#RejectHate

REJECT HATE

"

Islamophobia must be stigmatized, as racism is. Non-Muslims must stand up with their Muslim neighbors and reject those who would dehumanize Muslims example and fail to see the dignity and worth of every individual."

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The Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, receives Dr. Al-Issa at the WHO headquarters in Geneva.

We dedicate this issue to a discussion of Islamophobia and to the #RejectHate campaign that the Muslim World League has launched. We developed this campaign to raise awareness of Islamophobia and the harm it does to all of us and to encourage people to fight it wherever it exists and in all its forms.

This is not a subject that we take on lightly, because it would be easy for skeptics to accuse us of mounting a self-serving campaign. After all, we are a Muslim organization, so we would be expected to stand up for Muslims. But the fight against Islamophobia is and must be an inherent part of the MWL's mission. We are fighting religious extremism, religious-inspired terror and religious intolerance. We speak out against anti-Semitism and violence against Christians. We encourage inter-faith dialogue and harmony. How can we not ask our brethren to join with us to end Islamophobia?

Islamophobia is much the same as other forms of prejudice and intolerance. It is born of ignorance and fear. It is nurtured by suspicion of "the other," the person who looks different, dresses different, worships different or speaks with an accent. Ironically, this kind of prejudice seems to grow as the world shrinks.

Then the attacks of 9/11 happened, fanatic extremists perverting the teachings of Islam mounted violent attacks around the world, and suddenly "the other" became someone to suspect, to fear and to loathe. Suspicion, insults and even violence was directed against peaceful and law-abiding Muslims. Muslims who had been loving neighbors and loyal citizens suddenly felt unwelcome in their communities. Thankfully, kind and rational individuals have rallied to the side of the hundreds of millions of Muslims who follow the peaceful teachings of their faith, but it will take time and effort to eradicate the atmosphere of suspicion and fear that exists among many people.

This fear has manifested itself in violence even against non-Muslims in the U.S., such as the seven Sikhs who were killed in Wisconsin in 2012 by a racist gunman with a 9/11 tattoo on his arm who apparently mistook them for Muslims. It is a short stroll from bias to dehumanization, and then to violence.

Even lawmakers have fallen prey to the spell of Islamophobia, such as in Oklahoma, where voters approved a ballot measure in 2010 to amend the state constitution to prohibit the use of sharia law in state courts. The issue prevailed despite the fact that legal and constitutional experts considered the likelihood that sharia would be introduced in the courts to be extremely far-fetched. North Carolina and Missouri later adopted similar laws.

One hundred years ago, many westerners viewed Muslims benignly as inhabitants of lands far away who practiced a different religion.

But we are no longer distant people. Today, Muslims and non-Muslims live close to each other and are in contact with each other every day.

There is no easy answer to islamophobia, as there is no easy answer to anti-Semitism, religious intolerance or racism. Combating it will require education, dialogue, forbearance and solid example. Muslims in non-Muslim areas must be part of the larger society and

must be seen as such. They must take part in broader civic life and know their neighbors. Self-segregation may be tempting and give a false feeling of security, but it is not the answer. Finally, Islamophobia must be stigmatized, as racism is. Non-Muslims must stand up with their Muslim neighbors and reject those who would dehumanize Muslims example and fail to see the dignity and worth of every individual.

- The Editors

Dr. Al-Issa meeting local children.

Reject Hate

The Reject Hate Campaign is a groundbreaking initiative undertaken by the MWL to protect Muslims from abuse and violence fueled by social media. It also aims to cleanse the internet space of hatred and bigotry. Its success rate depends on all of us.

What is Islamophobia?

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, Islamophobia is "an irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam." In recent years, the internet and social media have become a free space for expressing Islamophobic sentiments and ideas. Dr. Al-Issa believed that acting to

combat Islamophobia was a mission that the MWL should undertake vigorously as part of its ongoing effort to promote interreligious dialog, understanding and tolerance.

The power of Social Media

"Social media has the power to bring people together across physical boundaries, but in recent years we have seen it become a breeding ground for hatred and intolerance," Dr. Al-Issa said. In October 2020, two leading global social media channels, Facebook and Twitter, introduced rules designed to combat hate speech on their platforms. They both also declared that they would remove posts denying

Holocaust. Additionally, although they have announced "zero-tolerance approach" to hate speech, no steps have been taken to curtail Islamophobic content from the platforms.

As the Reject Hate petition states, as many as one of every 1,000 posts on Facebook and Twitter violates the companies' rules on hate speech, and more than three-quarters of content that is reported as potentially violating the companies' anti-hate standards remain on the platforms even after being reported and investigated. This includes memes or posts that many Muslims and others consider offensive, anti-Islamic or Islamophobic.

Time for a Change

The MWL is calling for a zero-tolerance policy toward hate speech targeting Muslims or adherents of any religion. It is time to end personal abuse, threats, and physical violence directed against Muslims that are incubated and fueled by content spread through social media. Islamophobia can act as a disease, and we need to stop its spread.

In March 2021, the MWL launched the Reject Hate campaign to end Islamophobic content and hate speech on social media. The ongoing social media campaign is accompanied by a petition on change.org, and Dr. Mohammed Al-Issa sent letters to the CEOs of Facebook and Twitter, Mark Zuckerberg and Jack Dorsey urging them to improve their zero-tolerance policies toward hate speech targeting Muslims or adherents of any religion. The letters also called for more robust procedures to ensure that hateful content is removed quickly.

The Impact

As of the beginning of September, the Reject the Hate campaign has gained significant attention globally, accumulating more than 28.4 thousand signatures on change.org. The campaign spikes the conversation among social media users. Since its inception, it has been mentioned over 16.3K times on Twitter. The keen interest confirms the need to act on this burning issue.

> **Social media has the power to bring people together across physical boundaries, but in recent years we have seen it become a breeding ground for hatred and intolerance."**
>
> - Dr. Mohammad Al-Issa

Take Action!

Undeniably, the internet and social media play an essential role in our lives, and this role increases with the development of technology and the expansion of the modern lifestyle. The conversations taking place in the internet space have a real impact on people's lives and wellbeing. There should be no room for hatred and bigotry of any kind on social media platforms. Therefore, The MWL urges everyone to participate in the Reject Hate campaign, to clamp down on abusive content in a meaningful way, and make sure that those who spread it no longer have a home on those platforms. To take action is a moral duty not only for Muslims, but for everyone who has at heart the ideal that the internet space should be free of intolerance, hatred, and bigotry to all humankind.

In 2016, about 200 people gathered in east Minneapolis for a rally and march to denounce hate speech and hate crimes against Muslims.

The Rise of Islamophobia
During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Islamophobia has become a multi-faceted and a deep-rooted problem globally, and it has gotten worse during the coronavirus pandemic.

According to The Conversation, 2015-2019 observed a spike of anti-Muslim hate incidents. The U.S. media reported more than 1,000 such acts. However, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated over 50% of hate crimes go unreported. During the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Islamophobia has taken on a new form.

Hindu-Muslim tensions have existed in India since before partition and independence, and a strong wave of Islamophobia struck in India when national authorities linked the spread of COVID-19 in that country to an annual Muslim conference in Delhi in early March 2020. Rumors alleging that Muslims had spread the virus in this country led to excluding this minority from some areas of public life.

Muslims make up less than ten percent of the population of Sri Lanka and largely stayed out of that county's 26-year civil war. Yet Islamophobia has been growing since the war ended, fueled my suspicion that the country's Muslims are really allied with the Tamil minority. They intensified after the Easter suicide bombings of hotels and Christian churches in Sri Lanka in 2019.

The coronavirus pandemic gave rise to new suspicions in March 2020 when Muslims staged protests to oppose the Sri Lankan government's order that the bodies of all Covid-19 victims be cremated. Cremation, which is the practice among Hindus, is a violation of Islamic law, and Muslims sought an exception to the mandate.

At the beginning of the pandemic, well-established mainstream western media such as CNN, BBC, or The New York Times used images of famous mosques in Istanbul, among other images, to illustrate stories about the U.S. suspension of travel from Europe. At the same time, a wave of hateful memes depicting Muslims as super spreaders of the virus gained popularity across social media platforms, often accompanied by provocative images taken before the pandemic.

Facebook and Twitter did not take steps to remove unsubstantiated claims that Muslims were ignoring social distancing regulations and that mosques were outbreak sources.

According to TIME magazine, between March 28 and April 3, 2020, hashtag #CoronaJihad has appeared nearly 300,000 times on Twitter, and as many as 165 million platform users may have seen it.

The immediate and uncontrolled spread of false or defamatory information fuels further abuse, which often moves beyond the online realm, affecting people's lives, safety, and health. Harmful content, including false news, abusive memes and negative discussions, have remained on social media for months despite users' attempts to report them for violating the platforms' community standards.

