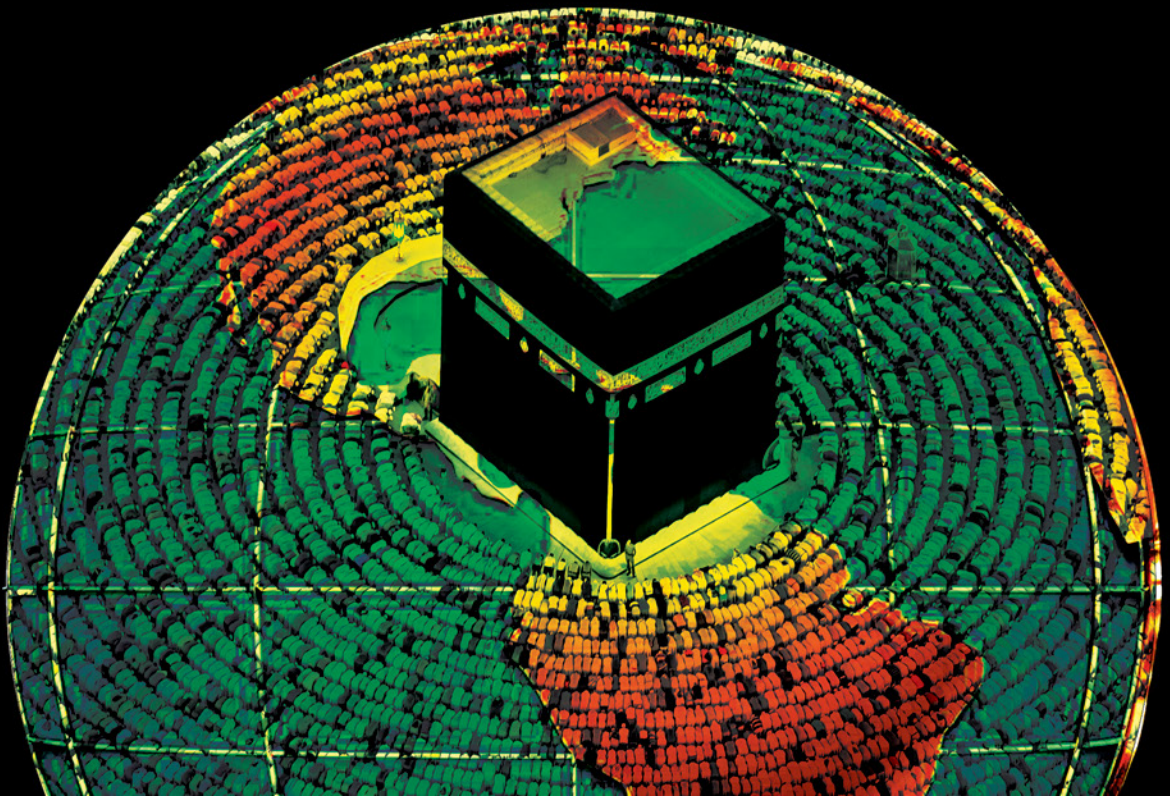


ISLAM IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

BY SHAYKH ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH





ISLAM IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

AN EVENING WITH
SHAYKH ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH

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PREFACE

On the 6th of November 2017 senior British Imams, scholars and female representatives of Islam gathered in London to share an evening with HE Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah, President of the Forum for Promoting Peace.

Entitled Islam in a Globalising World, the evening was hosted and facilitated by the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace and its partner Imams Online. It assembled a diverse range of senior Muslim leaders from across the United Kingdom in a pluralistic gathering that represented the diverse schools of thought that constitute Islam in Britain.

The scholars in attendance listened to a special address from the Shaykh that is reproduced in its entirety herein. In it, Shaykh Abdallah emphasised the critical role positive religious guidance plays in today's complex and confusing world. He affirmed that strong faith leadership and a committed adherence to the ways and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ were the perfect antidote to the ills and evils prevalent in today's world. The Shaykh also spoke extensively about the principles and higher objectives of the sacred law, and the need to keep these at the forefront of religious discourse and action.

The attendees took the opportunity to direct some pertinent questions to Shaykh Abdallah of both a scholastic and social nature. Several of the points raised centred around the need to revive profound religious scholarship, instilling confidence in Islamic thought leadership, and how to speak on complex socio-political issues such as Western foreign policy. The Shaykh also spoke of the need to integrate women in institutional leadership and provided guidance on engaging in discussions about intellectual disagreements and how to best approach such topics. Finally, the Shaykh addressed the twin problems of radicalisation and anathematisation which plague Muslim communities worldwide.



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When we examine the sacred law, we find that it can be reduced to four fundamental values: wisdom, mercy, benefit, and justice. Anything which diverges from these four fundamentals into their opposite is not from the sacred law of Islam.





I see sitting before me an elect group of people. What I mean by this is that there is a congregation of leadership in this room that has the potential to have a greater and wider influence on society. It is up to the leaders of this world to make the changes required to better the conditions of humanity.

Such an elect group of people is what the Quran calls a contingent (*ṭāʾifa*). It states:

it is not desirable that all of the believers take the field [in time of war]. From within every group in their midst, a contingent should refrain from going forth to war, and devote themselves [instead] to acquiring deep knowledge (*yataffaḡahū*) of the Faith, and [thus be able to] admonish (*yundhirū*) their homecoming brethren, so that these [too] might guard themselves against evil. (9:122)

A *ṭāʾifa* is a group of people who stay behind whilst others go out to defend themselves. It is the responsibility of this group to stay back and profoundly absorb the teachings of religion, so that they can remind and warn those who return about their responsibilities. The Quran says they should become learned in their religion and acquire a deep understanding of it (*yataffaḡahū*), but also be responsible for admonishing (*yundhirū*) when those who have set out return to society.

