

The Annual Pilgrimage to Makkah

Hajj During the Pandemic: Looking Back at 2020

Hajj 2021: Pilgrims' Safety is the Foremost Priority

Muslim World League Seals "Declaration of Peace in Afghanistan"



Looking at  
HAJJ TRADITIONS



Hajj literally means “to set out for a place.” Islamically however, it refers to the annual pilgrimage that Muslims make to Makkah with the intention of performing certain religious rituals as prescribed by Prophet Muhammad. ”



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# Muslim World League

## Recent Activities in Review



May 22

Dr. Al-Issa gives the opening lecture at a scientific symposium organized by ISESCO. He addresses an audience of high-ranking Islamic and international religious figures and scholars about the Charter of Makkah.

ISESCO honors Dr. Al-Issa for his efforts in promoting peace and harmony among nations and people and for his service to the Prophet's legacy.



May 27

Dr. Al-Issa receives Miguel Moratinos, the High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). Mr. Moratinos praised Dr. Al-Issa for "spreading dialogue among followers of religions, strengthening social integration, and combating hatred and hatred of strangers."



June 7



June 10

Dr. Al-Issa meets with Mr. Ayman Mazyek, President of the Supreme Council of Muslims in Germany. Mr. Mazyek hands Dr. Al-Issa a copy of the Charter of Makkah translated into German. During the reception, a memorandum of understanding is signed between the MWL and the Council.

The MWL is proud to host The Declaration of Peace in Afghanistan Conference, bringing together scholars from Afghanistan and Pakistan to agree on a pathway towards enduring peace in Afghanistan.



June 13

Dr. Al-Issa meets with the Chairman of the Pakistan Scholars Council and the Special Representative of the Prime Minister of Pakistan for Harmony and Middle East Affairs, His Excellency Sheikh Hafez Muhammad Tahir Al-Ashrafy.



June 19



June 24

Dr. Al-Issa meets with the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Mr. Daniel Benaim, and the Chargé d’Affairs of the U.S. embassy in Riyadh, Ms. Martina Strong.

Dr. Al-Issa hosts Adama Barrow, President of The Gambia, at the headquarters of the International Museum of the Biography of the Prophet in Medina. The meeting includes the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the MWL and the Fab Charitable Foundation to implement a package of comprehensive relief and development projects.

June 25





**I**n this issue we discuss the origins, rituals and current state of the Hajj, the holy pilgrimage that all faithful Muslims are obliged to make at least once in their lifetime. This year's Hajj will take place from July 17-22, and again it will be limited to residents of Saudi Arabia because of the need to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

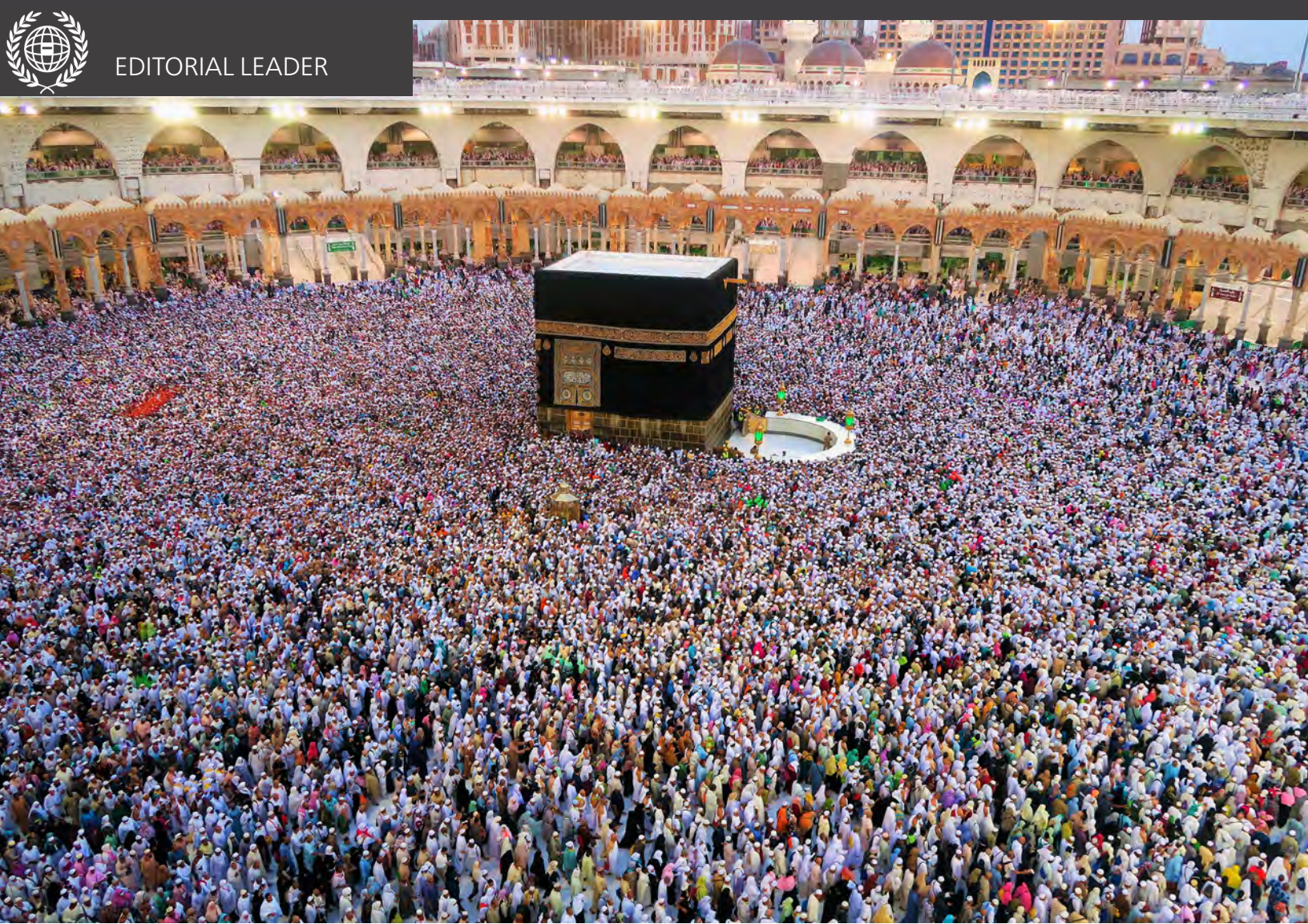
Normally, some 2.5 million pilgrims will make the Hajj, but last year, the Hajj was limited to Saudi citizens, only 1,000 of whom could be in the Grand Mosque at the same time, out of respect for social-distancing norms. This year, some 60,000 Muslim residents of the Kingdom, regardless of citizenship, will participate, but the Hajj will remain a smaller and more intimate version of its usual self until at least 2022.

The Hajj is a major undertaking for the average person, but even more so for the Saudi government, which has an entire ministry dedicated to all aspects of the Hajj: applications to attend, admission, payments, visas, organization, safety and security, care and feeding of pilgrims—everything. In a normal year, the Kingdom literally hosts 2.5 million guests for more than a week, all of whom are focused on two places: Makkah and Madinah.

This is not a normal year, of course, but the conditions that will bring fewer people to the Kingdom bring greater challenges for health and safety. Many of the traditional rituals that include person-to-person contact, sharing of food and drink, and kissing of objects will be prohibited.

All faiths consist of two important elements: belief and practice. Virtually every faith prescribes some rituals, sacrifices or daily practices that reinforce teaching. Many of these practices also serve as reminders of the greatness of God. They take us out of our temporal lives and into a spiritual reality. They can be daily practices that become a part of our normal routine, like praying and fasting. Or they may be grand events that force us out of our daily lives for a time and into a spiritual realm that we inhabit with other faithful. The Hajj is one of these, and the challenges it poses—in time required, in cost and in distance traveled—only increase its spiritual value. Anything of true value commands such a high price.

- The Editors



People Gathering Near Kaaba, Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

## The Hajj:

# The Annual Pilgrimage to Makkah

As Muslims prepare for restricted participation in the Hajj pilgrimage for the second consecutive year, Muslims' values of tolerance, faith, diversity and hope are as important today as never before.

### WHAT IS THE HAJJ?

Hajj literally means "to set out for a place." Islamically however, it refers to the annual pil-

grimage that Muslims make to Makkah with the intention of performing certain religious rituals as prescribed by Prophet Muhammad. In the final months of the year, the holy city of Makkah becomes even more vital, as an estimated 2.5 million pilgrims make their journey to the Holy Sites.

Making this pilgrimage is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. The others are the profession of



Allah as the only God and Muhammad as His Messenger (Shahadah), fasting during Ramadan (Sawm), charitable giving (Zakat) and ritual prayer (Salat) religious duties that every practicing Muslim must perform. All Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey and can support their family during their absence must make the Hajj at least once in their lifetime. About two million people visit Makkah each year from every corner of the globe during Hajj, providing a unique opportunity for people of different nations to meet and understand one another. The Hajj is the largest annual gathering of people in the world.

Although Makkah is always filled with visitors, the annual Hajj pilgrimage begins in the twelfth month of the Islamic year. Islam follows a lunar calendar, so the Hajj and Ramadan can fall, predictably, at any time of the year. The rituals of the Hajj, which are of Abrahamic origin, include circling the Ka'aba seven times and traveling seven times between the mountains of Safa and Marwa, as did Hagar, the wife of Abraham, during her search for water. The Ka'aba is an ancient cubic stone structure located inside the Grand Mosque in Makkah. The Ka'aba was built and rebuilt by prophets and is considered the center of the Muslim world.

After completing these acts, the pilgrims stand together on the wide plain of Arafat and join in prayers for God's forgiveness, in what is often thought of as a preview of the Last Judgement. The close of the Hajj is marked by a festival, the

Eid al-Adha, which is celebrated with prayers and the exchange of gifts in Muslim communities everywhere. This, and the Eid al-Fitr, a feast-day commemorating the end of Ramadan, are the main festivals of the Muslim calendar.