The coronavirus escalated Islamophobia worldwide by giving the purveyors of anti-Islamic sentiments a new false theme argument to exploit. Now, more than ever, we need to act against this ongoing hatred and abuse. The Reject Hate campaign is a resource providing an opportunity to end the mistreatment of Muslims on social media.

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Social Media Brings Out
The Hate in Individuals

This article was originally published in the Washington Times.

A perusal of social media content shows how those of all backgrounds violate the most sacred of tenets.

"Do not hate one another," Prophet Muhammad teaches. "Do not turn away from one another. Do not undercut one another."

Similarly, St. Paul offers in Ephesians: "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."

In Judaism, the concept of *hotzaat shem* ra forbids defamation. In Buddhism, backbiting and other forms of divisiveness run contrary to the values of right speech.

Even secular traditions from ancient Greece until today offer us variants of the Golden Rule: Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing.

Yet even a cursory perusal of social media content published around the world shows how wantonly individuals of all backgrounds violate these most sacred of tenets. Studies show how each day hundreds of thousands of tweets, snaps, updates and posts break the rules for hate speech created by social media platforms. The problem is only getting worse.

When describing what constitutes virtuous behavior toward the other, none of our faiths or philosophies include a special exception for social media materials. There is no asterisk to be found pertaining to proper interpersonal conduct in the Quran, the New Testament, the Talmud or any other venerated text. Nor is there a moral carve-out buried in the footnotes of the humanist canon.

Around the world, diverse legal foundations and statutory frameworks guide us. But what the fundamentally peaceful religions and belief systems that undergird our societies impart is that online hatred ought to have no place in our world. Every day, men and women should not have to bear the psychological and even physical strain of social media abuse. We have seen how no one is immune when social media platforms allow for vile threats and dehumanizing comments, often cloaked behind protection of fake names and false images.

Last month, the chief executives of Twitter, Facebook and Alphabet all promised to curtail the use of social media for misinformation and extremism, laying out before a House committee what their platforms have done as well as their technological advancements to combat online hate. None focused on the detrimental impact such material has on the daily lives of the people.

In the United States, some of the biggest stars in sports have reported revolting abuse directed toward them. Even as English Premier League teams take the knee in opposition to racism, footballers of color repeatedly have had to decry the racist aggression they face on social media.

I commend the efforts of athletes and sports leagues to stand up to the abuse. The Premier

League recently wrote an open letter to the CEOs of Twitter and Facebook, Jack Dorsey and Mark Zuckerberg, imploring them to root out hatred on their platforms. Their plea echoes many of the sentiments we at the Muslim World League have expressed in our correspondence with social media companies.

In Islam, we learn to abhor backbiting, or *gheebah*, which Allah likens to eating the flesh of your dead brother. It is by no means a position unique to Islam.

That is why we are engaging other faith-based communities, and reaching out to the CEOs of Twitter, Facebook and other companies to clamp down on the online hate their services have helped incubate.

We have seen some positive steps. In October, Facebook agreed to ban all content that denies the Holocaust. Such a prohibition was long overdue, though we note with sadness that the policy has yet to be thoroughly implemented.

Lamentably, hatred against Muslims hasn't been pursued with the same vigor. Dehumanizing content continues to flourish related to the Rohingya in Myanmar despite what many countries have declared a genocide. Even in the liberal democracies of the West, open insults to Islam and its adherents proliferate widely.

Online hate doesn't stop in cyberspace. Muslims from all walks of life are disproportionately subjected to verbal attacks, vandalism, discrimination and physical violence. Too often, the motivation stems from social media.

Such hatred is not inherently human or inevitable. In my work as an interfaith bridge builder, I have repeatedly found that the overwhelming majority of people abhor racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Christianity or prejudice and discrimination of any kind.

Unfortunately, our voices rarely get amplified on social media when we are not famous influencers or millionaire entertainers.

For those of us in leadership positions, we bear special responsibility. We must use our voices to speak not only for ourselves, but also for the millions of men and women, girls and boys who suffer the scars of online hate. They are predominantly ordinary people who often struggle to stand up to the abusers.

The victims are very real and we all know them. They are our neighbors and our co-workers. They stock the grocery stores and deliver the packages in a time of pandemic. They teach our children, treat our illnesses and ensure our public services. They deserve the same outcry in response to hatred, the same promise of protection as the most recognized celebrity.

As a religious leader, it is not for me to prescribe a universal remedy across different national borders and legal codes. Some reforms are obvious, however. At the very least, social media companies should prevent individuals using their platforms to attack and denigrate others while keeping their own identities hidden.

Even among the non-religious, can anyone argue such behavior is anything other than sinful?

The Washington Times

The three young black stars following their crucial misses (Left to Right) Marcus Rashford, Bukayo Saka, and Jadon Sancho.

The Battle Against
Online Racism in Football

The world of social media has made strides in connecting people from all over the world, especially when it comes to sports. Fans can watch, interact with, and stay on top of their favorite teams from anywhere in the world through multiple mediums. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram allow fans to "speak" with players by tagging them or direct-messaging them. Additionally, people can speak their minds about players or teams, vent their frustrations, or praise performances all while seeing their words reach thousands of people online.

This is a relatively new phenomenon and has led to some amazing connections and new fans, but unfortunately this has also created a dangerous online "veil of anonymity." Behind a keyboard, people feel untouchable and are more willing to post harmful or hurtful

messages about players without fear of reper-cussions. This has created a fertile ground for online racism, especially in European football.

Racism is not a new phenomenon, but online platforms seem to offer those who may not be willing to showcase their prejudices in person a way to do so without consequences. In 2015, internet companies along with police identified over 130,000 racially charged posts towards Premier League players alone.

This past year, racism around the world has come to center stage with the Black Lives Movement and the events surrounding the death of George Floyd. In response to and support of the movement, the majority of European football clubs have been taking a knee on the pitch before each match. It has also reached global importance surrounding England's penalty time loss in the finals of the UEFA European Championships this summer.

Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka are three budding stars for England who hold the trust and respect of their teammates and coaches. They are also among England's best penalty kickers, and they were selected to take game-deciding penalty kicks in the final against Italy. Unfortunately for them and England, all their shots missed or hit the goalkeeper, leaving England on the losing side once again. The racist outpouring on social media immediately following has disheartened all of England and the football world. This even reached the extent of racist fans defacing a mural of Rashford in his hometown of Man-chester with graffiti slurs.

Combating such racism is not an easy task. U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has already taken the step to ban any and all identifiable online racists from all future British football match-es, but this does not solve the real issue. The principal obstacle to online racism, besides the existence of racism itself, is that there is no real

way to hold many of these people account-able, for two primary reasons.

First of all, the majority of racially charged com-ments about those players came from accounts outside England, where English authorities have no jurisdiction. Additionally, some of the accounts are fake, "troll," or "bot" accounts, meaning there is no single person behind

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them. Another issue surrounds the privacy of account holders. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter have regulations that prevent them from disclosing certain information about users of their platforms. All of this makes it increasingly difficult to hold racists accountable in the modern age. But that is not to say that all is lost.

Two groups have emerged in the U.K. that attempt to fight back against forces of discrim-ination, prejudice and racism in football. Show Racism the Red Card and Kick It Out are two of

the leading anti-discrimination organizations and have been around since the late '90s. Kick it Out works "throughout the football, educational and community sectors to challenge discrimination, encourage inclusive practices and campaign for positive change." Kick It Out looks to partner with schools and youth clubs to educate young footballers to be inclusive. The group calls on football fans to report racist abuse that they see online through their website, with hopes to either take these postings down or hold the authors accountable. Show Racism the Red Card follows the same path. These are great steps toward a more inclusive football environment, but the road is long, and racism still permeates the colonial history of the U.K. and its football clubs.

To fully end discrimination in sports takes the strength of a community to be unwavering in its support for all athletes and unapologetic in

> "Kick it Out works throughout the football, educational and community sectors to challenge discrimination, encourage inclusive practices and campaign for positive change. "

holding racist and prejudiced fans accountable for their words. As players continue to take the knee and use their platforms to promote change, more conversations can be had, more lessons can be learned, and eventually the world of football and sports in general can be safe and welcoming to all.

Kick It Out is the leader in combating racism and discrimination in football.

Marcus Rashford's Fight for Justice

Marcus Rashford has taken it upon himself to use the death of George Floyd, the racist fallout from the Euro Finals, and the vandalism of his hometown mural as a call to arms to end racial abuse of football players. He is not alone. Rashford and other black athletes in football and other sports have taken to social media to promote change, and Marcus is one of the leaders. Marcus's tough and underprivileged upbringing has made him a symbol for youth around the globe, with the message that a person can overcome adversity or disadvantage in life. In this vein, he wrote a book titled, You Are a Champion: How to Be the Best You Can Be, which is already being seen as the work of a true global activist.