I will now make some additional remarks pertaining to this concept and leave you to contemplate them.

We live in a troublesome time that has caused a great degree of anxiety and unease. But what is the source of this condition, and what are the causative factors behind it? Let us first mention its causes, and the phenomena which are indicative of it. Let us speak about how it manifests, and then consider the steps we may take to address and mitigate the problem.

When I refer to the causative factors, I do not claim to have identified all the possible reasons behind our current



predicament. Generally, however, they can be thought to be of two types; some are the result of a general collective of circumstances, whilst others are specific to certain individuals. Thus we have general causes, and the particular problems of given individuals.

People have identified a number of different kinds of causes for our situation. Some say it is due to poverty and other economic problems. Others claim it is a problem of ignorance and a lack of education. Some cite war and a lack of social justice. Others argue that the problem is ideological, and that we are facing a dangerous set of beliefs. Some people say that Islam itself is the source of the problem; subsequently, the entire religion has become suspect. I do not seek to examine all of these claims as a sociologist, philosopher, or anthropologist. I will not even discuss the first causative factors mentioned.

Instead, I will examine the ideology

underpinning the problem from within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

One of the manifestations of this disturbing situation is the hysteria that we witness whereby people will kill non-combatants outside the context of a war. This is entirely prohibited in Islam. They have no consideration towards the people they are killing, nor for their own lives. This is terrorism. Many of these individuals - the majority, perhaps - are people connected to Islam and considered Muslims. Of course, there are people who kill others who are not Muslim, however here we are speaking specifically about people who claim to be killing in the name of Islam. I am by no means the only scholar in the Muslim world to assert that their behavior has nothing to do with Islam; nonetheless, we need to explain why this is the case through reminding ourselves of what it is that Islam teaches.

A HOLISTIC VIEW ON ISLAM

Islam encompasses acts of worship and social transaction. The Prophet ﷺ described the Muslim as someone whose tongue and hand other people are safe from.¹ Thus, one level of Islam involves worshipping God, and another regulates our transactions with others. This is speaking from the scriptural or textual perspective. As for the philosophical view of Islam, we have

¹ Nasā'ī (4995), Aḥmad (8918).

what we call the aims and objectives (*maqāṣid*) of the sacred law (*sharīʿah*).

The sacred law of Islam centers around protecting six key interests:

- Religion
- Life
- Property
- Intellect
- Family
- Human dignity

These aims and objectives fall under three categories. The first are the necessarily protected interests mentioned above. The second are the things termed ‘needful’ (*hājīyyāt*), and the third involve the decorum or the ‘embellishments’ (*taḥsīnīyyāt*) that accompany it.

The most important aspect of the ternary is the first one, that of necessity. Al-ʿIzz Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 1262) states that all of the sacred law can go back to two fundamental principles: the accrual of benefit and the warding off of harm. Other scholars assert that it could be further reduced to just one single principle, namely the accretion of benefit and wellbeing, because inherent in this idea is that harm must be warded off.

Imām Al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388) states that the sacred law has come for the benefit of humanity. But how do we come to know these benefits (*maṣāliḥ*), and what are they?

Al-ʿIzz Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām contends

that we come to know what these benefits are through reason. He argues that if something is truly of benefit, an

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Ossification or stagnant understanding of texts is an error that leads people astray. If you do not understand the context of the rulings of sacred law and their applicability, you will end up leading yourself and others astray.





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All things have to be understood both through scripture, and the context that we find ourselves in. Understandings that are not regulated by a sound application of the shari‘ah are incorrect.



intellectual examination of the matter and of the texts of sacred law addressing it will show this to be the case. The teachings of the sacred texts will concur with the dictates of the intellect as there is always a harmony between the two.

Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) additionally states that when we examine the sacred law, we find that it can be reduced to four fundamental values: wisdom, mercy, benefit and justice. Ibn al-Qayyim argues that anything which diverges from these four fundamentals into their opposite is not from the sacred law of Islam, even if some people wish to ascribe it to the shari‘ah.

THE VALUES OF ISLAM

When we look at the actions performed by extremists in the name of Islam, and evaluate them according to these four

criteria, we clearly see that they do not represent the fundamental values of the shari‘ah. We can thus confidently say that these actions cannot be attributed to Islam. When we look at the authentic ḥadīth, “a Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand people are safe,”² can we claim that it applies to people who commit these acts? No. Another ḥadīth states specifically that other Muslims should be safe from their hand and their tongue.³ Both versions are deemed sound according to the traditional authorities. This means that all people – Muslims and non-Muslims alike – should feel safe and secure in the presence of a Muslim. Thus, when we look at the behaviour of extremists, we can clearly say that they do not live up to – and in fact, entirely contradict – the definition of a Muslim according to these ḥadīths.

Nonetheless, the matter cannot be reduced to these narrations. We must

2 Nasāʾī (4995), Aḥmad (8918).

3 Bukhārī (10).

also consider the example of the legislator himself, the Prophet ﷺ, who was the embodiment of his teachings. He defined Islam on the one hand as the worship of God (*‘ibādah*) and human transaction and relationships (*mu‘āmalah*) on the other. The faith itself is made up equally of devotion and human interaction.