## THE HISTORY

The origins of the Hajj date back to 2,000 B.C. when Ismael, the infant son of Prophet Ibrahim (Or Abraham, as he is called in the Old Testament) and Ibrahim's wife, Hagar, were stranded in the desert. With Ismael close to death from thirst, Hagar ran back and forth between the hills of Safa and Marwa looking for water until the angel Jibril (Gabriel) touched down to earth and created a spring of fresh water for the baby, known as the Well of Zamzam.



The Ka'aba is an ancient cubic stone structure located inside the Grand Mosque in Makkah. The Ka'aba was built and rebuilt by prophets and is considered the center of the Muslim world. "

Following the orders of God, Ibrahim is said to have built a monument at the site of the spring known as the Ka'aba. Worshipers from many faiths traveled to revel at the site, and in 630 A.D., Prophet Muhammad led a group of Muslims there in the first official Hajj, destroying the idols placed there by polytheistic worshippers and re-dedicating the site in the name of Allah. The path that Prophet Muhammad and his followers traveled is retraced as part of the Hajj rituals, which include making Hagar's walk between Safa and Marwa, stoning the wall of Satan that tempted Ibrahim to defy God, slaughtering an animal in honor of the sacrifice that Ibrahim made to save his son, and climbing the Mount Arafat, from which Mohammed made his last sermon.

## CARRYING OUT THE PILGRIMAGE

In order to complete pilgrimage rituals, a person must be in a state of ihram, which is a special state of ritual purity. This is done by wearing special white clothes (which are also called ihram) and obeying these eight rules:

Pilgrims may not engage in marital relations, shave or cut their nails, use cologne or scented oils, kill or hunt anything, or fight or argue. Women must not cover their faces, even if they would do so in their home country, and men may not wear clothes with stitching.

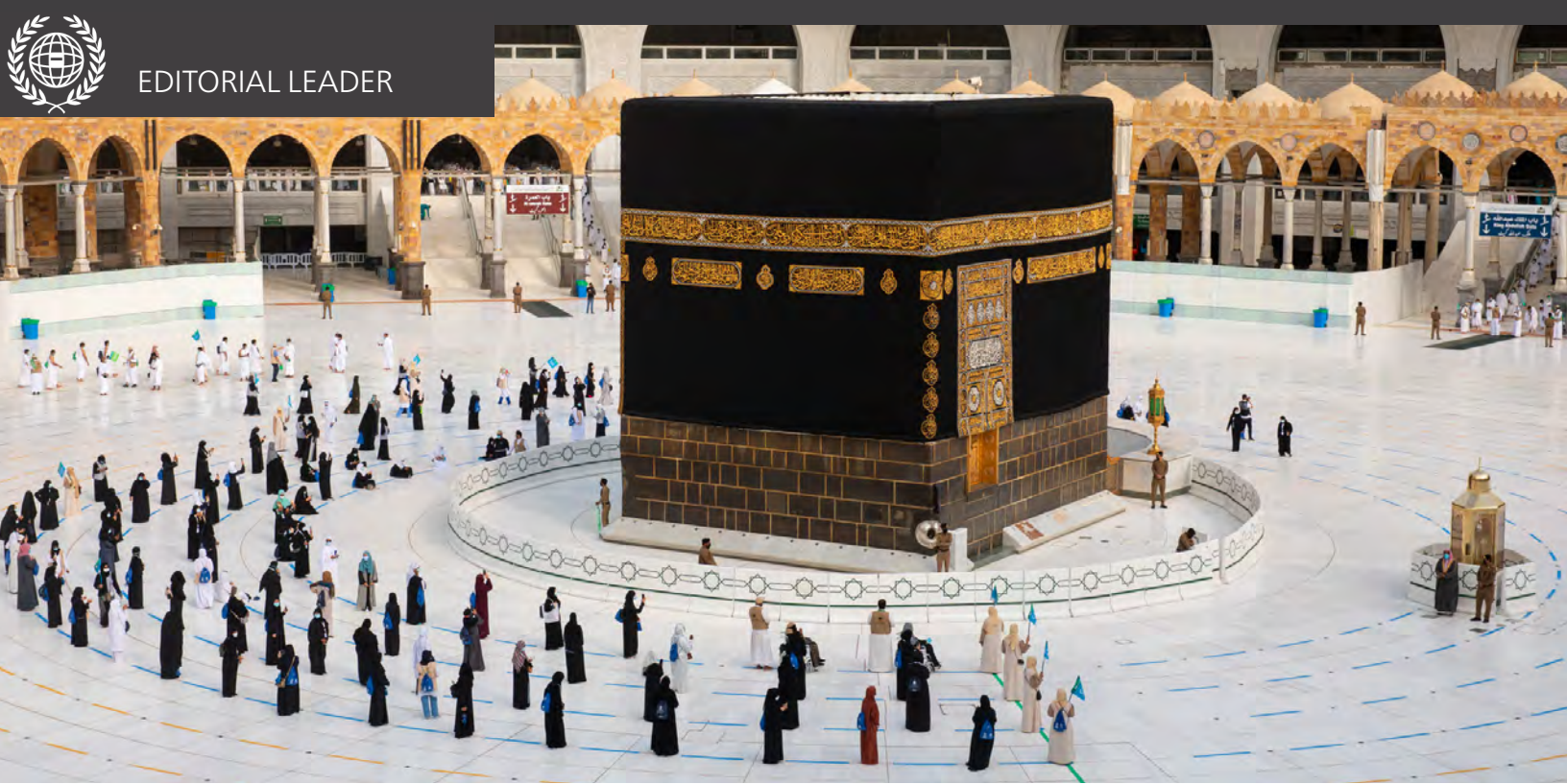
## 2021 AND BEYOND

The MWL extends to you and your loved ones its sincere best wishes on this important and

blessed period of celebration and reflection – a moment that brings families together in Muslim communities around the world and beyond. Our thoughts are particularly with the millions of people who have been affected by Covid-19, forcibly displaced, or torn apart by conflict, war, and persecution and have remained unwavering in their devotion, faith and resilience. Even though no foreign pilgrims will be allowed to perform the Hajj once again this year in response to the coronavirus pandemic, it is our hope that Allah’s blessing will light your way, strengthen your faith and bring joy to your heart as you praise and serve Him today, tomorrow and always. Hajj Mubarak!



People Gathered At Kaaba, Makkah, Saudi Arabia.



Hundreds of Muslim pilgrims circle the Ka'aba as they observe social distancing to protect themselves against the coronavirus, in the Muslim holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

## Hajj During the Pandemic: Looking Back at 2020

In 2020, Muslim pilgrims participated in a downsized version of the annual Hajj, as the Saudi government worked to prevent a coronavirus outbreak during the five-day pilgrimage. For the first time since the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932, the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah made the decision to bar pilgrims arriving in Saudi Arabia from foreign countries. With the Hajj being one of the largest mass gatherings in the world, the Saudi government wisely advised Muslims to postpone bookings until the pandemic could be mitigated. This decision came months after the COVID-19 outbreak had been declared a public health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO) a few months prior.

The 2020 Hajj was scaled down considerably, and participation for Hajj rituals was restrict-

ed to only 1,000 people, adhering to social distancing measures over fears of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Pilgrims performing Hajj in 2020 had to undergo a rigorous selection process and were required to go through periods of self-isolation before arriving in the holy cities. They were also expected to quarantine after their arrival and upon their return. In fact, some 70% of the worshippers last year were foreign residents of Saudi Arabia, with the rest being Saudi nationals. While all holy sites remained open, adequate physical distancing and disinfection measures were also put in place with oversight and assistance at regular intervals during the pilgrim's journey.

Before COVID-19, there was constant overcrowding during Hajj, but in 2020, the flow

of people within the Grand Mosque was well organized. A limited number of worshippers were allowed in at a time and there was clear demarcation to ensure physical distancing. Indicated by a label, these were prepared with strict health guidelines that eliminated the possibility of virus transmission.

During 2020's amended Hajj, wearing masks was mandatory, and pilgrims were subject to temperature checks and placed in quarantine if required. Daily text messages were also provided as reminder of preventative health measures. Also, unlike previous years when people would crowd to collect Zamzam water, in 2020, it was shared by mobile porters.

Throughout the duration of the Hajj, the pilgrims had to social distance and no pilgrims were allowed to touch the Ka'aba.

Undoubtedly, the newest innovation that came as a result of the pandemic was the use of mobile apps that provided test results and vaccination status. The apps were also used to apply for access to public places.

## Post-Pandemic Outlook

The successful completion of the 2020 Hajj was a major tribute to the leadership and commitment of the Saudi authorities, and it reflects their extensive experience of organizing the annual Hajj pilgrimage, and continued commitment to improving public health issues related to mass gatherings events. The decisive actions, public health preparedness and strict implementation of public health prevention and intervention measures, pre-Hajj, during Hajj and post-Hajj, provides many lessons worth emulating by sectors and events that bring together large numbers of people, including sports, religion, entertainment, and hospitality industries. Of particular interest is the use of mobile phone technology, which could be a very potent tool in combating the pandemic across the globe. We at the Muslim World League (MWL), support the decisive, logical, and prudent decision making by Saudi authorities which enabled the pre-Hajj nightmare of public health, political, economic, and religious concerns to be overcome.



**A limited numbers of pilgrims pray in the first rituals of the Hajj, as they keep social distancing to limit exposure and the potential transmission of the coronavirus, at the Grand Mosque in the Muslim holy city of Makkah.**



Robots serving Zamzam water bottles at the Grand Mosque in Makkah.

## Modernity Meets Ancient Hajj Rites

In recent years, society's rapid technological advances have found their way into one of the world's most sacred rituals. A deeply personal experience for Muslim worshippers, the Hajj pilgrimage is anchored in spirituality, and traditionally was characterized as experience stripped of worldly possessions. Today, registrations and bookings are carried out online, and personal cell phone use is common among pilgrims. The most important use of technology has been to assure health and safety.

The service of the Two Holy Mosques is considered one of the most important priorities for

the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has continuously worked to modernize the Hajj journey for the well-being and security of all involved. As part of its operational plan for this year's Hajj season, Saudi Arabia's General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques has worked to put in place all possible health precautions while also ensuring that the Hajj rituals can take place, the experience is enriched, and proper hospitality is provided in line with the Kingdom's Vision 2030. The goal is to make sure that the Hajj ends with zero cases of COVID-19 and also with no loss of life.