Marcus's efforts on and off the pitch have not gone unnoticed. Once his loving fans saw the graffiti that tainted his mural, the local community of Withington, Manchester, took to the streets to show their support for their local hero. Fans from all over England came to cover up the graffiti with notes of love, encouragement, praise and thanks to Rashford, who has become a role model for young black footballers and youth everywhere. "Seeing the response in Withington had me on the verge of tears," he said. "The communities that always wrapped their arms around me continue to hold me up. I'm Marcus Rashford, 23-year-old, black man from Withington and Wythenshawe, South Manchester. If I have nothing else I have that." Rashford continues his fight for justice and the world looks to more young stars like him to lead the way.

The vandalized mural is seen here covered in notes of support for Rashford.

Sloane Stephens Receives Thousands of
## Hate Messages after US Open Loss

Vitriol against athletes is not limited to football players. While tennis is a low-impact and non-contact sport that does not usually evoke the frenzy of team sports like European football, it has long been considered an elite sport for the "privileged" and has not been immune to negative racial attention.

World number three Sloane Stephens has long been one of the WTA Tour's leading players, having won the 2017 US Open and five other titles. After losing to Germany's Angelique Kerber in the 2021 US Open, the American player says she received more than 2,000 messages of abuse - including racist and sexist comments. Stephens posted examples of the hateful messages in her Instagram story to shine a light on the extent of the abuse. She confirmed that this type of hate is persistent and exhausting, and she believes it isn't talked about enough.

The Women's Tennis Association, the governing body of the women's tour, said player safety is its number one priority.

Star athletes like fellow tennis player Naomi Osaka and gymnast Simone Biles have shined a renewed spotlight on the importance of mental health in sports. In light of this recent attention given to mental health in sports, the WTA highlighted its work to educate, counsel, and protect players. It is working with social media companies to combat harassment and abuse on their platforms, by shutting down accounts when warranted and notifying authorities, if applicable. Despite the online hate, Stephens said she is thankful to have people who also support her.
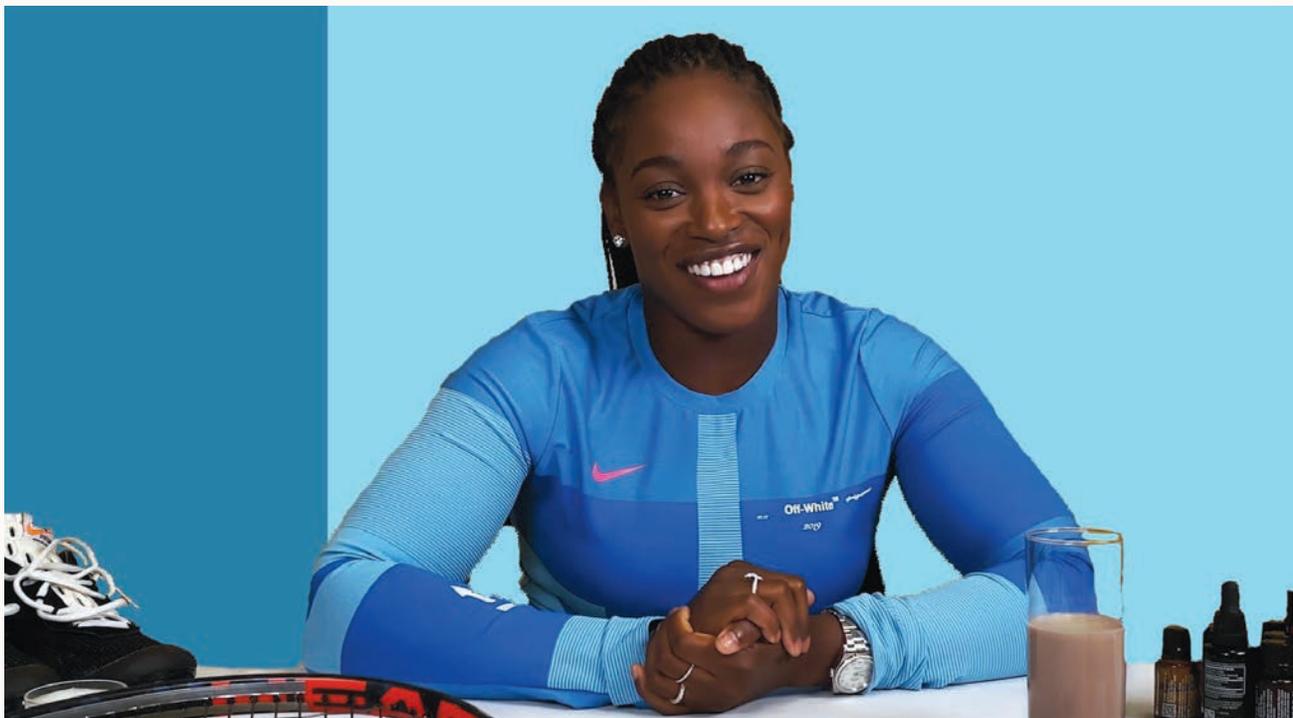
Sloane Stephensz.

Communities demonstrate against a rise in hateful speech and violence against Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities.

A New Online Twist in A Long History of Anti-Asian Hate

Anti-Asian Hate Resurgent Online Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

As the world continues to grapple with a global pandemic affecting people of all religious faiths, ethnicities, and nationalities, it is more important than ever to remember that there is more that unites us than divides us. We must look to history, old and new, to understand the role hate and bigotry has played in dividing communities. Only if we reject not only Islamophobia but work to combat all strains of

virulent ideology can humanity move forward together in the spirit of cooperation.

Of prominence since the COVID-19 pandemic has been the unfortunate rise of hate against people of Asian descent in the United States and across the world, with malign actors thriving online and propagating their misinformation and hate through social media to

the detriment of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) and all of us.

Xenophobia in the United States against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders has had a real and deep adverse impact on the physical and mental health of those victimized by hateful online rhetoric. References to COVID-19 as the "kung flu" online seek to place blame on Asian Americans for the emergence of the pandemic and can lead to deadly attacks carried out later in the physical world such as the Atlanta spa shootings. An organization called Stop AAPI Hate has recorded over 6,000 hate incidents against Asian Americans and Pacific Islands, a rise of more than 149% compared to the year preceding the pandemic.

The fact that Asians are often stereotyped as a "model minority" can have adverse effects on efforts to take hate speech against them seriously and can result in their concerns being minimized. A survey from January 2021 reported that 17% of Asian Americans had experienced harassment. According to Morning Consult, 2 in 5 Asian Americans say social media companies are doing a poor job of moderating hate on their platforms. 75% of those who had experienced harassment attributed the cause of the online attacks to their race or ethnicity.

From a historical perspective, racism against Asian-Americans is not new. In the 19th century, the Page and Chinese Exclusion Acts shut out immigrants that sought a better life in the United States. Japanese Americans were forcibly incarcerated during WWII, often regardless of any ties to Japanese state institutions and absent any role in the conflict.

According to the Media Diversity Institute, the hashtag #ChineseVirus was used more than 68,000 times on Instagram. Together with harmful tags such as #coronajihad and #MuslimVirus that reportedly reached 170 million users, social media has been abused against

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and Muslims alike during this pandemic. In response to such hateful trends on social media, communities have begun to take the matter into their own hands and push back on the tide of hate using their own hashtags that have gained prominence such as #StopAsianHate and #StopAAPIHate.

Victims often note that social media companies such as Twitter put the burden to report inappropriate hate speech on users, and that reporting dozens of bigoted Tweets can quickly become an additional burden only to receive feedback from Twitter that many comments are not outside the bounds of the company's hate speech policy.

Following a surge in COVID-19 misinformation, as well as the rise in online hate speech against AAPI communities, the U.S. Congress called for the testimony of the CEOs of Facebook, Twitter, and Google in March 2021. In May 2021, the

#StopAsianHate emerged as a force on social media to counteract the surge in bigoted attacks against Asian American and Pacific Islanders.

> **The Muslim World League supports AAPI communities during this difficult time and will continue resolute in its efforts to foster peace and increase understanding between all of God's creations."**

U.S. Congress responded to the tide of hate in a bipartisan manner and Biden Administration signed into law legislation to protect those who would be harmed by the physical violence and online assaults of those driven by extremist and bigoted ideology.

In May 2021, Facebook added #StopAsian-Hate notifications in news feeds as an additional measure to prevent hate. Efforts by the Facebook Partner Center to convene relevant organizations and provide educational materials and guidance to prevent Anti-Asian hate are welcome, but this problem will only be tackled when all forms of hate are moderated with significantly more investment so that people of all backgrounds and creeds can live in peaceful coexistence.

The Muslim World League supports AAPI communities during this difficult time and will continue resolute in its efforts to foster peace and increase understanding between all of God's creations.

Artwork promoting positive messages about Asian-Americans in the United States is being used in educational programming online to stem the tide of hate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A workshop on online hate conducted by the Amadeu Antonio Foundation.

