the Abrahamic religions together at the Paris International Conference for Peace and Solidarity. Together we agreed the Memorandum of Understanding and Friendship, which commits us all to tackle divisions and support each other against adversity.

Working beyond Islam, His Excellency Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa regularly meets with religious and cultural leaders around the world as he works to build a support network that binds us all together. The MWL will always work to defend those groups facing persecution.

As the pandemic exacerbates human suffering and provides opportunities to extremists, our purpose has never been clearer, and our passion fight fighting injustice and rejecting hate remains as strong as ever. That is what solidarity means to the Muslim World League.





A view of earth from space.

# A Year of Great Achievements in Space: Muslim Countries Plan their Own Future Beyond the Earth

The United Arab Emirates successfully launched its Mars-bound Al Amal (Hope) probe on July 19. It was the Arab world's first interplanetary mission, one of three international missions to the Red Planet this summer.

Al Amal is expected to reach Mars by February 2021 and will remain in orbit for a full Martian year, or 687 days on Earth, gathering data about Mars' atmosphere.

The launch caught casual observers of space missions by surprise. After all, the launch of the American SpaceX Dragon 2 in late May marked the first indigenous US human spaceflight in a decade. For space enthusiasts everywhere, the SpaceX rocket represented a milestone for the expanding private sector in space exploration, and an industry countries around the world are keen to see expand.

The Al Amal was one of three missions to Mars this year, which also saw test flights for innova-

tive, new crewed spacecraft. Countries across the Muslim world are looking at how they can benefit from this rapidly expanding industry, with plans for new satellites, scientific experiments, launch capabilities and eventually human spaceflight.

Muslim countries have actually had a long history of space innovation and technology, with initial plans for Arab satellite capabilities dating back to the 1960s.

Many people across the Middle East know Arabsat as a leading provider of satellite communications in the region. The first Arabsat satellites were launched on a French Ariane rocket in February 1985, followed by a second satellite launched aboard the American space shuttle Discovery in June.

One of the crew on this mission was payload specialist Sultan bin Salman, who supervised the deployment of the satellite. He became

the first Arab, the first Muslim, the first member of the Saudi royal family, and the youngest person ever to travel into space. He served as a payload specialist aboard the space shuttle Discovery, and he says the seven days, one hour, 38 minutes and 52 seconds spent in orbit broadened his perspective of the world as having “more to it than yourself and your small community, more to it than your own limited passions.”

Arabsat has regularly launched new satellites to upgrade and improve the network and keep up with cutting-edge technology. The network is now using its sixth generation of satellites, with the latest launched in 2019. Today Arabsat

provides services to 21 countries and is based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Efforts to build indigenous space programs exist across the Muslim world, with Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, and the UAE all having operational space agencies.

Saudi Arabia sees the space sector as a key contributor in its plans to upgrade, diversify, and revolutionize the economy. The Saudi Space Commission was founded in late 2018 and is set to play a major role in the Kingdom’s future growth.

Stimulating research and industrial activities is

## THE ROOTS OF ASTRONOMY IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

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As Europe slipped into the Dark Ages, the House of Wisdom, a library and center for scholars in Baghdad, translated a great number of European manuscripts into Arabic. Among the translated texts were many relating to astronomy, including works by Ptolemy and calculations by Eratosthenes of Earth’s circumference, igniting intense interest in the discipline throughout the Muslim world.

Islamic scholars did not just study the findings of others, but made their own contributions to the discipline as well. Around 964, astronomer Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi discovered the Andromeda Galaxy, the first galaxy beyond Earth’s own Milky Way. In 1274, Muslim scientist and mathematician Nasir al-Din al-Tusi invented the Tusi Couple, which explained the apparent