For the past several years, the Kingdom has incorporated the latest technology into the pilgrimage. New to Hajj in 2021, robots will distribute bottled water to promote social distancing, according to Abdul-Rahman Al Sudais, the General President of the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque.

Prior to pandemic measures limiting the number of attendees, the crowd control measures implemented include the use of thousands of cameras and security officers to coordinate the movements of people densely packed into narrow streets, walkways and paths of Makkah and Mina. Facial recognition technology and other high-tech security systems are advanced enough to decipher between pilgrims, dressed in nearly identical terry white cloth garments.

In 2019, robots connected doctors with patients using 4G technology during Hajj rituals in Mina, Muzdalifah and Arafat.

Last year, the National Committee for Hajj and Umrah introduced smart technology in the form of electronic ID wristbands that connect to an application on their phones. Upon their arrival, before entering Makkah, pilgrims were issued the smart bracelets with GPS capabilities to help them navigate the Holy Sites. Each card contains a unique QR code containing the bearer's contact and medical details. The smart card system gives pilgrims access to camps, transport, hotels, cashless payment terminals and ATMs, and help authorities identify crowded spots at the holy sites in Makkah and Madinah. They also allow the Saudi health ministry to observe movements and ensure the mandatory quarantine was observed. Thermal scanners are used across the holy sites to monitor people's temperatures.

Last year, was also the first-time pilgrims were given special attire to wear, which was laced with silver nano technology that helps kill bacteria and makes clothes water resistant. As part

of the special protocols, each pilgrim was assigned to a group of around 20 others. A group leader then guided them throughout the Hajj to each destination at a specified time, to avoid crowding in places like the Grand Mosque, where Muslims circle the Ka'aba.

In 2020 I'tamarna application was launched to enforce health standards and make it easier for people to book their journeys. The launch of the app came due to the coronavirus pandemic and preventive measures that require specifying the number of pilgrims. I'tamarna offers booking services that pilgrims can use ahead of their arrival in Makkah for accommodation, transport and recreation.

For those that cannot make the pilgrimage this year due to travel restrictions, a handful of apps exist that offer virtual views of Makkah. To open the experience up to Muslims around the world who are unable to attend, a German company created an interactive digital Hajj experience, called 'Muslim 3D.' While not meant as a substitute for the physical pilgrimage, it provides a virtual tour and an edutainment experience about Islamic lifestyle, history and rituals. There have also been other attempts to create virtual Hajj experiences, including Experience Makkah from Cairo-based Vhorus, the Saudi Arabia-built Manasik VR, and Miradj 360 VR, developed in Tatarstan. These apps have the potential ease stress and help future pilgrims familiarize themselves with the rituals, and can also help drive deeper understanding among Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Modern technology has the potential to enhance, rather than detract from this ancient spiritual rite. Going forward, Saudi leadership will continue to facilitate affairs of Hajj and visits of the Two Holy Mosques, using all of the tools at its disposal to provide the best services so that pilgrims can perform their rituals in a spiritual atmosphere, with care for their comfort, security and safety.

# The Significance of Hajj

The journey to Makkah involves many different rituals for pilgrims including ihram, whereby Muslims enter into a sacred state of purity during Hajj. Ihram includes a specific form of dress, two white sheets for men and modest, plain dresses for women, symbolizing the equality and unity of pilgrims from all over the world. Without any indicators of economic status, nationality or sect, Muslims are able to reflect on their purpose in the world as a community.

Muslims believe the Hajj originates during the time of Prophet Ibrahim, who built the Ka'aba, a black box-shaped building in Makkah's Grand Mosque, the Masjid al-Haram, with his son Ismael. The Ka'aba holds significant meaning to Muslims because it represents the oneness of God, and pilgrims circle it seven times counter-clockwise as part of the rituals of the five days of the Hajj.

As the fifth and final pillar of Islam, performing the pilgrimage is not only an honor, but also an obligation for adult Muslims who are physically and financially able to complete it. The word Hajj

means "to attend a journey," and the pilgrimage signifies both the physical journey and the spiritual one contained within the Hajj. The journey replicates the steps of Prophet Muhammad, who led the Hajj during the last year of his life, 632 A.D. Makkah, located in Saudi Arabia's western Hijaz province, is the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad and the place where he received the Quran in the early seventh century.

Many are not aware of the fact that there are 3 types of Hajj in Islam namely Hajj Ifrad, Hajj Qiran, and Hajj Tamattu. All the forms of Hajj are rewarded but the most recommended form of Hajj by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is Hajj-ul-Tamattu, which involves combining the Hajj with the Umrah in the same journey. Most pilgrims who come for the Hajj from different parts of the world arrive a few days before it actually starts and perform Umrah first.

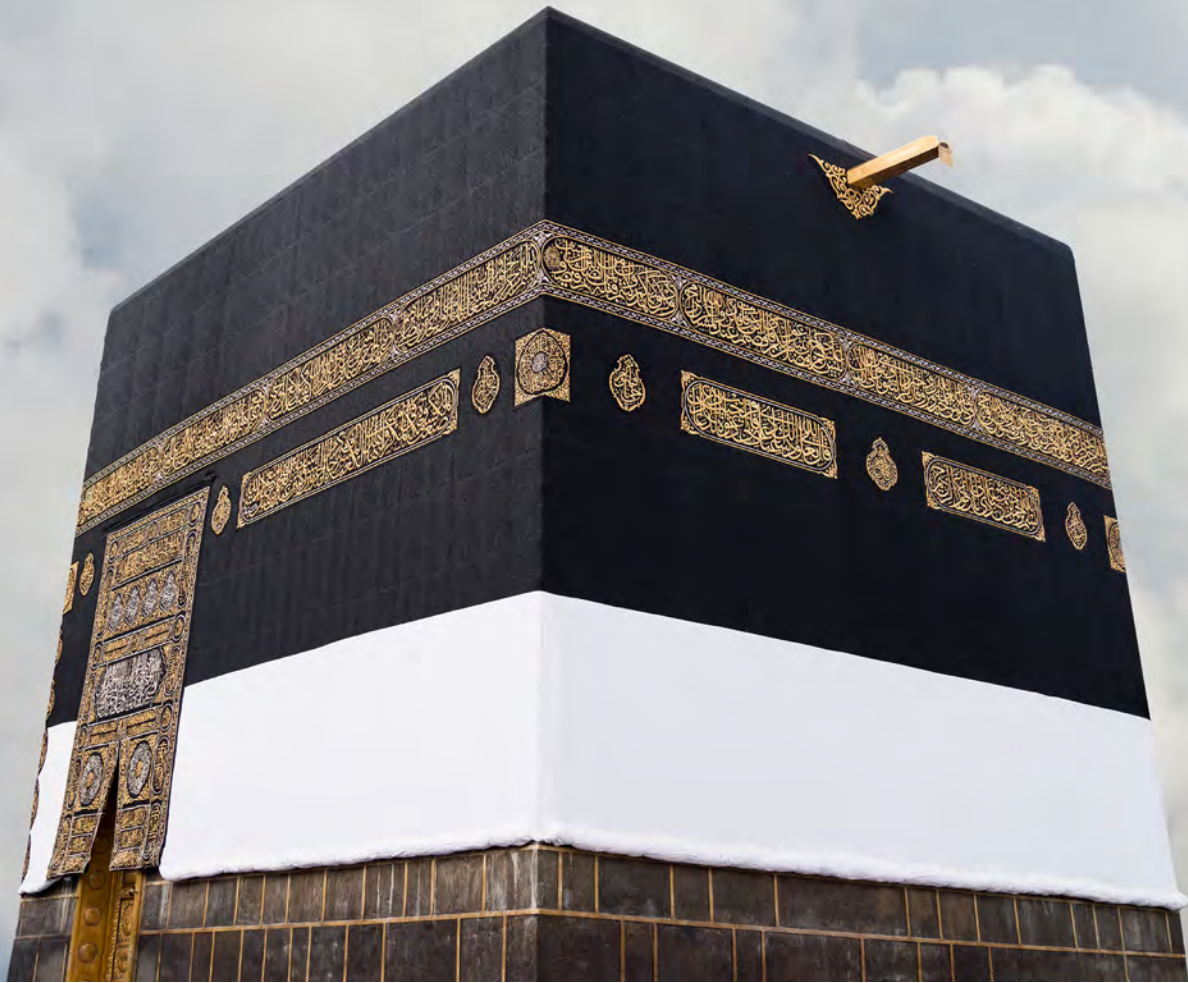
In the years to come, many are hopeful foreign visitors will be invited once again to perform the Hajj to instill unity not just within Muslim nations, but within all nations.



Muslim pilgrims pray on the second day of the hajj pilgrimage, near the holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia.



Muslim pilgrims around the Ka'ba at the Grand Mosque ahead of the Hajj 2019 pilgrimage.



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**Kaaba in Makkah/ This year, for the second time, Saudi Arabia holds restricted Hajj to ensure the safety measures of Muslims performing this year's Umrah.**

## Hajj 2021:

# Pilgrims' Safety is the Foremost Priority

This year, safety measures remain in place to ensure the health and safety of Muslims performing their Umrah.

With COVID-19 still spreading, the Kingdom limited the number of this year's visitors as well. However, Saudi authorities have made it a priority to improve Hajj and Umrah sector services since the beginning of the pandem-

ic. Thanks to that, the kingdom will be able to receive 60,000 pilgrims from inside Saudi Arabia this year. To limit the spread of the virus, foreign Muslims are barred from the Hajj for a second consecutive year.

This decision may be a disappointment for many Muslims worldwide, but it was absolutely necessary, and it follows the teachings of





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**Hajj 2021 will be limited to 60,000 pilgrims.**

Islam, including the belief that life and health are the highest values and should be protected by all believers.

“The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is honored to host pilgrims every year, confirms that this arrangement comes out of its constant concern for the health, safety, and security of pilgrims as well as the safety of their countries,” said the statement of the Saudi Press Agency. The Muslim World League supported these measures to limit the risk of spreading new variants of the virus.