The Fight Against Online Hate:
Resources and Skills

With the rise of social media and the prevalence of the internet in our daily lives, there has been a commensurate rise in online hate. Online hate isn't only schoolyard bullying or mean words gone digital, but any expression or promotion of vitriolic hate and racism, whether it is clear or veiled behind a messaging strategy. There has been significant work done by organizations across the world in order to put forward strategies and best practices to address this growing problem.

One such organization is the Turing Institute in the UK. It offers a resource hub that organizes a variety of initiatives in a single website, a one-stop-shop for those interested in accessing resources for anything related to online hate. It includes sources for metrics designed to track online hate, tech solutions for countering online abuse, statistics, academic research, and workshops on online hate.

links to a specific site, a WHOIS search to show who owns a domain, and conducting basic search engine tests to reveal the reliability of a site.

Hate speech is an area of particular concern due to its disproportionate impact on young people. This is because they are typically the heaviest users of the internet, and social media specifically. The concern is that teenagers and young adults might not have developed the skills necessary to contend with the hateful content they may be exposed to and therefore are less likely to be able to deal with it in a healthy or constructive way.

A shining example of how this disproportionate impact on the young is being addressed is the work of Sadat Rahman, a Bangladeshi teen who created a mobile app to help young people report instances of online hate. The app, called Cyber Teens, allows users to report instances of online abuse confidentially to a network of volunteers who then communicate with the relevant authorities to address the reported abuse. In addition to its reporting mechanism, the app also includes educational materials on online safety for its users.

This app is especially noteworthy due to the importance of establishing a space in which those who feel like they have been targeted by hate speech online can communicate their experiences. This is important because exposure to hateful messages and materials can cause stress, anxiety, and even depression. Therefore, it is crucial that there be a space for those affected to discuss their experiences and to make available to them any treatment that can remedy the adverse effects of hate speech.

In addition to access to resources, people of all ages need digital literacy is they are to counter online hate. Many people assume that most of us are digitally literate today due to our extensive exposure to the internet, particularly young people. But the truth is that digital literacy is more than simply being familiar with online content.

Digital literacy also includes knowing how to verify sources in an environment in which many hate groups devote considerable effort to ensure that their sites look legitimate. This includes conducting link searches to see who links to a specific site, a WHOIS search to show who owns a domain, and conducting basic

Logo of the Cyber Teens website.

search engine searches to reveal the reliability of a site.

The ability to identify hate speech is another valuable skill if we are to counter its prevalence online. Keywords to look out for when trying to ascertain whether something is hate speech are terms that refer to "others," a "glorious past" and "victimhood." This rhetoric is used to create a narrative that attempts to justify intolerance by singling out one group as the cause of a society's problems or as the cause of a specific group's decline.

These steps are generally what is advised by the various guides and workshops dedicated to addressing this important issue and should be considered a "best practice" when it comes to dealing with online hate.

However, this isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to an issue as complex and multifaceted as online hate speech. Organizations may choose to focus on aspects of this problem that are the most relevant to their own environment rather than taking a holistic approach.

Independently from which source one chooses to tackle this problem, the choice should be guided by education and tempered by empathy. Reminding people that there are human beings behind the usernames found online is something that is crucial to successfully addressing the problem of online hate.

Sadat Rahman, the 17-year-old creator of the Cyber Teens mobile app.

Protestors hold signs during a rally in March 2021 to protect Asian Communities after numerous hateful attacks on the Asian community online and in real life.

What to Do if You're
A Target of Online Abuse

The concept of bullying is not new. Bullies are a part of any type of group dynamic, whether it is in school, among friend groups, in the workplace or and online. as seen over the last 20 or so years.

Online bullying—or cyberbullying—and internet hate seemed top hit their stride in the mid-2000s, as technology evolved, people became comfortable with the internet and access to different sites became much easier. In addition, the ability to share information such as photos got easier once text messaging and emailing became more popular and advanced.

Cyberbullying is most common among teenagers. Young people are able to communicate with their friends online in a way that differs

A parent holds a sign to protest cyberbullying near Surfside Middle School in Panama City Beach, Florida, following the death of a student due to cyberbullying attacks.

significantly from normal school interactions. One area in which they communicate is through social media. Anonymous threats and slander are not new, but the ability to bully or slander online has grown with the expansion of the digital world. Online abuse —from impersonation accounts to hateful slurs and death threats—began with the advent of the internet itself, but the problem is pervasive and growing.

A 2017 study from the Pew Research Center found that more than 40 percent of Americans have experienced online abuse, and more than 60 percent have witnessed it. Social media is traditionally an open forum that has been only loosely monitored and regulated, which has made cyberbullying relatively easy. A person will often do or say things from a distance, in the distant safety of their home and through their computer or mobile device, that they would never say or do in public or in person. Hate and abuse can be directed at any number of areas, including a person's appearance, religion, race or sexual orientation, or may be based on rivalries in sports or social activities or groups.

Cyberbullying has produced some tragic results, and schools, state and local govern-

ments and communities across the country have adopted measures to prevent or punish it. Still, it continues. Being the target of an online attack is certainly hurtful, but it can also be humiliating or destroy the victim's reputation. Cyberbullying has led to school transfers, emotional breakdowns, and even suicides among the victims, but steps can be taken by anyone who wishes to defend themselves and find some peace.

The first thing one can do if they are the target of online abuse is to identify the type of abuse. Is it a racial or religious attack? Is it an attack on appearance? Personality? Work? Identifying the type of attack and its probable source is important in determining what to do next.

Additionally, some attacks may be more serious than others, depending on what is important to the victim. Once the type of abuse is identified, the next step is to document it. Documenting the attack is important because it allows the person being bullied to communicate with someone in authority and offer verifiable facts.

Furthermore, it entails keeping screenshots, saving emails/ texts, and recording details about online interactions in writing. The victim

should document everything he or she thinks is important before reporting it to authorities. The authorities will have questions, so it is important to have as many details documented as possible.

The next step would be to assess the situation. Is safety a concern? Are these online attacks threatening to the victim and his or her family's safety or merely rude and annoying? Is the abuse from a person known to be abusive in the past? Have the attacks moved to a different platform?

Assessing the degree of physical safety and taking the necessary steps to ensure the victim is safe is a priority. If the victim feels unsafe, he or she should seek a friend and get help.

If the situation shows no sign of stopping, and particularly if it escalates in scale or intensity, the victim should consider reporting it to law enforcement. When these attacks occur on an established social media platform, there are a few things one can do to block, mute and report them.

Muting the person will showcase fewer posts from the bully, and blocking the person will prevent any communication between the victim and the abuser. Reporting abuse can get the account revoked and the person banned from the platform.

All of these actions have risks as well. Muting the abuser can be temporary and may not resolve the issue. Depending on the abuser, blocking or reporting might escalate the abuse, as a person can easily create another account and continue the attacks. It is important to try to stay calm and rational while making a decision that best fits the situation.

It is important also to have allies. These can be friends, family, or any other support system. When one gets abused online, it can feel really draining and stressful, so it is important that victims have people who are there for them. Practicing self-care is also important. Victims should remember that the cyber abuse isn't their fault. Regardless, online abuse can cause a lot of stress and shame and take a toll on mental health.

A 2017 study from the Pew Research Center found that more than 40 percent of Americans have experienced online abuse, and more than 60 percent have witnessed it."

It is unfortunate that online abuse and cyberbullying are still going on despite all the attention it has received and the measures being taken to stop it. Social media companies now do a better job of monitoring their platforms for abuse and taking steps against it, including cooperating with law enforcement. However, as long as kids, teens, and the general public have easy access to social media sites and are emboldened by the ease of launching anonymous attacks at a distance and over the internet, we can expect it to continue.

Dr. Al-Issa said vaccine hesitancy can be addressed through influential figures and effective laws

Dr. Al-Issa: Islamic Values Drive MWL Efforts to Combat the Pandemic

GENEVA - MWL

The Muslim World League (MWL) Secretary-General Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa said the MWL fight against the pandemic was motivated by the Islamic values and their commitment to comprehensive human dignity without discrimination against any human being.

The SG of MWL commended the deliberate programs and effective laws fighting the pandemic, guided by the advice of WHO

During the Geneva Global Solidarity Conference, hosted recently by the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Al-Issa spoke highly of the WHO efforts confronting the covid-19 pandemic, commending its outstanding efforts in mitigating global suffering during the pandemic, describing them as "efforts to achieve world peace."

The event was attended by the WHO Director General Tedros Adhano, the Secretary-General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Jagan Chapagain, the Acting General-Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Rev. Professor Loan Sauca, as well as leaders of international organizations, and a number of government and civil figures. The former PM of Norway, Kjell Bondevik moderated the event.

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Dr. Al-Issa: The World Health Organization has taken on the role of global peacemaker in the face of a lethal enemy

In his speech, Dr. Al-Issa highlighted the WHO role noting, "the World Health Organization has taken on the role of global peacemaker in the face of a lethal enemy that has targeted our world without exception."