In a ḥadīth that Imām Muslim narrates, faith (*īmān*) is defined as belief in six things: God, the angels, the holy books, the messengers, the last day, and the Divine predestination of all things (*qadar*).⁴ But the Prophet ﷺ also said, the believer (*mu‘min*) is the one from whom people’s wealth and blood remain safe.⁵ The Prophet ﷺ said that the one engaged in sacred struggle (*mujāhid*)⁶ is the one who struggles for the sake of God against his own ego (*nafs*).⁷ We have to understand these realities that the Prophet ﷺ taught us.

Our sacred law engages with all of these things: the understanding of jihad; the understanding of loyalty and disavowal (*al-walā’ wa ‘l-barā’*); allegiance or non-allegiance to the nation state; the necessity of enjoining good and forbidding evil; the understanding of how we implement the sacred law;

and the understanding of the nature of the abode that we are living in. All of these things have to be understood both through scripture, but within the context that we find ourselves in. Understandings that are not regulated by a sound application of the sharī‘ah are incorrect.

The following question naturally arises: what are these regulatory mechanisms within the sacred law?

THE DISCOURSE OF HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

The first is what we call the discourse of context (*khiṭāb al-waḍ’*). This is an exploration of conditions. It asks, ‘what are the actual causative factors that make things what they are, or give them their particular rulings?’ It also asks, ‘what are the constraints on applying these rulings?’ Let us approximate these understandings. The rite of Hajj is only valid at a specific time during the year. If somebody goes to perform Hajj before the appointed month, is it really a Hajj? Do we call it Hajj? No, because the person did not respect the conditions of Hajj. Likewise, what of the person

4 Muslim (8).

5 Ibn Mājah (3934), Aḥmad (24004).

6 Literally ‘the one engaged in jihād.’ Jihād means struggle, and is poorly rendered as ‘holy-war’.

7 This ḥadīth is narrated by al-Ḥākim and Imam Ahmad, among others

who prays without performing the requisite ablutions (*wudūʿ*)? Is he considered to have pray in this specific sense? No. The same goes for if he prays before the designated time of the prayer; his doing so is impermissible (*ḥarām*) and incorrect. Such limitation by conditions apply likewise to jihad, commanding the good, and so on. They have their conditions; they have circumstances where they are applicable, and circumstances in which they are not. They only deserve their proper name when they are regulated by their governing conditions or where they fulfill their requirements.

The second regulatory mechanism is the context of the actual situation you find yourself in. Here we must bear in mind that there are two contexts: the historical context in which scripture was revealed; and the contemporary

situation which we find ourselves in. When you are looking at any situation to determine an appropriate ruling, you must fully understand the historical conditions that abounded when the sacred law made a pronouncement upon a similar situation. You then have to look at the contemporary situation you find yourself in and assess whether there is a concord between the two. If you attempt to apply rulings of the sacred law without this engagement –that is, without understanding the relationship between these two horizons - you will end up making egregious mistakes. This is what Ibn al-Qayyim, Imām al-Qarāfi (d. 1285), and others have affirmed. Imām al-Qarāfi added that ossification or stagnant understanding of texts is an error that leads people astray. If you do not understand the context of the rulings of sacred law and their applicability, you will end up leading yourself and others astray.

The third regulatory mechanism is knowing how to differentiate between those principles in the shariʿah that are permanent and those that are variable; meaning those that change with, and are affected by, time and place.

The fourth regulatory mechanism is understanding the difference between those things that are obligatory on each individual and those things that are a collective obligation upon society as a whole. If some people perform the latter, it is no longer an obligation on all the others. The individual obligations are the five pillars of Islam, and they



are obligatory on every individual.⁸ Collective obligations can also be termed obligations of authority, or laws of general import, and these are another type of ruling. If these regulatory mechanisms are not respected and guarded by the experts in sacred law, egregious wrongs will be done.

REGULATING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SACRED LAW

There are, furthermore, a number of additional factors required to regulate our understanding of sacred law. The most foundational of these is linguistic knowledge. It is imperative that you have a deep knowledge of the Arabic language in order to understand the teachings of scripture, because Arabic is the language of their revelation. You also need to be equipped with the tools of hermeneutics; interpretative mechanisms that enable you to navigate texts linguistically so that you understand what is actually being said, and all of the possible meanings that a given text conveys. Equally essential is an understanding the holistic nature of the sharī'ah. The sharī'ah is a holistic tradition, that must be viewed as an entire forest; one must not lose sight of the forest for the individual trees, because it operates as a collective. Imam al-Qarāfi said that all texts of



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The means terrorists use to achieve their ends all begin as delusions in their minds. They are fantasies because they are not based on fact and a realistic understanding of the sacred law.



the sacred law have to be taken into consideration simultaneously when looking at a particular situation. The expert must have precisely this type of encompassing vision. An example of this is the statement by the linguist Ibn Fāris (d. 1004) that the entire Quran is like one long chapter (*surah*), meaning that you have to look at the Quran as an integral whole and that you cannot

⁸ That is: The testification of faith that there is no god but God, and that Muḥammad is messenger of God; the prayer; the fast of Ramadan; paying the charity (*zakāh*); and performing the Hajj pilgrimage once in a lifetime.

divorce parts of it from the message of this whole.

How then do we understand the people that are inflicting harm in the name of Islam? How do we understand the context that we are in? People are often very ignorant about their own context. There is a very beautiful verse in the Quran – though all of the Quran is beautiful – in which God says to the Prophet ﷺ, ‘they look at you, but they do not see you’. (7:179).