Considering this, only vaccinated pilgrims aged 18-65 with no chronic illnesses will participate



Only vaccinated pilgrims aged 18-65 with no chronic illnesses will participate in this year’s Hajj. It’s worth noting that this year, women are allowed to perform the Hajj without a male guardian (mahram).”



All the pilgrims will have to follow safety measures, including social distancing.



The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is honored to host pilgrims every year, confirms that this arrangement comes out of its constant concern for the health, safety, and security of pilgrims as well as the safety of their countries "

- The Saudi Press Agency

in this year's Hajj. It's worth noting that this year, women are allowed to perform the Hajj without a male guardian (*mahram*).

To help the Saudi Ministry of Hajj administer a safe Umrah season, all visitors will have to adhere to strict safety measures. Upon arrival, the pilgrims' luggage will be disinfected. In the areas of the Two Holy Mosques and the central areas of Makkah and Madinah, social distancing will be strictly enforced. The pilgrims won't be allowed to bring meals from outside Makkah. Instead, they will be provided with three daily meals in Mina and two meals in Arafat. In Muzdalifah, on the other hand, they will be supplied with dinner. Additional food and beverage services will also be available.

To ensure compliance with the safety measures, the Hajj administration will equip all



A smart application, I'tmarna, allows the pilgrims to apply for praying permits in Makkah and Madinah's mosques together. "

the visitors with a smart card. The application serves as an electronic ID that is also linked to all services provided for pilgrims, such as accessing camps, transportation and hotels, and even making payments.

The Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has developed an advanced tech-focused crowd management model to protect pilgrims and elevate their experience. A smart application, I'tmarna, allows the pilgrims to apply for praying permits in Makkah and Madinah's mosques together. On the other hand, Ershad helps representatives of Authorized Agencies of Annual Hajj pilgrimage identify the pilgrims performing Hajj rituals. Another app, Manasikana, serves to give directions and locations, and provides prayer schedules and even weather forecasts in Makkah and Madinah.

Although the decision to restrict the Hajj to domestic worshipers caused sadness for many Muslims abroad, the government of Saudi Arabia has risen to provide the pilgrims with a safe experience in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

A large number of the safety measures are due to smart solutions and new technologies. Saudi Arabia aims to host 30 million pilgrims and Umrah visitors a year in the post-pandemic reality, and the digitization of services is an essential part of managing the movement of Hajj pilgrims in the future.



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**New technologies play an essential role in providing the pilgrims with the Hajj experience.**



Dr. Al-Issa at the “Declaration of Peace in Afghanistan” Conference.

## Muslim World League Seals “Declaration of Peace in Afghanistan”

The Muslim World League sealed a groundbreaking agreement of government ministers and senior scholars from Afghanistan and Pakistan on June 10 that creates a road map for resolving the decades-long conflict in Afghanistan.

The “Declaration of Peace in Afghanistan” was signed following a full-day conference in the Holy of City of Makkah. Supported by the gov-

ernment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the agreement establishes the religious parameters to achieve a just and comprehensive peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, in line with Islamic principles.

MMWL Secretary General Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa led the effort. Noor-ul-Haq Qadri, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony of Pakistan, and Moham-



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**Dr. Al-Issa at the “Declaration of Peace in Afghanistan”.**

mad Qasim Halimi, Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs of Afghanistan, signed the accord.

“This brotherly meeting was characterized by determination, love and harmony, and reflected the strong resolve of our brothers in the meeting to advance peace in Afghanistan,” Dr. Al-Issa said. “Brotherly peace is characterized by strong faith, sincere determination and responsibility, and this agreement was reached in the most sacred place on earth by religious scholars. There can be no stronger declaration of peace, and it will prove successful, God willing.”

Among other things, the declaration does the following:

Condemns all acts of violence and extremism, regardless of the perpetrator or motivation, and judges all attacks against civilians as a violation of the fundamental principles of *Shariah*.

Commits all sides to finding common ground on political, social and economic issues to ensure a final and sustainable end to the Afghan conflict.

Rejects any attempt to justify violence on the basis of religion, nationality, civilization or race.

Recognizes the unique role of religious scholars to ensure peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Leverages the influence of the religious scholar communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan to ensure compliance by all parties to the conflict.

Demonstrates the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's long-standing efforts to achieve peace in Afghanistan and steadfast commitment to the people of the country.

Reflects the status of reconciliation as the optimal resolution for conflicts and disputes as laid out in the Noble Qur'an.

"Saudi Arabia has always been there for Afghanistan and is leading the effort to ensure we achieve peace," Qadri said.

He added: "Our religion teaches us how to be united and harmonious with one another, and advocates international cooperation in all charitable work. Islam focuses on protecting the nation, encouraging development and progress, promoting peace and preventing subversive acts."

"We are truly fortunate for the unity and accomplishment of this declaration and its potential for ending the bloodshed that has lasted for years," Halimi said. "The obstacles to reconciliation in Afghanistan have been removed completely and there are none now."

Pakistani and Afghan scholars, many of whom participated virtually from their home coun-

tries, thanked Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Mohammad bin Salman for the Kingdom's support for peace and stability in Afghanistan. They commended the Kingdom's efforts to bring together scholars from both countries and build bridges that unite Afghans.



Brotherly peace is characterized by strong faith, sincere determination and responsibility, and this agreement was reached in the most sacred place on earth by religious scholars. There can be no stronger declaration of peace, and it will prove successful, God willing. "

- Mohammed Abdulkarim Al-Issa





Pilgrims are gathered on Mount Mercy on the plains of the Arafat during the annual Hajj Pilgrimage, outside Makkah.

## Customs, Rituals, Traditions and the Hajj

The Hajj (also spelled hadj or hadj) is very important to Islam and includes many rituals and traditions. A person who is unable to perform the Hajj in person is allowed to perform the Hajj via proxy by having a relative or friend go on the pilgrimage in their place. This representation entails the proxy to go through long-standing traditions and rituals executed during the Hajj pilgrimage that make it a thorough experience.

The pattern for the pilgrimage was established by Prophet Muhammad, but variations have developed over the centuries. The formal steps



The Hajj is the fifth of the five pillars of Islam, the pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia, which every Muslim adult must make at least once in his or her lifetime.”

aren't followed as strictly by Muslims today as they were in the centuries following their creation, as they visit the Makkah sites in a different order.

The pilgrimage begins on the 7th day of Dhū al-Hijjah (the last month of the Islamic year) and ends on the 12th day. There are certain things the pilgrim does even before reaching Makkah. When the pilgrim is 6 miles (or 10 km) away from Makkah, they enter a state of holiness known as ihram and wear special garments associated with that.

On the first day, the pilgrim walks around the Ka'aba seven times, which is the welcoming tawaf, and kisses the black stone. This is then

followed by a prayer session inside a mosque near the Ka'aba and then drinking water from the Zamzam. The pilgrims then move to the Safa and Marwah hills near the Ka'aba, where they either run or walk seven times between the hills, to symbolically emulate the run Ismael's mother Hagar did in search of water for her son.

On day two, the pilgrims spend the whole day in prayer at Mina, a holy place outside Makkah.

On day three, the pilgrims move to the Mount Arafat, where it is believed that Prophet Muhammad delivered his final sermon. At the Arafat, they stand in vigil from noon to sunset to offer supplications, seek repentance and listen



Pilgrims surround the Kaaba in Makkah, at night.



to sermons. This particular ritual is the ultimate day of the Hajj and is considered compulsory for the pilgrimage to be successful. After the sunset prayers, they leave for Muzdalifah, where they will spend the night and collect stones for the next day's ritual.

On the fourth, fifth and sixth days, the pilgrims will move back to Mina, where they perform the symbolic stoning of the devil by throwing seven pebbles or stones at the largest of three pillars. At this stage, Eid al-Adha, or the festival of sacrifice, is celebrated. This is when animals such as goats and sheep are slaughtered and sacrificed to commemorate Abraham's sacrifice to God, when he obeyed the command to sacrifice his son. The male pilgrim's heads

are usually shaved, and the female pilgrims will remove a lock of their hair. At the end of this ritual, the pilgrims will return to Makkah, where they complete the farewell tawaf seven times. After the farewell tawaf, the pilgrimage is finally completed.

The Hajj serves as a unifying force in bringing people together from diverse backgrounds. Once the believer has fully completed the pilgrimage, they may add "hajj or Hajji" (for male) or "hajjah" (for female) to his or her name. The pilgrimage, if performed properly, is believed to wipe out previous sins for the pilgrim performing it.



Pilgrims are surrounding the Kaaba in the Grand Mosque before leaving for their annual Hajj pilgrimage.



**Young Muslim Couple.**

## Muslim Youth and Hajj

Historically, the Hajj has been a journey for middle-aged to senior Muslims. This may be due to the cost of the trip as well as the length of the pilgrimage. Some of the cheapest packages for the Hajj still run around 7,000 USD. For younger Muslims who are establishing their careers, taking two weeks off seems un-doable, let alone the financial burden of the trip.

In other cases, perhaps the religious immaturity of youth keeps them from attempting the once-in-a-lifetime spiritual journey; they would rather wait until their faith further develops to fulfill the requirements of the fifth and final pillar of Islam. But this need not be true; the

rewards derived from the Hajj are priceless regardless of age or level of devotion.

Many Muslim youth grow up yearning to one day circle the Ka'aba, pray for supplication at the base of Mount Arafat and drink *ZamZam*. With the onslaught of social media today, these images are ever present, but still, many hold off.

The obligations surrounding the pilgrimage are loosened for those physically or financially unfit to make the trip, so it would seem that youth, unburdened by the obstacles that come with old age or family responsibilities, should be more inclined to make the trip to Makkah.



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#### Young adult at Hajj.

There will never be a “perfect” time to attempt the Hajj. It requires sacrifice, and a pilgrim must



Many Muslim youth grow up yearning to one day circle the Ka’aba, pray for supplication at the base of Mount Arafat and drink ZamZam. With the onslaught of social media today, these images are ever present, but still, many hold off. ”

capitalize on the opportunity of going through the Hajj when it presents itself, even if there are certain drawbacks. Once the door opens, it may never open again.