Dr. Al-Issa said the WHO closely monitored the global situation, offering advice and guidance to

WHO Director General Tedros Adhano said absence of coordinated health and social measures is behind rise in covid-19 cases in some regions

everyone.

He added, "The lethality of this pandemic has been significantly reduced while the overburden of health-care systems has been more effectively handled." The organization led countries of the world with high efficiency to defeat the common enemy that has exhausted and frightened the whole world, Al-Issa said.

The MWL Secretary-General praised the granting of the Bridge Maker Award in Norway to the WHO Director-General, noting that the organization has intensified its efforts to ensure world physical and psychological peace. He described it as an icon of peace in the time of covid-19.

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SG of WCC: The main lesson learned from the crisis is a greater understanding of our common fragility and destiny as one humankind

Dr. Al-Issa pointed out that global cooperation on fighting the pandemic could not have been attained without awareness among individuals and institutions, which was encouraged through deliberate programs and effective laws guided by the advice of WHO.

Discussing the importance of immunization, especially in developing countries, Dr. Al-Issa said that vaccine hesitancy can be addressed through influential figures and effective laws, proposing the creation of a universal health passport authorized by the WHO so that countries around the world could forbid entry to travelers who have not received vaccines.

Dr. Al-Issa reviewed the efforts of the MWL since the beginning of the pandemic, starting from its headquarters in Makkah. The efforts, he added, included "material aid in direct coordination with governments, as well as medical equipment for health institutions and food aid for vulnerable groups." The MWL worked to spread preventive awareness in more than 30 countries around the world, without discriminating in this humanitarian work for any religious or political reasons.

He stressed, "We are continuing our efforts, which we see as our duty."

Bondevik, who moderated the event, stressed the role religious leaders play in dealing with the pandemic, especially through improving vaccine uptake.

Tedros Adhano said, "This pandemic will end when we all decide to put an end to it, because the decision is in the hands of all of us.

"Several regions and countries are witnessing a sharp rise in cases of infection and death due to COVID-19, and the reason is the high rate of social contact and movement, the absence of coordinated health and social measures, the emergence of rapidly transmitting mutations and inequality in the availability of vaccines."

He explained that the causes of the spread are not related to epidemiology, but rather to social, political and economic dynamics, as misleading information became prevalent, resulting in a strong growth of the virus. He said covid-19 has demonstrated the critical importance of global solidarity

> **WHO Director: This pandemic will end when we all decide to put an end to it, because the decision is in the hands of all of us**

in order to confront common threats, "All of us including governments, international organizations, institutions, the private sector, civil societies and religious institutions have a role to play."

Secretary-General of the World Council of Churches Prof. Ioan Sauca called for dialogue and cooperation at the global level to help combat the pandemic. He said that the main lesson learned from the crisis is "a greater understanding of our common fragility" and "destiny as one humankind."

He said, "It is our responsibility to work together and alleviate the severity of this pandemic. If the virus and its variants continue to spread, the task of vaccinating, protecting the population and helping them will weaken our economic and health systems, but we must not allow this to undermine our courage and determination".

Jagan Chapagain, the SG of IFRC, said: "There is no way to confront these crises except through a united front that includes religious institutions, the public sector and society as a whole."

He explained that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequality and worsened humanitarian conditions around the world. Travel and trade restrictions have also hampered global solidarity to alleviate humanitarian conditions, but they have also demonstrated the strength of local communities to come together and leverage their resources to meet their needs.

According to Dr. Al-Issa, conditions for peaceful coexistence must include the belief that diversity and plurality among human beings are natural

The Makkah Document Supports Dialogue to Promote Global Peace

By Nizar Abdul-Baqi Ahmad

" Pluralism in religions, ideas, visions and cultures has been linked to the existence of life on Earth. When people could not agree on anything, and when Allah Almighty created them as nations and tribes, the goal was to get to know one another, not to quarrel and clash.

Therefore, Islam approved in its first covenants after the migration to Madinah that Muslims, Christians and Jews live on a solid foundation in terms of dealing with one another in order to build trust, security and stability, and to lay a broad foundation of peaceful and friendly coexistence, fruitful cooperation, and constructive dialogue, as well as achieve safety and social security, as long as the parties to the dialogue adhere to respecting each other.

Scholars are unanimous in their belief that the Islamic civilizational dialogue with the other is inevitable, whether Christian, Jew, pagan, or non-believer in religion, in order to save all humanity from dispersal, loss and annihilation, and to preserve human rights and freedom.

Many scholars point out that one of the goals of dialogue is to correct some concepts and dispel confusion, even though disagreement persists over the disputed issues. Dialogue with others is not intended to force them to give up their religions, or obligate them to something they do not accept, but rather to become acquainted with them in order to strengthen the commonalities and respect difference in order to achieve coexistence and cooperation.

When having a dialogue with others, it is necessary to specify what is intended so that it is based on common evidence and clarity among the interlocutors, and thus avoiding any deviation from the desired goal.

Because Islam has recognized the previous books revealed by Allah Almighty, this confirms the unity of the source to which the heavenly religions return. When a Muslim meets with followers of other heavenly religions, he should look for points of agreement before points of disagreement.

Intensive care

An inclusive and popular Islamic organization, the Muslim World League values dialogue and applauds its consolidation to become part of the culture of Muslim societies. It also promotes moderation, encourages tolerance, calls for moderation

> **Dialogue with others is not intended to force them to give up their religions, but strengthen commonalities with them**

and condemns extremism and all forms of violent behavior.

MWL believes that one of the most prominent reasons for the emergence and spread of the phenomenon of violence and terrorism, which has plagued most countries around the world and increased over the past decades, is the absence of a culture of dialogue. Additionally, there is the absence of genuine efforts to bring influencers from all religions to engage in dialogue and sit at the negotiating table to discuss ways to solve the world's problems.

Continuous efforts

The MWL held many conferences attended by followers of religions and cultures, and played an influential role over the past decades. It has accomplished many goals and brought together myriad thought leaders and influencers. The MWL unified the efforts of prestigious international organizations working in the areas of supporting dialogue of civilizations and encouraging world peace.

MWL Secretary-General, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa delivered lectures and seminars in most Western countries, portraying a bright picture of the Islamic religion and denying what some tried to falsely and slanderously attached to it, such as flimsy accusations and false allegations.

These efforts received widespread media coverage and were commended by officials in countries around the world because they succeeded in dispelling misconceptions prevalent among members of Muslim minorities. These misconceptions were promoted by suspicious parties causing Muslims to refrain from actively participating in the society of

The MWL has encouraged global peace and dialogue by unifying the efforts of concerned international organizations

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> Muslim World League believes that spread of violence and terrorism around the world is due to absence of a culture of dialogue

the country where they lived in.

Prominent position

When the MWL undertakes this monumental task, it is motivated by its prominent position among Islamic countries as a comprehensive umbrella under which many influential Islamic institutions and organizations fall. As a result, it made significant efforts to explain the truth of Islam and refuted the accusations of suspicious parties that Islam rejects the other, does not adopt dialogue and advocates isolation.

These efforts enabled others to learn about and become acquainted with Islam's tolerance, which had the greatest impact on many prestigious international universities and institutes and encouraged them to teach Islamic culture and award

higher degrees to graduates.

Dr. Al-Issa received numerous prestigious international awards in recognition of his outstanding contribution and efforts towards correcting the image of Islam and easing the lives of Muslims in Western countries.

Common necessity

Dr. Al-Issa confirmed in an open meeting via video conference, hosted by the Union of Organization of Islamic Cooperation News Agencies, that coexistence between followers of religions and cultures is an urgent need required for confronting the voices of hatred and racism, and the slogans of clash and civilized conflict.

He noted that some philosophers and thinkers attempted to establish the extremist concept of no dialogue between religious and cultural diversity. He said, "It is important for us, by the rule of jurisdiction and responsibility, to clarify Islam's position in this regard and emphasize that Islam has taken care of every moral value that would enhance peace and positive harmony among all. Islam respects the human race and the importance of the family bond and human unity. It aims to achieve and maintain peace and solidarity and improve understanding and cooperation".

Historical document

The Secretary General added that wisdom, which represents lofty Islamic guidance, is a tool for dialogue and the foundation for understanding and cooperation. The principle of coexistence in Islam was established through the Document of Madinah, which was presented by the Prophet, with the highest civil values. It preserved legitimate rights and freedoms, focused on human fraternity and respected the existence of religious diversity.

He continued, "This document, made over 1400 years ago, was considered as one of the greatest humanitarian pacts throughout history. The second important pact is the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Document, issued on 24/9/1440 H under

the auspices of the Muslim World League during the first gathering of diverse Islamic scholars. In this document, they affirmed that people with different components belong to one origin and are equal in their humanity, and that the difference between people and nations in their beliefs, cultures, natures and ways of thinking is a natural and inevitable matter".