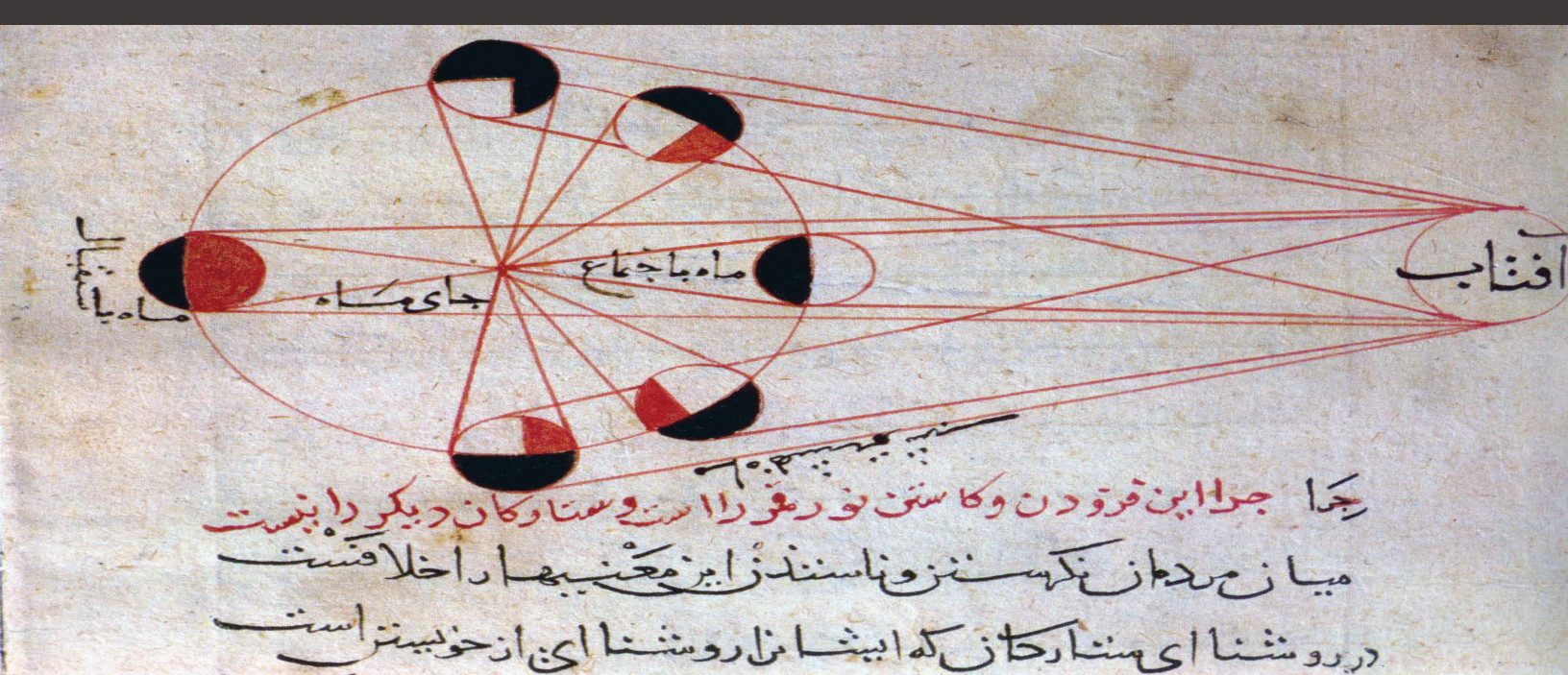
linear motion of heavenly bodies on the basis of circular motion and would later form the basis of Copernicus’ heliocentric model of the solar system.

The critical role of astronomy in determining prayer times, orienting the direction of Makkah from anywhere on Earth, and setting the dates of Ramadan and Hajj earned the discipline high-respect—and generous patronage. Khalifa Al-Mamun, astronomy’s earliest great Islamic patron, built the first formal observatory dedicated to scholars of astronomy in the 8th century. Founded before the advent of telescopes, this Baghdad observatory used giant sextants to study the angle of the sun, movement of stars, and orbit of the planets while also innovating better astronomical instruments.

Sultan bin Salman was born in Riyadh, the second son of King Salman. He received his BA in Mass Communications from the University of Denver and worked in the Ministry of Information before joining the Discovery mission. He later helped establish the Association of Space Explorers, an organization of all those who have been

in space. Since December of 2018, Salman has served as the inaugural Chairman of the Saudi Space Commission. He looks forward to grooming a new generation of space travelers who view it as an opportunity to serve their country and “know it’s not a personal junket.”





An illustration from Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, a scholar during the Islamic golden age, which shows the phases of the moon.

Source: Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1976) Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study, World of Islam Festival Publishing Company

a key part of the Saudi National Space Strategy, and the Commission hopes to attract and train young Saudis in science and technology with the ultimate aim of training new astronauts. To this end, the Space Generations Programme will inspire new generations of space engineers and scientists.

Low-cost satellite manufacturing and launch systems to enable indigenous launches are also a key part of the Saudi vision for a diverse future economy. Efforts to develop these capabilities are already advancing.