Young adults who find themselves able to make the Hajj may think that there will come a better, more financially stable time to embark on the journey. However, the uncertainty of the future and the rewards that come from completing the pilgrimage itself can make it ideal to do the Hajj at a younger age.

For some young Muslims, completing the Hajj represents a strengthening of faith. For others, it is a chance to rediscover faith that may have been lost or tarnished. Regardless of what draws you to Hajj, the experiences you will gain along the journey will be enlightening.



Dr. Al-Issa receiving the honorary PhD from UPEACE Rector Dr. Rojas

## UPEACE Awards Dr. Al-Issa an Honorary Doctorate for Combating Hatred

### Geneva - MWL

The United Nations' University for Peace (UPEACE) has granted an honorary doctorate to the Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL), Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, for his outstanding efforts in supporting international diplomacy, promoting friendship and

cooperation among peoples and his effective endeavor in combating hatred.

The honorary degree was awarded at the UN headquarters in Geneva in the presence of UN Undersecretary General and Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission, Mr. Larbi Djacta, and a number of European religious,

intellectual, political and parliamentary leaders.

Dr. Al-Issa delivered a speech in which he extended his thanks and appreciation for this honor that represents a motivation to do more in the service of peace. He said the UPEACE is a prestigious university that has made remarkable global contributions to the service of world peace, having been established in accordance with an international treaty aimed specifically at this noble purpose.

UN Undersecretary General Mr. Larbi Djacta noted the widespread appreciation of Dr. Al-Issa as a leading international figure representing religious and intellectual moderation, who is continuing to work hard to deliver the message of moderate Islam and peaceful coexistence all around the globe and making efforts to educate Muslim minorities.

Mr. Djacta added that Dr. Al-Issa is a unique figure who led the largest Muslim delegation to visit the site of Nazi concentration camps in Poland.

Dr. Francisco Rojas, Rector of the UPEACE, stressed that granting an honorary degree to Dr. Al-Issa comes in recognition of his individual contributions and humanitarian efforts in the field of peace, conflict settlement and promotion of harmony. "The UPEACE is honored to grant an honorary degree to Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa, who is widely recognized as a global voice for religious moderation, and for his commitment to educating the whole world about religious values represented in compassion, understanding and cooperation among humankind. Dr. Al-Issa has been playing a pioneering role in building partnerships among societies, religions and nations," he said.

Since its inception, UPEACE has granted this honorary degree to a group of distinguished personalities, including five former heads of states.

The university enjoys a prestigious international



Larbi Djacta:

Dr. Al-Issa is widely recognized as a leading global figure representing religious and intellectual moderation

standing. It was established under a treaty at the United Nations General Assembly in 1980, with a main campus in Costa Rica and offices in Rome, Addis Ababa, New York, Geneva, The Hague, Manila, Beijing and others. Its main mission is to serve humanity through a prestigious international higher education institution, with the aim of promoting the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among humankind, and working towards alleviating obstacles on the way to global peace in accordance with the UN Charter.

It provides unique international contributions to studies of peace and conflicts, dispute settlement, international law, human rights, environmental protection and security. Master's and PhDs in these programs are granted to policy-makers and practitioners who are the target group. It has a global mandate to grant scientific degrees recognized by all member countries of the General Assembly.



UPEACE Rector:

Dr. Al-Issa is globally respected for his commitment to educating the whole world about true religious values



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More than 300 Saudi Red Crescent volunteers provided medical services in Makkah and the Holy Sites

## Advanced Technology Helps Ensure Safety and Security of Pilgrims

By Rob Wagner

»» When Um Abdullah of Madinah discovered that the 2021 Hajj would allow 60,000 pilgrims to perform Hajj, she jumped at the chance to make her first pilgrimage.

Um Abdullah, 51, was eager to perform her obligation, but she was reluctant because of the ongoing 2020-2021 worldwide pandemic. How many people would perform?

Where would they come from? Would Hajj come at a time of increased infections?

But she needn't have worried.

"I know my government is looking after us and they have shown us year after year that they are experts in crowd management and medical treatment," she said. "The Ministry of Hajj (and Umrah) has managed big crowds in a very small area for decades. I have full confidence in them."

Indeed, 2.5 million domestic and foreign pilgrims each year was the average for decades and the ministry has honed its skills to protect pilgrims. In 2020, only 1,000 domestic pilgrims performed



Thermal-imaging cameras were also employed to locate individuals with no Hajj permits

Hajj, which was more or less a symbolic goodwill gesture on the behalf of Saudi Arabia to Muslims worldwide. This year, the number of permitted domestic pilgrims jumped to 60,000, a drop in the bucket compared to the previous Hajj seasons. No foreign pilgrims participated this season. Yet 60,000 is a significant increase that gives hope that larger numbers of both domestic and foreign pilgrims will be permitted in following Hajj seasons.



Modern technology guaranteed the health, safety and security of pilgrims



Smart technology helps improve a pilgrim's experience



Pilgrims wore an electronic bracelet to identify them

To put 60,000 in perspective, over the last decade the number of pilgrims performing Hajj peaked at 3.16 million in 2012. Fifty-five percent, or 1.75 million, of those pilgrims were foreigners. In 2015, 71 percent, or 1.384 million, of the 1.952 million pilgrims were foreign, according to the Ministry of Health.

This year, the standard quota for pilgrims to obtain a permit was dropped in favor of approving applications on a case by case basis that include considerations of age, previous Hajj experience, Saudi residency, and, above all, whether the applicant had been fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

"I am an educated middle-age lady who never performed Hajj and I cried big fat tears when I was selected," Um Abdullah said. "I cried because I finally will perform Hajj and because I trust the government to protect me."

The Ministry of Health this year announced that the Covid-19 vaccine is mandatory to participate and is one of the main conditions of receiving a permit.

Only people between the ages of 18 and 65 who were given full doses of the Covid-19 vaccine at least 14 days prior to the beginning of Hajj and had no chronic diseases were allowed to perform Hajj. The Ministry of Health reported, "Those over the age of 65 are being prevented from performing Hajj this year in order to preserve their health during the ongoing pandemic."

According to Dr. Tawfiq Al-Rabiah, the Saudi minister of Health, the government had the necessary manpower "required to operate the health facilities in Makkah and Madinah."

More than 300 Saudi Red Crescent volunteers provided medical services in Makkah, Arafat, Mina and Muzdalifah with teams of doctors and nurses specifically trained to deal with Covid-19 with a prevention program.

Teams of three to five members of Red Crescent each operated 25 ambulatory posts inside the Grand Mosque and nearby sites. In a first, pilgrims this Hajj season were not permitted to move between Mina and Arafat but rode busses. Thermal-imaging cameras were also employed to locate individuals with no permits to prevent them from joining the pilgrimage. Such individuals could pose a danger to the safety and security of the events. Pilgrims also wore an electronic bracelet to identify them.

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention. Lessons learned during the pandemic coupled with the experience and expertise of the ministries of Hajj and Health have led to the creation of advanced technology to ensure the health, safety and security of pilgrims. These are not temporary measures but now permanently secured in place for all future Hajj seasons.





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Most of mosque imams are not aware of the reality of the life of Muslims in Germany

## Islamic Studies College Connects Imams and Clerics with German Society

By Nizar Abdulbagi Ahmed

“ The German government has launched a program training German-speaking imams and preachers locally at an Islamic studies college in an attempt to decrease reliance on overseas imams, and control extremist ideas as well as the spread of terrorist groups. The enrolled students must have sufficient knowledge about the characteristics of the German society.

Established in the city of Osnabrück and officially opened its doors on July 15 of this year, the college is to change this situation, especially since most mosques in Germany, totaling more than 2500 mosques, are run by imams coming from abroad.

One of the biggest problems faced by the Muslim community in Germany is that the majority of imams have received scholarly and religious qualifications from outside the country. Most of them are not aware of the reality of the life of Muslims in Germany. Training imams locally is expected to diminish the overseas influence on German imams and mosques.

Politicians and Islamic activists have often called for employing imams and scholars who are born



The majority of imams in Germany have received scholarly and religious qualifications from outside the country

and raised in Germany and integrated into its society to be more able to reflect the true image of religion, build bridges of communication and positive interaction with the rest of society. German-educated imams can confront the advocates of extremism and terrorism who attribute their criminal acts to Islam. The Islamic studies college aspires to achieve this goal.



German-educated imams can confront the advocates of extremism and terrorism



## The college sends a clear signal to Muslims that the government officially recognizes the Islamic religion

The new college's two-year programs offer courses including the German language, recitation of the Qur'an and its rules, teaching sermons, worship practices, community education, social work, women and youth work, and political education. After graduation, the 35 participants will receive practical training.

One of the college's advantages is that it is the one and only in Germany that is not associated with any group or institution. Teaching is conducted exclusively in the national language, German, and training is offered in collaboration with a national university. In addition to teaching Islamic subjects, the college aims to increase student awareness of the culture and knowledge of the German society.

### Recognition of Islam

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Islamic Studies College Christian Wolf, a former Federal President, described the institution as a step in the right direction that was necessary subsequent to the establish-



## Majority of Muslims in Germany are good citizens and want to integrate into society

ment of Islamic educational institutions, and said, "In addition to the great importance of founding the college, it also sends a clear signal to Muslims that the government officially recognizes the Islamic religion and treats Muslims on the basis of equality with others. It must be admitted that we have been very late in training and graduating Muslim scholars independently of the Muslim communities in Germany, so that the process takes place in our own language and on the basis of law and the constitution". He affirmed his personal interest in the success of the college that was established with funding from the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Science in Lower Saxony.

### Good citizens

The former German president added, "More and more citizens whose origins are in other countries are refusing to rely on imams from abroad who are linked to an agenda that does not represent or express them. These people feel that they are good citizens and want to integrate into society and it is our duty to help them by keeping them away from the political movements that hide behind them".

Germany will no longer allow any attempt to use these citizens in work far from the principles of good citizenship, and Germany will strive to help them and benefit from them in all fields of work. The majority of them have prestigious educational qualifications, and have proven during the past period their loyalty to Germany and that they can constitute a positive addition to society.