Here, the Quran conveys how people may be looking but not seeing. You may be in a situation where you can view something in and of itself, but you do not understand it. If you are not informed, you may conceive of it as something very different from the reality. This is a common problem for people: because they have not been able to understand their situation, they do not benefit from their experiences in an appropriate manner. This is what the Quran refers to when it describes those who look but do not see.

We have thus far discussed in a summative fashion the protective mechanisms built into the sacred law; the overarching aims of the shari‘ah; and the holistic way in which texts must be read. Now, we will focus on the issue of contexts. The contexts we find ourselves in affect our rulings in an intimate way. The individual responsibilities and obligations that are not affected by external circumstances are the five pillars of Islam as mentioned previously, namely believing in God, praying, and

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It is clear from the Prophet’s ﷺ biography that he was never engaged in aggression. He was defending his community to protect them from complete destruction.



so forth. These are immutable; that is, they never change (though they are to some extent dependent on the individual’s ability to perform them). However, the transactional aspects of the shari‘ah certainly are impacted by their context. For example, we now find ourselves in what is called a globalized world. Globalization is a situation that is involuntary; nobody chooses to partake in it. Some people assume it is voluntary, or that you can somehow avoid it; you cannot.

Something else which cannot be avoided is that which we call technology. A certain French philosopher described technology as something that controls us whilst we think that we control it. In any case, we are forced to engage ourselves with it. If there was no technology, there would be no such thing as ISIL. However, we are forced to ride this beast we call technology.

How can we then counter the corrupt ideas that these people are spreading with

sound ones? Can we work with their mentality? The English philosopher John Locke raises the idea that reality is what you personally experience; the sight of a tree, for example, is a result of your subjective viewpoint. Its existence comes from external perceptions which we then make judgements about.

Ibn al-Qayyim states that if you want to educate people properly you have to begin with training their thoughts. because everything begins with thoughts. Thoughts in turn become ideas, ideas become desires, desires become will, and then will becomes action. Therefore if you do not stop something wrong at the mental level, or the level of will, then it becomes an incorrect action because its original intent is not right.

For example, stealing a car begins first as a thought in the mind of the thief. The thought becomes stronger, and then turns into a desire; the desire becomes volitional, and then this volition becomes an action. The criminals that carry out these crimes all started on their path with an idea from the outside that caught hold of their minds, affecting their interior state. The process always begins with an idea.

The means terrorists use to achieve their ends all begin as fantasies in their minds. They are fantasies because they are not based on fact and a realistic understanding of the sacred law. For instance, anybody who argues that pre-emptive jihad has any applicability

in the modern context is entirely mistaken. There was a historical debate about such things amongst the early Muslim scholars. However, to apply rulings related to pre-emptive attacks and not recognizing that jihad is solely a defensive undertaking in the shari'ah is deeply flawed.

There's a book by Ibn al-Qayyim entitled *Guiding the Perplexed: On*



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The Prophet ﷺ never fought anybody for his religion.



Answering the Jews and Christians. One of the arguments he makes in it is that the Prophet ﷺ never fought anybody for his religion. He argues that there is

no proof of such an incident. Among the evidence from which he derives this position is the Prophet's ﷺ statement that there is no coercion in religion, in addition to the Quran itself which states that 'there is no compulsion in



religion.' You cannot force people into religions that they did not choose; the Quran is very clear and unequivocal about this. Another proof for Ibn al-Qayyim's claim is that, in instances of war, the Prophet ﷺ granted a protected status to religious people or those dedicated to a religion other than Islam. Monks, priests, nuns, and rabbis were exempt from any possibility of harm. This exemption is one of the clearest proofs that the Prophet ﷺ sought to protect their religions, because he was protecting the people who knew and practiced their religions best.

The idea that Islam is there to fight other religions is false. The Prophet ﷺ wanted to protect all religions and their continuity; they had the right to

continue to exist, and this was a part of his mission. I share this truth with those belonging to an elect group of people possessed of higher understanding; however, we must extend this understanding to the masses. I strive to work to the best of my ability to do so. It is imperative that we recognise our responsibility of renewing our tradition, our understandings, our ideas, and the meaning of the words we are using in our current context. We must also renew how we live in the world and how we understand the present situation. It is very important that we remember that Islam is not a militant call. It was first and foremost a call to mercy, a call to devotion. If you look at the example of Prophet ﷺ and the those he sent out to preach, you will see that there were far more people sent out to explain Islam than those sent out on military expeditions (*ghazawāt*). Most of the military expeditions never actually eventuated in fighting. If you look at these military expeditions, you will find that the Prophet's ﷺ own tribe, the Quraysh, were his primary enemies.

If you look at the two major battles with the Quraysh, the battle of Badr and the battle of Uḥud, you find that these were fought when the Quraysh attempted to eradicate the Muslims. In Uḥud, they actually came to the Prophet's ﷺ city, al-Madīnah; the mountain of Uḥud is right outside the city. This tells us he ﷺ was resisting aggression. These were not wars of belligerence and hostility; they were defensive battles. Likewise,

in the battle of the Trench (*al-Khandaq*) it was the confederation of tribes along with the Quraysh who attacked the Muslims in their city.⁹ It is clear from the Prophet's ﷺ biography that he was never engaged in aggression. He was defending his community to protect them from complete destruction.