Basic conditions

According to Dr. Al-Issa, the conditions for peaceful coexistence must include the belief that difference, diversity and plurality among human beings are natural, and that the unity of human origin must be recognized because humanity is one family. Priority should be given to states' national interests, world peace and societal harmony while national dialogues must be strengthened and promoted on all important issues.

He stressed that these dialogues must be effective and based on common denominators, and that the atmosphere of dialogue between religious and cultural adherents must be transparent and clear. The existence of outstanding issues is the primary reason for the ineffectiveness of the previous dialogue sessions. The outcome of all dialogues should be discussed in order to identify any shortcomings.

It is also necessary to bring the common denominators to everyone's attention, agree to work with them, and discuss the points of disagreement with the intention of resolving them.

It is critical that independent persons with competence monitor the course of dialogues and rationalize it, and that the effective results of each dialogue should be announced with timetables to implement its decisions.

Clearly-defined position

In a lecture titled "Makkah Al-Mukarramah Document: Achievements and Prospects" held by the MWL in collaboration with the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Dr. Al-Issa delivered lectures in most Western countries, portraying the bright picture of Islam and dispelling misconceptions about it

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Misconceptions about Islam were promoted by suspicious parties to discourage Muslims from active engagement in their societies

(ISESCO), Dr. Al-Issa stressed that the document showed Islam's position on civilizational sharing and human coexistence and its overall vision on a number of pressing contemporary issues.

He said, "The Makkah Document conveys a global message through an enlightened Islamic horizon carried out by the nation's scholars. It stressed the need to respect the existence of the other and preserve his dignity and all his rights as well as coexistence, partnership and fraternal cooperation with him.

It proved the distinction of those scholars and their ability to unite their word despite their deep sectarian diversity. It represented in its provisions, orientations and principles a source of inspiration on both the individual and collective levels as a human document in its goals and functional dimensions".

A local woman sits inside Sarajevo's Gazi Husrev Mosque courtyard, Bosnia and Herzegovina

A Londoner Highlights Europe's Muslim Heritage

By Rob Wagner

The great migration of Muslim refugees into Europe in 2014-2015 has sparked intense debate among Europeans of what role immigrants from Muslim-majority countries should play in modern Europe. But what if the answer to that question was available 14 centuries ago? And that answer has remained in plain sight for Europeans to study, learn and appreciate what Muslims have already contributed — and continue to contribute — to European culture?

Tharik Hussain, a London-based travel writer, author and searcher of obscure and neglected but historically significant mosques in Europe, addresses some of these thorny issues in his book "Minarets in the Mountains: A Journey into Muslim Europe" published this year by Bradt Travel Guides. The book is longlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction, the annual British book prize for best non-fiction writing in English.

The truth is "Minarets in the Mountains" is disguised as a travelogue but deep dives in its exploration of the largest indigenous Muslim population in Europe. With his wife and young daughters in tow, Hussain, 42, explored the Western Balkans and discovered just how significant Islam shaped the region and continues its influence today. It is mischaracterized as the hidden Muslim Europe when truth be told it is available for inspection, if not introspection, for anyone curious enough appreciate the origins of blonde-haired, blue-eyed Muslims who have much to offer to their communities.

"Realizing that Muslims had come to Europe as early as the 7th century, it dawned on me that there were 14 centuries of Islamic heritage — my Islamic heritage – here in Europe that I knew almost nothing about," Hussain told the Muslim World League Journal. "As I began to explore it, I saw that much of it lay in plain sight, from the former palaces of the Muslims of Spain to the villages and towns across the Western Balkans that are home to indigenous European Muslims. But all of it was either poorly documented or badly misrepresented."

Hussain noted that the 14 centuries of Muslim presence in Europe remains very much alive in countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and Kosovo – "all three of which have Muslim-majority populations and can rightfully be regarded as European Muslim countries. This latter idea seems to really strike people as odd, and yet Europe has had Muslim countries since the 8th century or so."

For the uninitiated, it would seem that a Muslim presence is a recent phenomena: Algerians migrating to France in the 1950s and '60s; Pakistani
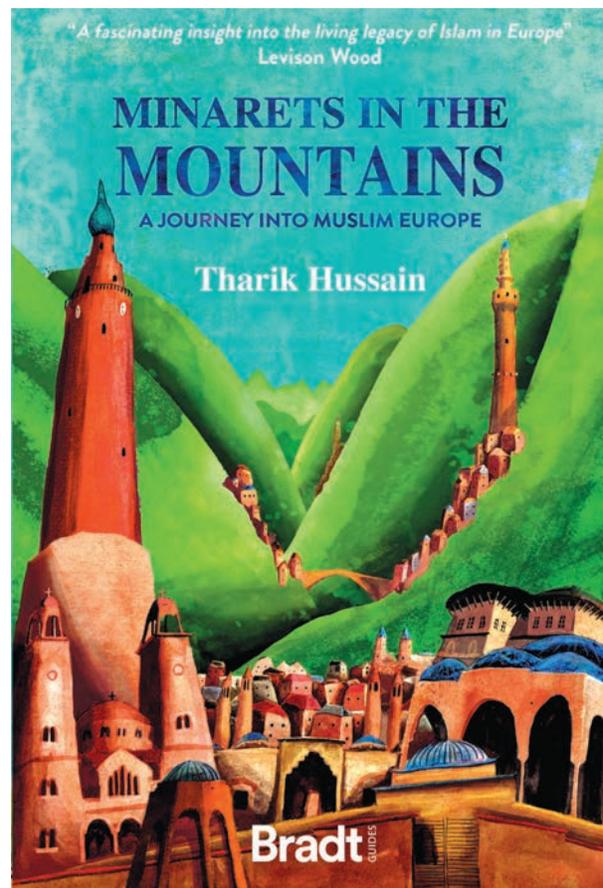
Book Cover published on 15 July 2021 (UK date)

migrants to England in the 1960s and '70s; Turkish citizens to Germany in the 1980s and '90s; and Syrians and Iraqis in the first two decades of the 21st century to a number of Western European nations.

These Western countries courageously opened their borders to these migrants. But less known, according to Hussain, is from the 8th to the 20th centuries, the most persecuted religious groups found safety in Muslim majority European countries.

"Until the Nazi genocide of the early 20th century, during the previous 12 centuries, most of Europe's Jews felt safest in lands ruled by Muslims," he said.

While visiting mosques during his travels, the Londoner was distressed to see many in states of disrepair. But he was encouraged that the vast majority of the mosques had healthy congregations.

He characterized the mountainside lodges as "dreamy spaces built by "mystical Muslims.""

Tharik Hussain realized that there were 14 centuries of Islamic heritage in Europe that many Muslims know almost nothing about

"For my family and me, visiting these lodges were amongst the highlights of the trip. As well as being built in stunning locations, we loved the energy of these very special spaces," he said.

The noted Ottoman writer Evliya Çelebi, who chronicled his travels throughout Europe in the mid to late 17th century, influenced Hussain's own approach to his travelogue.

"Evliya was traveling at a time when Europe was as Muslim as would ever be under the Ottomans, and so his accounts offered a tantalizing window into that world that was no more," he said.

With Evliya much in his thoughts during his journey, Hussain said, "it was also a wonderfully romantic thing to do as a traveler; especially for me as a modern Muslim travel writer to follow in his footsteps and bring Evliya to a wider audience.

"Comparing his world to ours was also just a lot of fun. Like the time I stood before the famous Stari Most bridge in Mostar and recalled Evliya watching young boys throw themselves off the bridge shouting 'Ya Allah!' in a most innocent and fun way

and comparing that to the modern incarnation of this diving, which has a much more organized and professional air to it – and one where absolutely no one is calling out to God anymore."

He said there is a beautiful tradition of co-existence in these countries, where Muslims and non-Muslims reach out to each other. As a result, everyday people on the ground accepted each other's beliefs and cultural differences.

"Sarajevo used to be known as the 'Europe's Jerusalem' by western European observers, and before my trip, I imagined this was some kind of exceptional example of religious co-existence in the region," Hussain said. "However, having Evliya as a guide meant I quickly learned that this was the norm across Muslim Europe he traveled through, where people of all different faiths were living side by side, intermarrying and even sharing spaces of worship. In spite of the horrors of the 1990s wars, this is still very much the case in most parts of the Western Balkans.

He said Muslims founded "highly tolerant societies across Europe" and influenced almost every aspect of European life, from introducing new agricultural techniques to advancing science and technology.

"Most scholars now concede there would not have been a European Renaissance without a Muslim Europe because the literature and knowledge the renaissance was founded upon came from the libraries of Muslim Europe," he said.

By living shoulder-to-shoulder among Europeans of other faiths, Muslims' deep roots in Europe have strengthened their ties between the varied cultures and religions. Yet there is a tendency among majority cultures and faiths to marginalize ethnic and religious groups that do not have the power in numbers.