Continuing to strengthen cooperation with international partners is also essential, with the United States, France, Germany, Russia, and China all collaborating with Saudi Arabia on space missions and projects. With indigenous launch capabilities still in development, the Kingdom relies on these partnerships to launch new satellites and carry out scientific operations.

Efforts to promote regional partnerships are also growing. In March 2019, the Arab Space Cooperation Group was established in Abu Dhabi by 14 states: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain,

Oman, Kuwait, Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Iraq and Mauritania. In June 2020, the member states signed the basic charter of the organization, initiating the Group's official role coordinating space operations and guiding joint Arab space endeavors.

These efforts at cooperation are borne of a desire to see the Arab world return to its historical position as a leading center of research, development, and knowledge. During the signing ceremony, Dr. Al Al-Sheikh, CEO of the Saudi Space Commission, reflected this ambition for the Saudi people and Arab youth at large. "We are sure that this generation will help the region assume an advanced position among advanced countries by unlocking the potential of the space industry and harnessing its peaceful uses," he said.

With the next decade poised to be the strongest yet for the international space sector, Muslims can anticipate the innovations and achievements planned for the 2020s with growing excitement.



# Live, Learn and Participate: Sponsoring Refugees in Africa

**Dr. Al-Mahjoob bin Saeed**

The Muslim World League has agreed to sponsor in part the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees project, “Live, Learn and Participate,” which provides for improved education and healthcare for young refugees in Africa. Earlier this year, the MWL signed an agreement with the UNHCR in a commitment that demonstrates the MWL’s ongoing efforts to provide humanitarian aid, particularly as it affects young people.

The agreement outlines a three-year project that will operate in a number of African countries with a total budget of \$14 million USD. The project will focus on young refugees and

asylum seekers between 15 and 24 years old, as well as children who have been separated from their families. The project aims to promote sustainable solutions to the refugee crisis by providing safe and adequate housing for refugees and by strengthening educational and development activities, including both elementary-level education and vocational training.

One of the core missions of the MWL is to build bridges of cooperation and understanding among communities around the world. At the heart of this partnership with the UNHCR is the desire to support initiatives that help build a

better world, one that is more just and more equitable for all.

This new partnership is just one of many initiatives undertaken by the MWL over the years that aim to demonstrate the values of moderate Islam, including a deep caring for humanity, tolerance and respect for all.

“The Muslim World League must do good for all of humanity – all religions and races – and provide humanitarian services to everyone, regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender or nationality,” His Excellency Dr. Mohammad Al-Issa, Secretary General of the MWL, has said on numerous occasions.

The Charter of Makkah, endorsed by leading Muslim scholars in 2019, outlines this guiding principle of doing good for all of humanity without reservations. It is widely considered one of the most important documents in modern Islamic history, making a united call to combat hate speech, violence, extremism and terrorism around the world, while advancing the principles of moderate Islam and interfaith partnership.

The charter followed the precedent of the Charter of Medina, drafted by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) nearly fourteen centuries ago to preserve the diversity of the Islamic Ummah and form the basis of interreligious cooperation. The Charter of Makkah was unanimously approved by more than 1,200 notable Muslim scholars at the culmination of the Makkah Conference in May 2019. As Secretary General of the MWL, Dr. Al-Issa led the four-day conference, which included participants representing every sect of Islam.

The MWL recognizes refugees as among the groups of people most in need of protection and support. Refugees are the result of some of the most complex global issues and often suffer from violations of human rights and the rights of minorities. In recent years natural and environmental disasters have exacerbated the

displacement of peoples, adding to the extreme poverty and conflict that had already created a global refugee crisis. In 2019, the total number of global refugees exceeded 79 million, meaning that 1% of the total world population was considered a refugee. For every 5 children in the world, two were displaced as refugees, according to UN statistics.

For more than half a century, the UNHCR has aided refugees, returnees, stateless persons and asylum seekers by protecting their rights and helping them build a better future. The New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, signed in 2016, outlines the importance of education as an essential component of the international refugee response, emphasizing that education is a fundamental human right as stipulated in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1951 Refugee Convention. Findings from specialized agencies across the UN state that education can protect refugee children and youth from forced recruitment into child labor, sexual exploitation and child marriage and armed militias, all while strengthening overall community resilience and providing the knowledge and skills necessary to lead productive and independent lives.