### Fighting bigotry

German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer called on Muslims in Germany to participate in the Islamic Studies College program, which aims to combat extremism and terrorism. He appealed to imams and authorities to stand up to fanaticism, stressing that terrorism practiced by some in the name of religion threatens the foundations of



### College of Islamic Studies aims to increase imam awareness of German society's culture

social coexistence, praising the continuous cooperation between the state and Islamic clerics.

Seehofer said that the college project is a priority for his country's government, which attaches great importance to helping Muslims integrate into society. The government, he noted, responds decisively to calls that describe Muslims as strangers and that Islam does not express the nature of German society. He described those calls as a kind of rejected hatred that the government does not tolerate, because it contradicts the law, stressing that the constitution clearly indicates that all citizens are equal before the law, regardless of their religions and ethnicities. Seehofer pledged to provide all kinds of support so that the college project achieves the desired success.



The number of students will be doubled in the coming years to qualify imams for all mosques across Germany

### Generalization of experience

Feliz Polat, a parliamentarian on immigration and integration policy, described the decision to establish the college as a pioneering step, noting that it gives the Muslim community in Germany an assurance that a new beginning is on the way. Polat added that there are already many inquiries

about the project from other European countries that seek to implement the same program in their countries. He pointed out, "The project is unprecedented and is the result of lengthy studies and comes in response to multiple calls made by many leading figures among the Muslim community in Germany to provide an opportunity to qualify imams and preachers from the inside, instead of bringing in others who are not familiar with the language, customs and traditions, and who do not know much about the nature of society, which makes them unable to find solutions to the problems faced by Muslims in Germany". Polat called on all segments of society to support this project and contribute to its success.

### Diverse curricula

The college director Bulent Okar, a professor of Islamic Religious Education, revealed that the academic curricula address seven units, including recitation of the Qur'an and its rules, teaching sermons, worship practices, community education, social work, women and youth work, and political education.

In his opinion, this initiative was long overdue, and Germany had to offer it years ago. Okar said, "All the college staff have high scholarly capabilities and sufficient knowledge of the fundamentals of the Islamic religion, and realize that it is completely far from fanaticism and extremism. They are also keen to present it to society in its true form. The small number of students at the present time is attributed to the fact that the project is still at the beginning stages, and in the coming years, we expect to double the number until sufficient numbers are graduated for all mosques in Germany".

### Connecting to the community

The researcher at the University of Cologne, Luay Al-Madhoun, stressed the importance of establishing a college to train imams in Germany, especially that imams from abroad are unable to integrate and deal with worshippers, due to their



Admission to the college is available to anyone who holds a university degree in Islamic sciences from any recognized university in the world

ignorance of the German language, so they face difficulties in understanding the problems of society.

### Free study

Although admission to the college is available to anyone who holds a university degree in Islamic sciences from any recognized university in the world, those who received their Islamic education in Germany are given priority, and in some cases, people who do not hold degrees in religious sciences can be accepted, provided that they are actually active in Islamic societies and institutions.

There are no financial obligations for the students, as the study is free of charge. The Federal Ministry of the Interior is financing the project with an amount of up to one million euros. It was agreed in principle that the project would continue for five years, provided that the experiment would be evaluated first. It is hoped that the project will contribute to the role of Islam in Germany, according to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Horst Seehofer.



Training imams locally is expected to diminish the overseas influence on German mosques



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### Zamzam Well

# ZamZam: The Miraculous Water and a Spring from Heaven

By Syed Abdulaziz

“ Zamzam water is one of the most enduring miracles of Islam, representing the mercy of Almighty Allah. For over 5,000 years, the well of Zamzam in the holy city of Makkah, continues to quench the thirst of millions of people across the globe.

The well first sprang under the feet of Prophet Ismael (peace be upon him) after his mother Hagar, the second wife of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), ran seven times between the two hills of Safa and Marwah looking for water to save her thirsty son.

The name of the well comes from the phrase Zome Zome, meaning “stop flowing,” a command repeated by Hagar as she attempted to contain the spring water.

The astounding Zamzam water is the flower of the collaboration of the worldly and the spiritual realm; the worldly being the cries of baby Ismael and the spiritual being the intervention of angel Gabriel as he flapped his wing that brought forth the water of ZamZam.

Brief anecdotes that mention Zamzam are described in the holy books of various religions, including the Torah (Old Testament/Torah), the Bible, and the Qur’an. As narrated in these holy books, Zamzam is the holy water and is termed as a great gift from the Almighty.

Zamzam is viewed by Muslims as a natural source of healing for the sick with thousands of pilgrims having reported that they healed from infertility, blindness and many other diseases after drinking Zamzam.

Zamzam’s alkaline nature is said to help to reduce acidity and heartburn. For people who are weight conscious, the water of Zamzam could help in curbing appetite. For many days, Hagar and Ismael survived on the water of ZamZam. This shows that if you drink Zamzam it satiates the need for food.

Zamzam well’s ever-clean water has no moss, insects, fungus, or any other impurities, Dr. Yahya Hamza Kashak, a Saudi national, found out following a series of tests he conducted using ultraviolet technology.



For over 5,000 years, the well of Zamzam in the holy city of Makkah, continues to quench the thirst of millions of people across the globe

German scientist Dr. Knut Pfeiffer found out that Zamzam water acts as a natural enhancer for cells and metabolism. She says Zamzam water increases energy levels and nourishes the cells in our bodies. Zamzam contains a higher level of natural minerals than found in normal desalinated water. For this reason, it has a distinct, heavy taste. Zamzam contains some special minerals and inorganic components such as sodium calcium, magnesium, potassium, bicarbonate, chloride, fluoride, nitrate, sulfate, and totally dissolved salts (TDS) that scientists did not find in any other water around the world.

During the years, just preceding the advent of Prophet Muhammad, Zamzam Well was protected by the leader of tribe of Quraish, Abd Al-Muttalib bin Hashim, grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad. The custodianship of the well since then passed on to several caliphs up until the unification of Saudi Arabia by King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud. Since then the well is not only being protected by the Al-Saud family but also is maintained and developed.

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdul Aziz and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman have the sanctity of the Grand Mosque, the Zamzam well and other holy sites close to their hearts and they are continuing with the legacy of their predecessors in spending billions on the upkeep and maintenance of these places. To preserve the quality of Zamzam water, the Saudi government has started using optical



**Zamzam bottling plant can produce up to 30,000 liters of water per hour**

fiber technology of the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition network and the most suitable methods of pumping and filtering.

The main development for the filling and distribution of Zamzam water and maintenance of the well was done in the reign of late King Abdullah. He also started King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Zamzam Water Project in 2013. The cost of the project amounted to more than SR700 million (\$187 million). The project brought new and latest technology for pumping, filtering, distributing and filling the water. The latest technology removed all the unhealthy systems of bottling water and unwanted water pollution with an accredited bottling process.

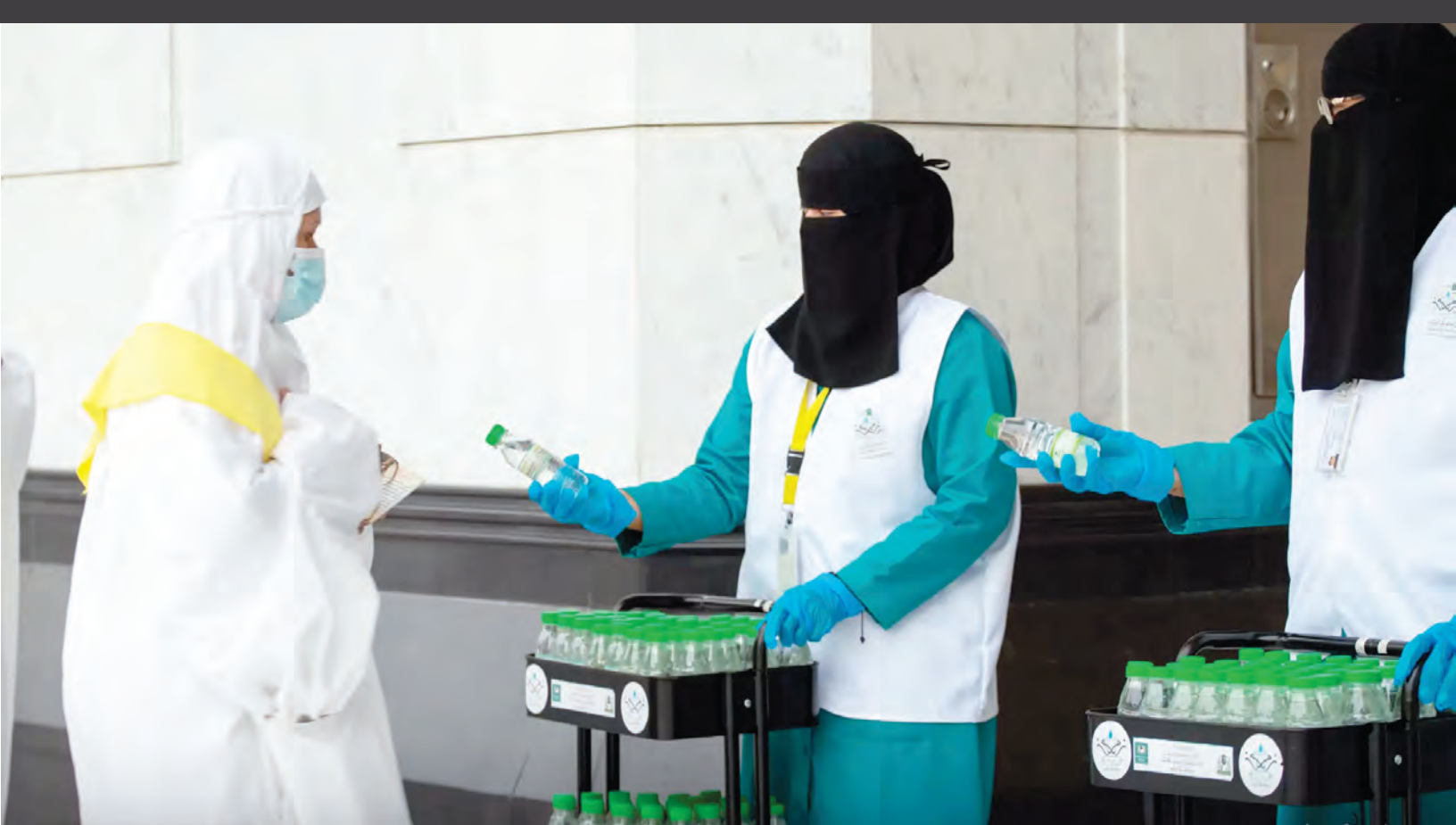
The project has two sizes of containers, 5 and 10 liters. Zamzam water is treated, bottled, stored, and distributed efficiently. Before the



German scientist Dr. Pfeiffer found out that Zamzam water acts as a natural enhancer for cells and metabolism

end of the Hajj or Umrah journey, visitors make sure to get a bottle or two of Zamzam water before they leave, which in previous years used to result in chaos and unorganized queues. Today, the project allows water bottles to be distributed to pilgrims inside buses or at airports in order to save time and prevent crowding. Now during the pandemic, the Saudi government has made Zamzam





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#### Zamzam quenches spiritual thirst of Umrah performers and pilgrims



The Saudi government has made Zamzam bottles available online to everyone around the world

bottles available online. The online purchase of Zamzam water is a part of the National Water Company's project, which was initiated following the suspension of sales as a precaution during COVID-19 outbreak.