We must renew our reading of history; we must read using a new approach. We also must immunize our young from these false ideas that are being spread. We must also renew our discourse and the way we talk about our faith. Likewise, we must renew the behavior that we display. This involves rectifying our actions, strengthening our understanding, our intelligence, and also

nourishing our hearts. This rectification of behavior was traditionally called 'purifying the soul' (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) or the science of Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf*). For the strengthening of our intelligence, one of the most important disciplines traditionally was the study of logic. I am not talking about the branch of philosophy that involves disbelief (*kufṛ*), which our scholars refuted in the past, but rather metaphysics.

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God the Exalted tells us in the Quran, “Help one another in righteousness and piety; do not help one another in sin and rancour” (5:2)



⁹ As described in Chapter 33 of the Quran entitled 'The Confederates' (Al-Aḥzāb). Tr.





Recently, I met with a high-ranking theologian. Despite being from two different religions, we agreed on many things; we saw things from the same perspective because we were looking at them from a higher, metaphysical viewpoint. All people of reason and intelligence will find they have much in common with each other, whether they are religious people, intellectuals, or philosophers. Cooperate with people that have worldly experience and wisdom. Cooperation is needed for us to address and treat the phenomenon of violence that we find in the world. God the Exalted tells us in the Quran, “Help one another in righteousness and piety; do not help one another in sin and rancour” (5:2)

QUESTION & ANSWER

SESSION

Question 1

What will a renovation of the tradition look like, and how can it take place?

The renovation itself is a complex undertaking; hence have given only a brief outline of it. It involves studying scripture itself, the meanings of scripture, the letter of the law, and the spirit of the law. The study of scripture entails the understanding of both its implications and its aims. To grasp these, you must be equipped with the requisite linguistic skills as Imām Al-Shaṭībī tells us. Moreover, to understand the overarching objectives of the sharīʿah, you must understand the wisdom underlying the rulings and why they exist. The second essential investigation is toward understanding the actual conditions in which Qurʾānic passages were revealed, including the temporal context as well as the events that took place therein. For instance, the Quran is examined from the perspective of the Meccan period – that is, through the verses revealed at that time - and the Medinan period that followed. Scholars have investigated questions such as whether the second group of Medinan verses abrogated the former. Through studying the texts in the ways described, many of them concluded that the Meccan verses were not abrogated by the Medinan ones.

On this matter, Imām Al-Zarkashī (d. 1392) said that all of the texts which

were revealed in the Meccan period such as: “have patience with what they say, and leave them with dignity” (73:10) and “be patient; your patience is but through God. And do not sorrow for them, nor be you strained by their plotting” (16:127) are not abrogated by later verses such as the Divine permission to fight in 22:39: “To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged;- and verily, God is most powerful for their aid”. So, the verse which states, “None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar” (2:106) actually means: “We delay our meaning until the context in which their meanings become appropriate to apply”; that is, the conditions in which those verses were revealed return, then they become applicable once again; one set of conditions might warrant a particular verse, while another might require the application of a different one entirely. The contextualization of verses such as those mentioned is highly important both historically and contemporarily. For instance, when the Prophet ﷺ said to his people, the Quraysh, “allow me to speak to the people, that is all I am asking”, these words still apply. It is not that they have been abrogated. What the Muslims require is freedom to practice and express their religion. Here in England, Muslims have their mosques and nothing is preventing them from praying in them. They are not under any threat; why would you apply verses which speak to a context

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My advice to those imams is to focus on their circle of concern. If you become a social commentator and start espousing your opinions about everything you see on TV and social media, you will make a lot of mistakes.



in which threat prevails instead of those which speak from a state of peace?

Some people take the hadith, “I was commanded to fight people until they proclaim that there is no god but God” to be of general application. Most scholars, however, qualify that this statement only applies to specific circumstances involving specific people. It is not a general statement made by the Prophet ﷺ that must be applied in all contexts, but rather only those in which the need to invoke it is specified. The Prophet ﷺ was commanded to say to the disbelievers:

I have only been commanded to serve the Lord of this city Who has sanctified it and to Whom belong all things: And I have been commanded to be of those that surrender, and to recite the Quran. So whosoever is guided, is only guided to his own gain; and whosoever goes

astray, say: 'I am naught but a warner.
(27:91-92)

Renovating our tradition requires many skills, both linguistic and philosophical, as well as a broad understanding of the aims and objectives of the sacred law. It also requires a knowledge of the situation at hand, the general context, and the jurisprudential distinction between needs and wants.

The companions (*ṣaḥāba*) of the Prophet ﷺ witnessed massive sociopolitical changes in the short space of the 30 years after the Prophet ﷺ lived. Imagine the situation now; we have all sorts of novel developments such as, for example, rulings related to the role of women in society. Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767) recognized in his time that women were taking a more active role in social life and that they deserved to be granted the appropriate legal status. The nature of modern governance itself is also something which must be understood and carefully considered. Now, we have representational governments, parliaments and heads of state. All of these technical terms and their intrinsic meanings have changed. In addition, the economic and scientific developments of our time must also be kept abreast of.

Question 2

Should imams speak about politics when this is an expectation among their congregation? Is it wise to do so?

Once again, the matter depends on



the context. In some circumstances, governments - due to their conceptions of public order - do not want people talking about politics because they consider it a disruption of social harmony. The Imams have to respect their decision if they are living in those lands. In other places, Imams are granted more freedom to speak politically. My advice is: do not become obsessed with what is going on outside; you can waste your life on things that may never change. Instead, work within your own circle of influence; that is, with that which you can impact and change. Imams have their circle of influence. If one places all of their eggs in a single basket of concern, they may end up wasting all of their energy and efforts. You should be thinking about what you can actually influence in your environment. Look at what is really going to benefit people; give them sound and sincere advice; and spread peace.