According to UNHCR reports, refugees between the ages of 15 and 24 often find themselves in an ambiguous world and are at greater risk of sexual and gender-based violence, forced recruitment, exploitation and detention. In addition to losing their homes, many young refugees also lose access to skill-building opportunities, which erodes their confidence and overall social competence.

According to UNHCR reports, children constitute about half of the number of refugees in the world. Many spend their entire childhood away from their homes, and often away from their families. Refugee children may have witnessed or been subjected to acts of violence, and are often at greater risk of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, trafficking or military recruitment.



”” Dr. Saeed is an expert in institutional communication with a focus on the analysis of hate speech and the portrayal of violence in the media. He holds a Ph.D. in communications and has served as the Director of Information for Governmental Institutions within the Morocco Ministry of Education since 1991. He is currently a representative to the ISESCO.

— Rabat, Morocco

UNHCR works with national authorities and other international and local organizations to assist, protect and find solutions for displaced children. The UNHCR also works to connect unaccompanied or separated people to family through tracing and reunification services, registering newborns at birth and supporting children with disabilities. Under UNHCR care, children are being helped to rebuild their lives through psycho-social support and education activities.

Specifically, in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa, the UNHCR supports one of the fastest-growing refugee population in the world. More than 2.5 million people have fled across the region as a result of regional conflicts and terrorist operations. This worsening humanitarian crisis has been exacerbated by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The MWL has been supporting humanitarian relief projects in the region, assisting more than 30 million people with access to better education, healthcare, community development and disaster relief. The focus of the partnership between the UNHCR and the MWL in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly the focus on young people in refugee communities, was a natural expansion of the MWL’s humanitarian mission in the region.

This agreement between the MWL and the UNHCR is an important piece of the MWL’s expanding humanitarian mission. This partnership broadens the international contributions of the MWL to communities in need and highlights MWL’s vision to spread peace and security, promote the values of solidarity and harmony, and build a culture of dialogue and mutual respect, all key pillars of true moderate Islam.





**The Islamic Center of Washington serves as both a mosque and an Islamic cultural center in the U.S. capital.**

Source: Photographs in the Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

## Muslims in America: The National Islamic Center

The United States has always been a country of great religious foment. Visitors since colonial times have remarked on the number of churches they saw and the number of different religious sects and movements in the country. Waves of immigrants have brought their beliefs and practices with them, and in the environment of religious freedom that they found, erected their own religious houses: synagogues, orthodox Christian churches, mosques, and Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh temples.

As the nation's capital, Washington reflected this religious fervor. Different faiths erected

large houses of worship in the capital to welcome their members just as Washington's civic shrines welcome Americans to renew their faith in their democracy.

Muslims have been present in the United States since colonial times, but in small numbers until well into the 20th century. So when Münir Ertegün, the Turkish ambassador to Washington, died suddenly in 1944, there was no local mosque to host his funeral. (His son, Ahmet Ertegün, became a major figure in American cultural history as the co-founder and president of Atlantic Records who discovered and cham-

pioned many leading rhythm and blues and rock musicians.)

This lack became more evident in the post-war years, as Washington became a more international city. More Muslim-majority countries established embassies in the city as the old European empires gave way to newly independent states. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank established themselves in Washington with a deliberately international workforce. And Washington's universities attracted more and more students from the Islamic world. A

bassadors of Muslim countries in the U.S. to aid in the effort, and he traveled the world to soliciting funds from Muslim countries to build the mosque.

The foundation purchased a property in 1946 on Massachusetts Avenue, NW, in the heart of what is known as Embassy Row. Italian architect Mario Rossi, who had designed several mosques in the Middle East and Africa, was commissioned to design the building. Funding came in from Muslim governments and the American Muslim community, with particularly generous



The Center's place as a national institution was cemented on June 28, 1957, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower dedicated the building. Calling it "one of the ... most beautiful buildings in Washington," he called upon people to "rededicate ourselves to the peaceful progress of all men under one God."

mosque in Washington—indeed, a national Islamic center—was necessary.

This new reality breathed life into the longtime ambition of Joseph Howar to build a great mosque and cultural center in Washington. Born Mohammad Issa Abu Al Hawa around 1879 in Palestine, he arrived in America as Abraham Joseph Howar in 1904 and eventually entered the building trade in Washington. He developed and owned several apartment buildings in his adopted city and was active in philanthropic projects. Howar lived to be 103 years old, and his experience as a developer and knowledge of the city made him instrumental in the development and construction of the mosque.