Water distribution centers have been placed in various corners of the Grand Mosque for easy access to worshippers. Inside the Grand

Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, Zamzam water is provided in coolers that undergo a continuous cleaning and filling process.

In addition to the King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Zamzam Water Project, the Zamzam bottling plant operates with a separate mission under the United Office of Zamzemah in Makkah. Zamzam water is bottled and distributed by the King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Zamzam Water Project, which is operated by the National Water Company, and whose new bottling plant can produce up to 30,000 liters of water per hour. The construction of the new plant began in 2014. Originally consisting of two production lines, a third was added in 2017, which massively increased production capacity. With the water being dispensed into 200 mm bottles, it means that the plant can produce well in excess of 150,000 bottles per hour.



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The Noble Qur'an is a comprehensive guide gifted by the Lord of the Universe to humankind

## A Systematic Study of the Holy Qur'an

A unique work that has made a remarkable attempt to study the multidimensional nature of the world as ascribed by the divine verses

**By Aftab Husain Kola**

It is unfortunate that an overwhelming majority of Quranic scholars have been concentrating mostly on the guidelines provided by the Noble Qur'an in the realms of theology, law and social behavior. Some scholars have approached the Holy Book more from the point of view of their sectarian positions than anything else. In reality, the Noble Qur'an is a comprehensive guide gifted by the Lord of the Universe to humankind for understanding the truth related to all aspects of the functioning of the universe.

'A Systematic Study of the Holy Qur'an' by Dr. Javed Jamil, a renowned author, published recently, is a unique work that has made a remarkable attempt to study the multidimensional nature of the world as ascribed by the divine verses. Dr. Jamil has made a systematic study beginning with the creation of the universe, the way it functions under the governance of the supreme, majestic Lord. He has also examined the functioning of the earth, and discussed the philosophical, theological, legal, social and spiritual aspects of human existence.

Professor Ehtasham Hasnain, former Vice-Chancellor of Hyderabad University, in his foreword to the book, has beautifully summed up its entire theme thus:

"What attracted my attention at the very outset was the caption on the cover of the book. It describes the book as 'a humble endeavor to make a Systematic Study of the Noble Qur'an in terms of the systems Almighty God has created in the universe, on the earth, in human life, and the system He wants man to establish and adhere to with the aim of building a healthy and peaceful world, and ensuring a successful life in the Hereafter. This is a categorical confirmation of the fact that in the Noble Qur'an there are a very huge number of verses, which describe the creation and functioning of the universe as a whole, as well as the functioning of the earth, including its flora and fauna. There is absolutely no doubt that if human beings have to establish on earth an existence similar to the harmonious way the universe functions, they have no option but to follow God's injunctions in full. The particles of the universe, the stars, the planets and all other celestial bodies follow the laws of nature created by God with unimaginable precision. If God gave us human beings certain flexibility, we should endeavor to work only within the boundaries prescribed by the Noble Qur'an. Moreover, the system that God has directed through His Final Book and Final Prophet (peace be upon him) needs to be established not only in the lives of the people, but also in the world as a whole, including at legal, social,



The work has been written in modern English in a lucid and cogent style, and is a beautiful blend of creative and investigative writing

political and administrative levels."

Dr. Javed Jamil is a well-known thinker and writer, and is currently Chair in Islamic Studies and Research at Yenepoya University, Mangalore, India. He has already earned wide acclaim for his concept of Applied Islamics, which implies examining scientific theories, international ideologies and developments with regard to Islamic principles, and presenting Islamic paradigms/models/definitions/concepts/programs in different areas of knowledge in Natural Sciences, Social Sciences as well as Health Sciences.

His other works such as 'Muslims Most Civilized, Yet Not Enough?', 'Muslim Vision of Secular India: Destination and Roadmap', 'Justice Imprisoned', 'Economics First or Health First?', 'The Devil of Economic Fundamentalism', 'Islam means Peace', and 'Islamic Model for Control of AIDS', have all brought a new approach to scholarship that is based on facts and figures, and have succeeded in not only highlighting the failure of the modern systems in creating a healthy and peaceful world, but have also successfully countered the propaganda unleashed by anti-Islamic forces.

A mere look at the contents of the book, A Systematic Study of the Holy Qur'an, will provide the reader an idea about the comprehensiveness of the work. The book has five parts, with each part covering several topics. These are: 1. Faith (Iman), 2. Philosophy, 3. Constitution, 4. System (Legal, Political, Economic, Social, Moral, Spiritual, Health Protective System), and 5. History of Confronta-

tion between Right and Wrong. Each chapter has an introductory article about the basic approach of the Noble Qur'an to the topic being discussed, followed by a compilation of verses related to that topic. The verses are followed by explanations wherever required in the form of notes. Not only have scientific facts been used to discuss the meaning of the verses related to the structure and functioning of the universe, but the scientific philosophies based on negation of God have also been effectively countered. The author has also tried to explore the meanings of terms like Najam, Kawaakib, Shihab-at-thaqib, Najm-ath-thaqib, Tariq, Samaa-dhaatilburooj, dhaatil-raj'a, Sab'aSamawat, etc, in cosmological sciences.

When discussing the creation of human beings, Dr. Javed Jameel has also dwelt upon the embryological details and the functioning of the human body. In the chapter on Philosophy, he has discussed the Quranic view of Iman and Islam, the purpose of man's life, and the Qur'anic view on Judaism, Christianity, Monasticism, etc.

The chapter on Constitution is sure to attract the attention of legal luminaries as it discusses the three-dimensional legal system of Islam comprising Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Prohibitions (opposed to the present international approach of focusing only on Fundamental Rights while ignoring Prohibitions altogether). It also discusses the Civil and Criminal legal matters put forth in the verses.

The fourth part examines the Social, Political, Economic and Moral systems that are required for the governance of the world. It also presents the Qur'anic paradigm of Holistic Peace and Complete Health, and discusses the harmful effects of prohibited substance and practices like intake of alcohol, drugs, pork, sex outside proper marriage, homosexuality, gambling, etc.

The final part focuses on stories of prophets in a chronological order. The author has arranged the verses related to each prophet in a way that it reads like a continuous story. Another remarkable feature of this chapter is that wherever needed,



Dr. Javed Jamil discusses the purpose of man's life and the Qur'anic view on Judaism, Christianity, Monasticism, etc.



**Dr. Javed Jamil**

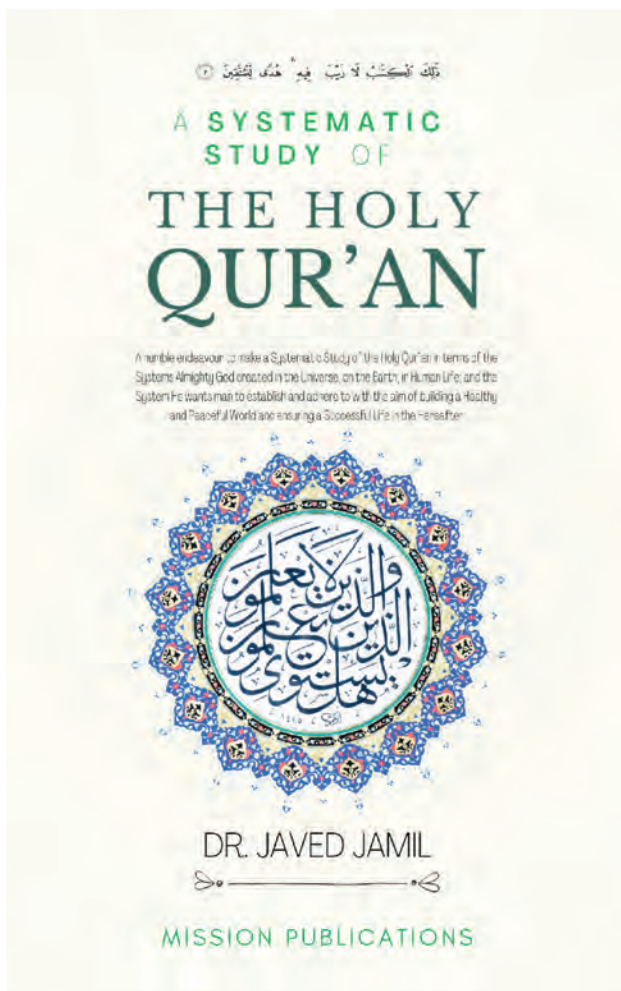
he has used quotes from both the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible, pointing to differences if any.

The book has been written in modern English in a lucid and cogent style, and is a beautiful blend of creative and investigative writing.