Question 3

Some prayers contain imprecations against certain people, and some end with mention of the disbelievers. I fear it is very easy for non-Muslims to claim, 'you are praying against us.'

Some of the prayers you mention are taken directly from verses of the Holy Quran. We do not change the Quran but recite it exactly as it was revealed. You must read prayers from the text exactly as it was sent down, however, you must never pray against specific people. In fact, the Quran taught us not even to curse the idols worshipped by the disbelievers, because this will result in them cursing God in ignorant retaliation: "Abuse not those to whom they pray, apart from God, or they will abuse God in revenge without knowledge". (6:108) If you do so, you become the means by which they curse God, and you are responsible for the negative reaction you have caused. There are many examples from the Prophet's ﷺ life in which he was asked to curse people and he would refuse to do so; therefore, speak kindly and well to others.¹⁰

Question 4

When we debate extremists, they claim they are being faithful to scripture, such as the hadith that says, "I was commanded to fight the people until they proclaim, 'there is no god but God'¹¹", and the verse, "O believers, fight the unbelievers who are near to you; and let them find in you a harshness; and know that God is with the godfearing" (9:123). What is the response to this?

The scholars of Islam are in agreement that this hadith is not universally applicable; You cannot apply its meaning generally to all people. In fact, the ninth chapter of the Quran, 'Repentance', clearly states that they [the unbelievers] are not to be fought if they pay the tribute due upon them.¹² So if one says they must fight disbelievers until they say proclaim that 'there is no god but God', then he is going against the text of the Quran which allows for people to remain outside the fold of Islam under certain circumstances. This negates that the hadith can be

10 It was said to the Prophet ﷺ, 'O Messenger of God pray against the polytheists.' He replied, 'I was not sent as a curser, I was but sent as a mercy.' Muslim (2599).

11 The first part of the Muslim testification of faith, "there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God." One enters Islam by pronouncing and believing in this statement. This is the first part of a hadith that is narrated by both Bukhārī and Muslim. Tr.

12 "Fight those who believe not in God and the Last Day and do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden -- such men as practise not the religion of truth, being of those who have been given the Book -- until they pay the tribute out of hand and have been humbled." (9:29) Tr.

universally applied. Moreover, the Quran also states that we must not fight those with whom we have covenants.¹³ So long as they are upright with us, we must be upright with them. If you



have covenants, peace treaties, then there is no applicability of this hadith. Moreover, the Quran teaches that if they incline towards peace, then you should too incline towards peace.¹⁴

Even in situations of war there are alternatives: Making peace with those that are willing to live in peace with you;

entering into covenants; and levying a poll tax or tribute upon them (which is fact a replacement of the obligatory charity (*zakāt*) that Muslims pay). There are many alternatives to war given in the Quran. In fact, some scholars said that the hadith, “I was commanded to fight people...” was abrogated. This means that it was a command specific to a certain context and objective. It is no longer operative. This is the first opinion Ibn Ḥajar (d. 1449) quotes in *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, his commentary on Bukhārī’s hadith collection. This is also the opinion of the school of Imām Malik (d. 795). Other scholars state that it applies in specific circumstances only.¹⁵ Historically the Muslims did not force the Christians or the Jews to enter into Islam. In fact, quite to the contrary, they defended and protected their places of worship. Ibn al-Qayyim said that neither did the Prophet ﷺ nor the righteous caliphs that followed him ever destroyed a church, a synagogue, or a temple. It is clear that anybody who uses this hadith today as an excuse for attacking people or their property is

13 “(But the treaties are) not dissolved with those idolaters with whom you have entered into a covenant and who have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor aided any one against you. So fulfil your covenants with them to the end of their term: truly God loves the godfearing.” (9:4) And: “How should the idolaters have a covenant with God and His Messenger? -- excepting those with whom you made covenant at the Holy Mosque; so long as they go straight with you, do you go straight with them; surely God loves the godfearing.” (9:7) Tr.

14 “And if they incline to peace, incline to it; and put your trust in God; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.” (8:61) Tr.

15 Another opinion is that ‘the people’ mentioned here refers specifically to the idolaters of the Prophet’s ﷺ own tribe, the Quraysh. This is because the term ‘the people’ (using the definite article, *al-nās*) in verses of the Quran that recounted events of the Prophet’s own life referred specifically to his tribe. Tr.

in grave error.

Question 5

Could we have some comments on Muslims engaging in politics in non-Islamic countries. For example, what is our responsibility in Great Britain?

Engagement and participation in politics is to be encouraged. Politics can be defined in our society as searching for the common good and ways to benefit the people living in a given place. In the twelfth chapter of the Quran, the Prophet Yusuf عليه السلام says to the king of Egypt, “make me a minister of the storehouses”.¹⁶ He asked to become something akin to a modern-day minister of finance; he wanted to take on this role because, as a virtuous individual, he knew that he could carry out this duty better than others. The only condition which Muslims must abide by is that, if they are going to participate and become an elected official, they must be upright; a good Muslim ought to be a good citizen.

Question 6

Why are some imams not making Mosques into the wonderful and accepting spaces that you describe?

My advice to those imams is to focus on their circle of concern. If you become a social commentator and start espousing

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Hold your stance and speak clearly and definitively; spread the message of peace to others.



your opinions about everything you see on TV and social media, you will make a lot of mistakes. Some imams seek to gather lots of devotees around himself and to have people follow him. One of the quick ways to achieve this is to become known for your zealotry; so, they will attack one individual, curse another, and speak out against the third. This is a way of acquiring a demagogic popularity; we must instead teach people how to navigate this world with intelligence and wisdom so that we can be occupied with what benefits ourselves and society, (and not the search for following or popularity). Let us not waste our time.