It is stories like Hussain tells that illustrate "there is an indigenous European Muslim culture that is alive and well. It is an ancient one with its own distinct and fascinating culture," he said. "That's (my) real aim, to normalize this reality and embrace it as part of the wider European cultural narrative."

AlUla boasts many magnificent and mesmerizing archaeological and historical sites

Saudi Arabia:

Home of Archaeological Treasures

By Syed Abdulaziz

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has innumerable archaeological sites spread across the country. The sites in Al-Ahsa Oasis, Mada'in Salih in AlUla, Al-Turaif District in Diriyah, Historic Jeddah, and rock art in the Hail region, Tabuk region, Al-Jawaf and Qassim have been attracting thousands of visitors.

Turaif District in Al-Dir'iyah is described as the "Jewel of the Kingdom" and is a must-visit site for archeology lovers

> **UNESCO elected Saudi Arabia as organization's vice chair and representative of Arab group within World Heritage Committee**

Preservation and upkeep of Saudi history, culture and archaeology is extremely important for the government of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdul Aziz and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman. Billions of riyals have been spent in numerous undertaken projects and a large sum of money has been earmarked for several others in the pipeline.

The Kingdom places special emphasis on preserving its Islamic archaeological heritage. Several mosques around the Kingdom have been meticulously renovated to preserve their pristine glory, including the Grand Mosque in Makkah, the

Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, and other holy sites and mosques built by the first rightly-guided caliphs.

The Saudi government has also been restoring historic neighbourhoods. Restoration work has been undertaken in the old Qasr Al-Hokm area in Riyadh, as well as the ancient quarters of Jeddah, Hail, and other cities.

Recently, the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) elected Saudi Arabia to be the organization's vice chair as a representative of the Arab group in the committee.

Princess Haifa bint Abdulaziz Al Muqrin, Saudi Arabia's permanent representative to UNESCO, described the election of the Kingdom a result of its prominent role in supporting heritage and its efforts to document the common human heritage alongside the member states of the committee and to achieve the goals of the orga-

nization in general and the goals of the World Heritage Committee in particular.

The five sites in the Kingdom on UNESCO's World Heritage List, namely Al-Ahsa Oasis, Mada'in Salih in AlUla, Al-Turaif district in Diriyah, historic Jeddah, and rock art in the Hail region, Tabuk region, Al Jawaf and Qassim feature several stone installations comprising inscriptions, rock art, tools and signs dating from the post-Neolithic period.

AlUla is a place of extraordinary human and natural heritage. It boasts of a living museum of preserved tombs, sandstone outcrops, historic dwellings and natural and human-made monuments that hold 200,000 years of largely unexplored human history. Home to panoramic desert landscapes, spectacular rock formations and some of the Middle East's most important ancient sites, including those built by Lihyanite and Nabataean civilizations of the 1st millennium BCE and beyond, AlUla is a wonder of the ancient Arabian world.

Al-Ahsa Oasis, an evolving cultural landscape located between Riyadh and Dammam, is a lush green landscape away from the hassle of the world, stretching into the Empty Quarter encompassing gardens, canals, springs, wells and a drainage lake, historical buildings, urban fabric, sand dunes, arid desert plains, historic fortresses, mosques and archaeological sites.

At-Turaif (in Al-Dir'iyah) is described as the "jewel of the Kingdom" and is a must-visit site for tourists. Riyadh is located in the middle of the desert of the Arabian Peninsula on a large plateau like a jewel or pearl in the middle of the king's crown.

At-Turaif, a historic district located in Al-Dir'iyah northwest of Riyadh, represents the capital of the Saudi dynasty; it was the original home of the Saudi royal family and the country's first capital from 1744 to 1818.

Historic Jeddah, the old town Balad, is a fascinating historical and archaeological area. Jeddah

Al-Ahsa Oasis has drawn thousands and thousands of tourists from the world over

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Saudi Tourism Authority registered 624 archaeological sites in the first quarter of this year

was founded in the 17th century and is the beating heart of the Kingdom. The city is also called "Bride of the Red Sea."

Balad is famous for its traditional buildings, architecture and construction of coral stone and intricate windows. The places that one must visit are Ramshackle majlis, Baeshen House, Old Pilgrimage Road, Bait Nassif, Shaffie Mosque, and many old museums.

Through "the Green Arabia Project," the Heritage Commission is carrying out intensive surveys and systematic excavations to identify and gain insight into the ancient climatic conditions and nature of the prevailing paleoenvironment in Arabia. It also wants to have an inroad into human movements within the scope of its efforts to excavate, preserve and promote the Kingdom's archaeological sites as part of the Saudi Vision 2030.

Kingdom's first wind energy project in Al Jouf is a 400-MW wind farm

Wind Energy Technology and Windmills in Islam

Fatima Taneem Ruknuddeen

❞ Wind energy is one of the oldest energy sources harnessed by humans since ancient times and currently has become one of the most established and efficient renewable energy sources used to produce electricity. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the share of renewable energy in the global electricity generation has increased to 29% in 2020 and is said to expand rapidly in the coming years with the wind set for the largest increase in renewable generation.

Across the world, many countries have reshaped their portfolios towards sustainable development and clean energy technologies including expansion into wind power generation. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has also embarked on this epic journey to rapidly diversify its domestic power supply by creating a global hub of renewable energy capability. Its first wind energy project - Dumat Al-Jandal is a 400-MW onshore wind farm located in the northwestern region in Al-Jouf province. It is the largest wind farm in the Middle East. Trial operations are currently underway and it is set to commercially operate in the first quarter of 2022.

Thus, there is a global resurgence of this ancient wind energy technology and the windmills, which were earlier considered as quaint relics of the past, are making a comeback, albeit as modern wind turbines.

Traditionally, windmills were structures using the wind power to grind cereals, pump water or perform other repetitive tasks. They were first seen in the Islamic lands and the Muslims were the pioneers in spreading and popularizing their use. Later, they were built in India, China and Europe with various modifications. However, they were widespread in the Islamic World four to five centuries before they became a regular feature of the landscapes of Northern Europe in the 13th century.

Origin Of Windmill

Windmills were first seen and described in the Islamic lands of the Middle East and Western Asia in the 9th century AD, although when and where exactly they first originated remain unclear.

The earliest reference to a 'wind-powered machine' was given by the Greek inventor of 3rd century BC, Hero of Alexandria, who described a 'wind-wheel operating an organ.' There are also references in 400 AD to wind-driven prayer wheels used in Central Asia (China, Tibet). However, the first 'windmill structures' were textually described around 10th century AD in the Islamic lands; although references to their use centuries

earlier were recorded in oral tradition by the Muslim scholars.

Windmills In Islamic History

The first definite reference to 'mills driven by the wind' was recorded in 644 AD when a Persian slave boasted about his skills to construct one to Caliph Omar bin Al-Khattab. The story indicated that windmills were known in Persia in the early 7th century AD - a fact confirmed by the Arab geographers' writings centuries later. Al-Masudi, a Persian scholar of the 10th century, quotes Al-Tabari (d. 923) with this story in his book, 'Meadows of Gold.'

Al-Masudi (d. 957) also documented in his books the windmills seen during his lifetime particularly in the Persian province of Sistan, which he described as a 'country of wind and sand.' He noted that the people of this region used wind to operate their mills and raise water from wells. His contemporary Al-Istakhri (d. 957) also wrote about the Sistan region and how the wind blows without interruption and operates the mills erected everywhere.

Al-Qazwini (d. 1283) refers to the grinding of corn by such windmills. His contemporary Al-Dimashqi (d. 1327) described and made sketches of the windmills; giving explanatory notes as well. The Arab writer Ala-al-din Gozuli (d. 1412) noted that in Afghanistan all the mills were driven by the North wind.

Thus, wind power was widely used in the Islamic lands especially in the arid regions having ample wind to run millstones grinding cereals and also draw up water for irrigation. These early windmills

Nashtifan Windmills in Khorasan have been restored and are functioning, being recognized as a national heritage site

were widespread east of the Islamic lands, particularly in the areas experiencing 'the wind of 120 days' - in present day Iran and Afghanistan.

They were also used in other regions, for example, in today's Iraq as part of the elaborate irrigation systems in that region and in Egypt, for crushing sugarcane on a large scale. The Chinese became acquainted with the device at Samarkhand in 1219 AD and again in 1414 AD and adapted it to suit their coastal salt-pans. Moreover, it was from Egypt that the Spanish in the early 16th century recruited technicians to build windmills in the West Indies. Many historians believe that it was the crusaders who introduced windmills to Europe in the 12th century AD.