Efforts to build a great mosque in Washington began in earnest in 1948 with the arrival of Kamil Abdel Rahim as Egypt's ambassador to the United States. He established and chaired a foundation and brought together the am-

support from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Finally, the cornerstone was laid on January 11, 1949. Support for the project also came from the American-Muslim community.

The funding contributed by Muslim countries was clearly critical to the creation of the National Islamic Center, but it was the donation of objects and materials to decorate the interior of the building that, from the beginning, made a statement about the global nature of Islam—its appeal and reach across many continents and cultures. Egypt donated a magnificent bronze chandelier and sent specialist artisans who wrote Qur'anic verses to adorn the mosque's walls and ceiling. Painted tiles came from Turkey along with the experts to install them. Iran contributed massive carpets. Indonesia donated carved woodwork. And Saudi Arabia provided the gold decoration on the ceilings and archways.

The Center's place as a national institution was

cemented on June 28, 1957, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower dedicated the building. Calling it “one of the ... most beautiful buildings in Washington,” he called upon people to “rededicate ourselves to the peaceful progress of all men under one God.”

But Eisenhower did more than single out the building’s contribution to Washington’s physical landscape and skyline. He established its identity not as a facility to accommodate foreign diplomats and visitors, but as a place of worship taking its rightful place among the monuments of the capital city.

“I should like to assure you,” he said, “that under the American Constitution, under American tradition, and in American hearts, this center, this place of worship, is just as welcome as could be a similar edifice of any other religion. Indeed, America would fight with her whole strength for your right to have here your own church and worship according to your own conscience.

“This concept is indeed a part of America, and without that concept we would be something else than what we are.”

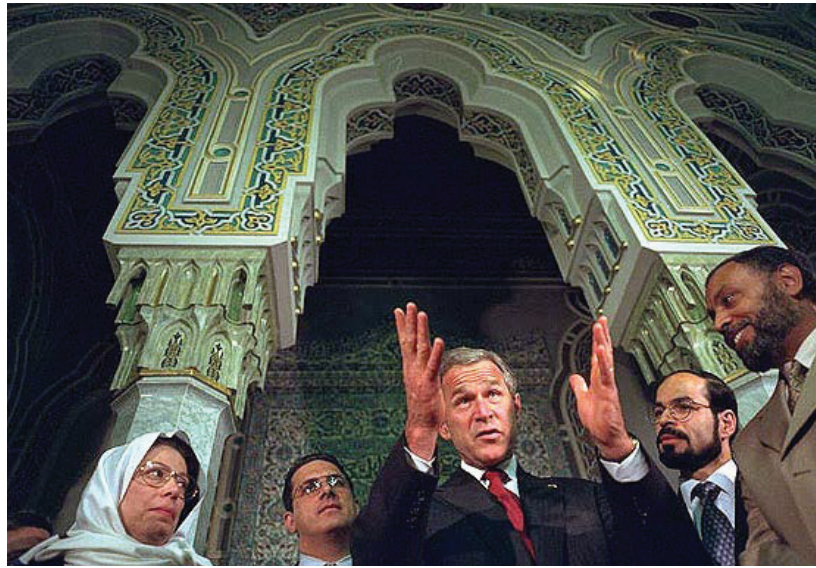
Today, the National Islamic Center has a prominent place among Washington’s great houses of worship, including the National Cathedral, which was chartered by the United States Congress, the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, and Ohev Sholom - The National Synagogue. They stand not just as places of welcome for all people, but as symbols of religious freedom and tolerance in the United States.

In addition to the mosque, the center encompasses a library and classrooms where courses on Islamic culture and the Arabic language are taught. Islamic ambassadors make up the center’s board of governors. The flags of the world’s Islamic nations are arrayed around the grounds.

The building plan is a large prayer hall divided into three naves, or iwans, surrounded by an

“ This concept is indeed a part of America, and without that concept we would be something else than what we are.”

— President Dwight D. Eisenhower during the dedication of the Islamic Center.



President George W. Bush visited the Islamic Center in 2001.

exterior double arcade. The building is set at an angle from the street to conform to the qibla axis. An arcade of five horseshoe arches serves as the entrance portal. In addition to the prayer hall, the center contains a library and multiple classrooms. It is listed in, and protected by, the Historic American Buildings Survey of the United States Library of Congress.





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