Question 7

How do we respond to people that say that these controversial matters surrounding jihad and the activities of extremists are matters of valid religious difference (khilāf), and therefore its fine for us not to agree with them, but like other matters of khilāf they are entitled

¹⁶ “He said, ‘Set me over the land’s storehouses; I am a knowing guardian.’” (12:55). Tr.



to their opinion?

Jihad was traditionally understood as being of two kinds: defensive and pre-emptive. Anybody that says that the second type of jihad is valid today must be deemed insane, and accompanying their madness is a profound ignorance. Why do we say this? The Prophet ﷺ was in Medina and found himself responsible for a society. Remember, there are two types of prophetic office: one that involved leadership of a community and nation, and another that did not. Those prophets that did not have leadership responsibilities did not oversee what we would call states. For example, Jesus ﷺ never ruled; he never held political power. On the other hand, Moses, David, Solomon and the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ all ruled their communities. They had to make use of the aspects of their roles, such as defense. A state must defend itself. In this regard, when God grants

believers permission to fight, He uses the word ‘permission’ or ‘license’ (*idhn*). God says in the Holy Quran:

Permission is given to those who fight because they were wronged -- surely God is able to help them --those who were expelled from their habitations without right, except that they say ‘Our Lord is God.’ Had God not driven back the people, some by the means of others, there had been destroyed cloisters and churches, oratories and mosques, wherein God’s Name is much mentioned. Assuredly God will help him who helps Him -- surely God is All-strong, All-mighty (22:39-40)

It is clear here that this permission was granted for self-defence. In those conditions, people were not even allowed to proclaim that our Lord is God. The Quran tells us that the only reason they were being persecuted was because of their belief in God. In such a context, the only way that they could preach their faith was through belligerent means, because otherwise they would have been prevented from doing so. It must be remembered that, at that time, political boundaries were defined by war and were always in flux. The Prophet ﷺ was threatened; the very existence of his city state was threatened by aggressive force. They had to defend themselves through combat. At that time, they did not possess weapons of mass destruction capable of annihilating humanity; people fought nobly. All of these conditions have changed. Do we now

say let us use these weapons of mass destruction and annihilate humanity? Of course not. Islam is not a form of nihilism (that is, it does not seek to kill and destruct).

The Prophet ﷺ was fought by the city of Ta'if. When he ﷺ saw that some of his companions were being killed, he withdrew. Was he defeated? No. He was trying to save lives. In Hudaibiyya the Prophet ﷺ signed a peace treaty with the Quraysh and accepted their demands. This allowed the Muslims to practice their faith freely in Mecca and led to ten years of peace between both sides. I fear we no longer have this breadth of vision. Those who insist on violence at this time are sowing corruption in the earth. God asks: "Which of the two groups are more worthy of having security; if indeed you have belief?" (6:81) A Muslim that is carrying out his duties, helping the poor, and looking after the sick; or someone who is going to sleep thinking about who he is going to kill tomorrow? Which one is more worthy of feeling secure from the wrath of God? To think that the one who does constructive good and the one that only seeks to destroy are the same in the eyes of God is nihilistic. Terror is not the path to paradise. We cannot have difference – *khilāf* – about this issue whatsoever. Hold your stance and speak clearly and definitively about this; spread the message of peace to others.

Question 8

There is a problem that nobody wants to talk about regarding the safety of children in the care of some of our imams. There have been cases of abuse, and we would like you to speak to us on this topic.

The imams have a responsibility for regulating the behaviour of other



imams. I am assuming and hoping that the majority of the imams are decent people and would also despise some of the things you are bringing up. The imams must come together so that they can resolve the problems that you are addressing properly.

In the older books of sacred law, it is stated – as the imams must be aware – that it is prohibited for an adult to be alone with children without an unmarriageable relative (*maḥram*) of at least one of the children being present.



Scholars of the past were as keen to guard the safety of young boys as that of the girls. The imams must be warned about being alone with children. One of the signs of the latter days that the Prophet ﷺ warned of is that children and boys would be desired sexually; this is a sign of the end of times. In the mosques it is very important to have mechanisms by which the imams, irrespective of how highly we regard them, are kept accountable and monitored. In fact, all of us should be monitored in such situations if only to protect ourselves from false accusations. Sometimes you even have people with mental illnesses who wish to make false accusations against an imam. Nowadays we hear of imams being accused of things and we do not know if they are true or not. Therefore, it is very important to have somebody else in the room if an imam is working with children, or else to use cameras. You can have security measures in the mosque for the purpose of monitoring people. This is what they do in hotels now. I never used to

enter an elevator if there was a woman inside. Now all elevators have cameras inside them, so you do not have the same concern about being accused of something because everything is being monitored. Unfortunately, this is the nature of the times we are living in. Paedophilia is a major problem not only in the wider community and we cannot pretend it does not exist in the Muslim community. It is very important to protect our children by putting in place these mechanisms. Interestingly, in the United Arab Emirates the government has made it a condition that imams are 35 years of age or older and married.

Question 9

Is extrajudicial killing allowed in Islam for blasphemy or other crimes? Are terrorists sinful for such acts, and can we still consider them Muslims?