The incontrovertible message that Dr. Javed Jamil sends out through his book is that the Noble Qur'an is the ultimate solution for all ills and problems in the world. It presents a holistic regime of peace and health. Qur'anic guidelines are for acceptance and application in every field of knowledge and every field of existence, individual or collective. The ultimate result of follow-



Qur'anic guidelines are for acceptance and application in every field of knowledge and every field of existence



book cover

ing the Qur'anic principles is not only peace in this world but also peace in the next life. It will be worthwhile here to quote a few passages from the book, which will give an indication about the comprehensiveness of this work as a study of the holistic system of existence that Qur'an presents:

“The world today, despite its apparently advanced and sophisticated ways of living, has been overpowered by chaos at every level. The current international system, which many proudly call the New World Order, appears to be highly advanced in method, but is a colossal failure when it comes to results. At the individual level, notwithstanding the huge advancement made in the healthcare system, physical, mental and spiritual illnesses are ever on the rise. At the family level, the disintegration of the family is fast becoming the norm rather than an exception. At the social level, the ever-rising crime rate, social and economic exploitation, commercialization of all forms of dangerous substances and practices including sexual deviations, addictions and crimes, and various kinds of extremist movements working in the interests of certain forces have almost completely destroyed universal peace. It is in the background of this asphyxiating disruption of harmony that Qur'an needs to be understood and applied in all spheres of life.”

“Islam’s agenda, as shown by the Noble Qur’an and Prophet, is to establish a Natural and Just World Order. The agenda of the present world is to establish and sustain the New World Order. It has led to the development of a strange kind of world, which appears to be a paradise from outside, but as one enters it, one finds nothing but hell. We are living in a world where, thanks to the designs of merchants, immorality reigns. The globe of the New World Order is therefore rapidly developing into nothing but a fireball of chaos. It is in the backdrop of this universal disharmony that Islam, in its final form established by the Last Prophet, has to play its role. We have to challenge the New World Order and establish a Natural Just World Order, in accordance with the principles laid down by the Final Testament of God and the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him).”

This book is sure to attract students and scholars, and the holistic system of peace it endorses can greatly help even non-believers. The book will open new windows of research in Islamic and Qur'anic studies. It would also be of great help to students of Islamic courses.



Saudi authorities imposed hefty fines and imprisonment for cutting down trees

## Saudi Arabia Launches Plantation Campaign

By Tasnuva Jahan

“ In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, authorities have declared strict steps to curb environmental vandalism with fines of up to nearly \$8m and 10 years’ imprisonment.

Recently, the Saudi Public Prosecution said in a tweet that 'Cutting down trees, shrubs, herbs, or plants [and] uprooting, moving, stripping them of their bark, leaves or any part, or moving their soil' might land criminals with the maximum fine and jail time. The announcement is part of the development strategy of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 to attain environmental sustainability by the end of the decade. However, forests still cover approximately 30 percent of the world's land surface. But day by day they are declining at an alarming rate. Deforestation is not always carried out on purpose. Some of it is caused by a mix of human and natural causes, such as wildfires and overgrazing, which can prevent young trees from growing. Even forest loss caused by natural disasters such as extreme weather, landslides, and wildfires is tough to anticipate and control. What is really more concerning being that, as in the past record, human activities are the primary cause of deforestation around the world. One of the main reasons for this deforestation was the clearing of land for cultivation. Deforestation and forest destruction are still occurring at unprecedented rates, directly contributing to ongoing biodiversity loss. Since 1990, an estimated 420 million hectares of forest has been lost to conversion to other land uses. According to a report of the World Bank, the world lost 502,000 square miles (1.3 million square kilometers) of forest between 1990 and 2016, which is equivalent to an area the larger size than South Africa. In 2020, the approximate loss of virgin primary forests was estimated to be 4.2 million hectares, about the size of the Netherlands. Deforestation is estimated to increase by 10 million hectares per year between 2015 and 2020. Over the last 50 years, about 17% of the Amazonian rainforest has been lost, and recent losses have been on the rise. In this situation, Saudi Arabia's authorities' strict action against environmental vandalism with fines is a clear outcome of sustainable development. The forest and land biodiversity vary considerably on factors like



Forests cover approximately 30 percent of the world's land surface and are declining at an alarming rate

forest type, geography, environment, and soils, as well as human use. Although some areas are experiencing deforestation, others are trying to natural expansion or concerted attempts to create new forests. There are a few countries, especially Indonesia and Malaysia in Southeast Asia, that saw significant reductions in forest loss in 2020.

In terms of climate change, chopping down trees releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and reduces the ability of the air to absorb carbon dioxide already present. Trees are essential for a number of reasons, not only they absorb the carbon dioxide that we exhale, but also reduce the heat-trapping greenhouse gases that human activities release. Clearly, global warming rises as these gases flood the atmosphere. According to one calculation, tropical tree cover alone can provide 23% of the climate mitigation required over the next decade to reach the Paris Agreement's 2015 goals.

Trees have given a very important aspect in Islamic guidelines. Preserving nature has become a worldwide issue. It may be starting with planting trees. Trees are generally the sign of life. We are also highlighting the importance of trees in light of Islamic prescription. According to Shari'ah principles, it is the human responsibility to keep the environment fit and clean. There are several references in the Noble Qur'an and Hadith that trees and gardens in



Planting a tree is equivalent to doing endless good deeds as long as the tree is alive.



Since 1990, an estimated 420 million hectares of forest has been lost to conversion to other land uses.

the paradise colored green. Notably, Surats Al-Mu'minun, Al-Rahman, Al-Baqara as well as Al-Inaam describe the significance of plants. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) talked many times about the significance of trees and plants in Islam. Narrated by Anas bin Malik, the Prophet said, 'No Muslim plants a tree or sows a seed and then a bird, or a

human, or an animal eats from it but that it is charity for him.'" (Sahih al-Bukhari).

The Islamic practice is rich with references to our duty as Muslims to serve as environmental stewards. Trees are being planted as a charitable act. Planting trees has many advantages for both the planter and other beings. If a tree gives life to an animal or grass under it, the person who planted it will be rewarded. Planting a tree is equivalent to doing endless good deeds as long as the tree is alive. All have gained from the tree, and the rewards go straight to the planter.

Even the Prophet had a strong spiritual bond with trees. 'The Prophet Muhammad used to stand by a tree or a date-palm on Friday.



Then an Ansari woman or man said. "O Allah's Messenger! Shall we make a pulpit for you?" He replied, "If you wish." So they built a pulpit for him. And when it was Friday, he proceeded on the way to the pulpit (for delivering the sermon). The date palm cried like a child! The Prophet descended (the pulpit) and embraced it, whereas it continued moaning like a child being quietened. The Prophet said, "It was crying for (missing) what it used to hear of religious knowledge given near to it" (Sahih al-Bukhari). There is also a direction about the passerby's permission to eat fruit. Narrated by Rafi' bin 'Amr, 'I was throwing stones at a date-palm belonging to some of the Ansar. They took me along with them to the Prophet. He said, 'O Rafi'! Why were you throwing stones at their date-palm?' He asked, 'I said: 'Out of hunger, O Messenger of Allah! He said, 'Do not throw stones at them, eat what falls. May Allah fill you and quench your thirst (At-Tirmidhi)'. Therefore, trees must be treated with respect and should not be hurt unnecessarily. Several Quranic verses also instructed to use the blessing which comes from a tree. Surat Al-Mu'minun verse 20 explains, 'And [We brought forth] a tree issuing from Mount Sinai which produces oil and food for those who eat.' In the Noble Qur'an, Allah also uses the tree as an example to explain a good deed. Surat Ibrahim verse 24 says, 'Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky?'

Allah confirms His existence through a variety of ways, comprising the living of the trees. According to Surat Al-Hajj, verse 18, 'Do you not see that to Allah prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the moving creatures and many of the people? ...' This verse confirms that Allah ranks trees among other notable creations. But we prefer to ignore trees as well as flora in



According to the World Bank, the world lost 502,000 square miles (1.3 million square kilometers) of forest between 1990 and 2016

general, as they don't do something that we can see and have instant satisfaction. Further, Surat An-Nahl verse 65 says that 'Allah has sent down rain from the sky and given life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness. Indeed, in that is a sign for a people who listen.' This verse clarifies that Allah bestows blessings on humans and the earth by the rain that he sends down. The rain makes it green and aids the growth of the trees. As a result, trees can provide life to other beings such as smaller plants and animals, as well as produce more oxygen for humans. In other words, the source of all life is the tree. Trees can give life to other creatures such as animals that eat their leaves. Humans who inhale the air it produces. It has been made abundantly clear that trees are extremely important in Islam and in general. People should not cause harm to the environment for their own interests.

Preserving the environment by planting more trees are really valuable for the human being. Trees provide us with the oxygen we need to live. Trees minimize storm water runoff, reducing erosion and contamination in our rivers and possibly reducing flood effects. Many wildlife species depend on trees as a source of food and shelter. Various birds and mammals depend on trees for habitat. The tree contributes to the balance of the ecosystem. By absorbing carbon dioxide, it helps to keep the air clean and safeguard us against natural



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**Prophet Muhammad emphasized many times the significance of trees and plants in Islam**

disasters. Trees would eventually play a major role in slowing the rate of climate change, preserving biodiversity, and providing food for billions of people. Despite this, deforestation and the mass removal of trees continues, diminishing the long-term benefits of standing trees for the sake of short-term gain.

Because of the increasing pollution in the atmosphere, the need for tree planting has become even more urgent. We should continue to plant trees in order to protect our climate. The tree-planting system should be extended to all parts of the world. Trees are an integral part of our lives. The value of tree plantation and the need for trees cannot be ignored. For our own survival, we can plant more and more trees. Thus, it is our moral obligation to plant and care for trees. While humanity has

ignored the goal of reducing deforestation, it is still possible to eliminate it entirely, if policymakers use the strategies combined with the stick of harsh penalties for criminals. Since the timber industry and the business of other forest products are global phenomena, this will necessitate a concerted global effort. So, one or two countries alone would not be able to combat this. All governments, corporations, and international organizations must coordinate their policies and implement best practices for forest conservation and reforestation. From the Qur'anic perspective, deforestation, cutting down trees, and indiscriminate use of trees are also blatant violations of Islamic principles. It is, without a doubt, a major concern for the entire humanity. Fortunately, Saudi Arabia has taken steps to reduce ecological destruction.

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