Unfortunately, the Mongol conquest of the 13th century destroyed the irrigation systems in Iraq and with the decline of sugar industry in Egypt, the windmills fell out of use there as well. The availability of cheap fuels further lead to their disuse and presently the old windmills are not found in the Middle East except in Iran and Afghanistan;

> First wind energy project in Saudi Arabia is a 400-MW onshore wind farm, considered the largest in the Middle East

there too most of them have fallen to ruins with the exception of a few which have been restored as 'heritage sites' by the government.

Structure And Working Of Islamic Windmills

The structure of the Islamic windmills varied from simple primitive buildings in the villages to the architecturally impressive massive structures in the towns. They were built on hilltops, towers of castles or on their own platforms.

The windmills had vertical shafts onto which vertical vents were mounted to catch the wind. The windmill had two storeys. On the upper storey

were the millstones, one connected to a vertical wooden shaft. This vertical shaft extended into the lower storey, where there was a wheel, driven by six or twelve sails that were covered with fabric or palm leaves. These turned the upper millstone. The lower chamber walls were pierced with four vents, with the narrower end towards the interior, which directed the wind onto the sails and increased its speed.

Windmills In The '120-Day Wind' Region

In the vast deserts, there is ample wind that usually blows constantly in one direction and from the same place. The people living in such harsh environments and arid conditions readily adapted and utilized nature's wind for their domestic use, building windmills along the path of the wind.

Islamic Windmills though widespread in the Islamic lands were a striking feature in the region experiencing the 120-day wind - in the present day eastern Khorasan and Sistan provinces of Iran and provinces of Herat, Farah and Nimruz in Afghanistan. Currently, there are many windmills scattered along the path of the 'wind of 120-days' as remnants of the past; most of which are in ruins; with a few being restored. For instance, the 'Chigini Windmill' is the ruins of one of the massive, isolated mills in Sistan from Malek Hamza's time (1619-1645). On the other hand, the Nashtifan Windmills in Khorasan, dating from the Safavid era have been restored and are functioning, being recognized as a national heritage site.

The '120-day wind' originated from the central deserts in Iran and blows towards Sistan and Baluchistan province, usually in the late summer and early autumn, allowing the windmills of this region to work only in those few months after the harvest. These mills have remained restricted to the region bounded by Mashad, Herat, Zahedan and Birjaud.

The Islamic Windmills thus represent the attempts made by Muslims to adapt with nature and transform the natural environmental obstacles into opportunities and thereby benefit themselves and

One of the old windmills near Herat City, Afghanistan, used for grinding grain

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Windmills were first seen and described in the Islamic lands of the Middle East and Western Asia in the 9th century

their societies.

Hence, the use and spread of windmills far and wide resulted in advances in the field of mechanical engineering and created opportunities for new professions and trade; giving rise to efficient source of power technology which though at one time became outdated, is currently touted to be one of the most safe environmentally sustainable and efficient renewable energy source.

Cheraman Juma Masjid in Kerala is admired by tourists for its heritage

Three of India's Oldest Mosques were Built by Arab Traders of Yore

By Aftab Husain Kola

India is home to a magnificent medieval Islamic architectural heritage, vast in scope and scale. Many of these monuments bear testimony to the Islamic culture that flourished during the Muslim rule that spanned several centuries; several of these structures have now been recognized as World Heritage Monuments. However, seldom do we know that a few of the oldest mosques in the world are in India!

Islam came to India through the Arab traders who frequented the subcontinent's western coast from ancient times, anchoring at different places such as the Malabar region in Kerala, the Kanara coast in Karnataka, and a few pockets on the Konkan coast in Maharashtra. The enterprising Arabs have had trade relations with many countries in times of yore. The Arab traders never had any kind of political ambition nor missionary zeal of a proselytizing nature. Traditionally traders, their main purpose in coming here was commerce, and they had been carrying on commercial activities much before the advent of Islam. Commerce between far-off places naturally led to these merchants setting up settlements of their own in the places where they had trade relations. Thus, new communities (Mappilahs, Navayaths, etc.) came to be established owing to marriage relations between these new settlers and local women. These new communities soon integrated with the mainstream society, becoming part and parcel of it. With the advent of Islam, new Muslim communities came to be established, and soon flourished as a trading community on the western coast, and later scanned out to the interiors, trading peacefully. Even Gujarat was one of those places where Arabs had docked for trade in the beginning of the seventh century CE. However, in the northern part of the subcontinent Islam mostly came to be established through foreign Muslim rulers from the beginning of 11th century CE. The Islamic faith was dear to the Muslims, and wherever they settled, they made it a point to construct mosques. Thus, the subcontinent became home to countless numbers of mosques.

Here we explore three mosques that are among the oldest in India.

Probably the first mosque in India, though there are a few other contestants staking such a claim, was the one built in Kodungalloor (Cranganore being its colonial name) in Kerala by the then Chera King, Cheraman Perumal, in 629 CE, during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him). This is believed to be one of the oldest mosques in the world. The Cheraman Juma Masjid is situated in Methala village, 2-km from Kodungalloor town, which is 35-

> Traders' main purpose in coming here was commerce, and many had been carrying on commercial activities much before the advent of Islam

km north of Ernakulam (Kochi).

It may be recalled here that the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, during his visit to Saudi Arabia in 2016, gifted King Salman a gold-plated replica of Cheraman Juma Masjid, underlining the ancient trade links that existed between India and Arab lands.

According to an account, Cheraman Perumal, the last king of the Chera dynasty that ruled this part of south India in those times, converted to Islam after having dreamt of a splitting moon, and then meeting Arab pilgrims who reported that the Noble Qur'an mentions such a miracle. Impressed, the king joined the pilgrims in their journey to Makkah, but not before dividing his kingdom among the princes.

Having fallen ill on the return journey, and unable to make it to his homeland, the king entrusted the pilgrims who had gone along with him the mission of establishing mosques and propagating his new faith in Kerala. Many of the ancient mosques in this region are said to have been founded by these pilgrims, who were dispatched all along the coast to serve as qadis to the fledgling Muslim communities.

Not only does this masjid serve Muslim worshippers, hordes of tourists also come here to admire the heritage edifice, which probably is the first mosque built in India.

Juni Masjid of Ghogha

Another masjid that is said to be as old as the Cheraman Juma Masjid is the Juni Masjid, or Barwada Masjid, on the northern fringes of the ancient

Juni Masjid of Ghogha, which is not functional now, has one of the oldest Arabic inscriptions on its Mehrab

port town of Ghogha in Bhavnagar district, on the Gulf of Khambhat. In the local Gujarati language, Barwada means non-locals or foreign owners.

Retaining its original form to a fairly good extent, but remaining in a shoddy condition now, nothing much is historically known about its origin. But it is clear that it was built by Arab merchants. The date can be conjectured from the position of the qibla of this stone structure which is almost aligned towards Jerusalem in Palestine, which was the direction that Muslims were required to face while praying (623 CE). In 624 CE, the second Hijri year, a new Quranic revelation instructed Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Muslims to turn towards the Holy Kaaba in Makkah when they pray.

The positioning of the qibla of this masjid reflects the fact that this stone structure must have been built before 632 CE, though no record as such exists to prove this.

The masjid is not functional now; nobody apparently thought of reconstructing it after the qibla was shifted. This mosque has one of the oldest Arabic inscriptions on its Mehrab. Unless a detailed study is undertaken, the claim of it being the oldest mosque in India will always remain just that, a claim!

> The qibla of Juni Masjid is almost aligned towards Jerusalem in Palestine, indicating it was built during the Prophet's time

Zeenath Baksh Juma Masjid in Mangalore

The Kanara coast in Karnataka is one of the pockets where the early Arab traders anchored their boats. Mangalore's exquisite Zeenath Baksh Juma Masjid is one such legacy the Arabs left behind. This is also counted as one of India's early mosques. Built in 644 CE by Malik Ibn Deenar, a scholar and traveler, this mosque is located in the area of old Mangalore. There is also another Malik Ibn Deenar Masjid, a palatial structure built in 642 CE in Kasaragod, 45-km from Mangalore.

Coming back to the Zeenath Baksh Juma Masjid, whose artistically chiseled teakwood and rosewood doors and the wooden roof covered with brass sheet to protect it from rain, makes its interior a delight to the eyes and the senses. These exquisite woodworks were incorporated into the mosque by India's well-known freedom fighter Tipu Sultan in the seventh century. This mosque is functional.

Besides these three landmark mosques, Arab traders also constructed many other mosques, some of which are still extant. They include the Kodiakarai Mosque in Tamil Nadu's Kayalpattnam, built in 633 CE. The Juma Masjid at Thazhathangadi on the banks of the Meenachil River in Kerala's Kottayam district is another notable structure. These mosques built along coastal areas and riverbanks were originally meant for the Arab merchants who often visited these regions. Besides the Arabs, many foreign Muslim rulers also built many grand mosques in India. The Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, located within the Qutb complex on Delhi's southern fringe, was the first mosque built in north India, in 1193 CE, by Qutb-ud-Din Aibak, the first Sultan of Delhi Sultanate.