Denigrating any Prophet or the sanctity of other faiths is prohibited. This is universally agreed among scholars. All types of extrajudicial and vigilante killings in Islam are unacceptable under sacred law, yet unfortunately they do occur. The permissibility of such vigilante acts can be examined under the rubric of enjoining good and forbidding evil. There are three levels of commanding that which is good and prohibiting that which is evil, and four modes within these.

Regarding the three levels, the Prophet ﷺ states in a sound hadith: “whoever among you sees something foul or wrong

let them change it. First with their hand if they're able to; then, if they cannot do that, with their tongue; and, if they cannot do that, then let them at least reject it in their heart – and that is the weakest of faith.”¹⁷ The Prophet ﷺ is not saying that the faith of those at this third and final level – that of changing it with the heart – is weak. They may well be people of sincere faith, but in terms of their ability to act on it may be of a weaker status in relation to the other two. The task of changing evil by the hand is to be led by the government who have the power to enforce laws; and the task of changing it with the tongue is to be led by the people of knowledge who can effectively express themselves, such as scholars and people aware of the law. Rejecting evil with the heart is for people who are not in

positions of authority and who are not scholars. Its purpose is to prevent the heart from dying as a result of all the evil that it sees around itself which causes it to become immured and desensitized. The heart dies from being overexposed to vice and sinfulness; so, by rejecting evil within it, one keeps their heart alive. The Divine reward for the one who rejects evil with the heart is equal to the reward for the other two. This is because the reward is based upon conforming to the sacred law by putting oneself in the appropriate position as regards their rank and ability to change evil.

As for the possible modes of commanding the good and forbidding evil, they are four. The first involves rectifying the wrong by replacing it

¹⁷ Muslim (49).





with something that is right. This entails righting a wrong without causing any harm. The second involves mitigating a wrong through something that is better or more right. The third situation is where you deem things to remain the same; In this case, you might not eliminate the evil, but rather you weaken it by manifesting the good. The fourth situation is one in which changing the wrong could lead to making it worse; in such cases, you would create more harm in attempting to do what appears right. For example, you could correct someone's mistake in such a harsh manner that in doing so you perform an act worse than what they were doing. These four modes were mentioned by Ibn al-Qayyim.

All matters related to the shari'ah are set on scales of benefits and harms; the

benefit must always outweigh the harm. We put forth a proposition to the United Nations that they enact a policy which criminalizes the denigration of religion and religious figures. To denigrate the Prophets, peace and blessings be upon them, is the same as denigrating the individual who believes in them. It has the same effect. It disrupts public order because it ignites people's emotions and sensitivities. This is not unlike the prohibition of Holocaust denial in some European states. These policies exist to protect people from hatred. Legislators must take such things seriously in the interest of public order. In such cases you can condemn things with your tongue if there is benefit in doing so.

The question whether those who terrorise and murder others can be considered Muslim is a very nuanced one. What should be understood is that anyone who deems acts of bloodshed to be permissible outright, without religious scriptural sanction, is not a Muslim.

This is because there are clear textual proofs against these acts in our tradition; they involve denying something necessarily known to be of the religion, namely, the sanctity of human life.¹⁸

On the other hand, if they deem it

18 The Shaykh is here referring to the idea that denying something necessarily known to be of the faith of Islam – a general example would be the prohibition of illicit intercourse or wine drinking – amounts to a denial of the faith itself. On the other hand, engaging in misdeeds whilst recognizing that they are such does not involve apostasy. The ruling of those who misread texts out of ignorance – and not willfully – is addressed by the shaykh in the following sentence. Tr.

permissible based on some faulty or inaccurate reading of scripture they are sinful because they have engaged in issuing religious edicts without requisite knowledge. In fact, they are criminals of the worst kind, and their otherworldly punishment is more severe than those who reject faith altogether. We do not say that such people are not Muslims; we affirm that they are Muslims and criminals.

It is also important to remember that there are different degrees of disbelief. The word ‘disbelief’ (*kufṛ*) means different things in different contexts in the Quran.¹⁹ For example, the verse, “Who so does not judge according to what God has sent down – they are the unbelievers” (5:44) was interpreted by Ibn ‘Abbās (d.) as ‘a disbelief apart from actual disbelief’. Rejection of what God has sent down is disbelief itself. However, not applying God’s law – out of laziness or disobedience – is not of the same type. Likewise, the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘do not revert to being disbelievers after me, striking the necks of one another’.²⁰ The classical scholars made six different interpretations of this hadith. Some asserted that a disbeliever here is someone who performs the

actions of disbelievers, making it a matter of resemblance and not actuality. Others said it involved the parties declaring each other as disbelievers prior to fighting one another. As we know, a Muslim declaring another Muslim to be a disbeliever can be an act of disbelief, because the Prophet ﷺ said that in such a case one of them will surely be considered a disbeliever.²¹ There are different interpretations, but in sum, if these terrorists deem murder permissible, they are not Muslims



because they are making something know to be prohibited by the faith permissible. On the other hand, if they say that killing blasphemers and disbelievers is permissible because

19 There is common confusion among extremists that the word has only one meaning – that of disbelief and apostasy – which they use to justify spilling the blood of people who engage in these acts. Tr.

20 Bukhārī (7080).

21 This is a reference to the hadith: “Any man who says to his brother in faith, ‘O you disbeliever’ has caused one of them to bear the allegation.” Bukhārī (6104). ‘Bearing the allegation’ could be read literally as causing the one making an unjust accusation in this case to become a disbeliever, or as bearing the sin of the allegation, which is an enormity. Tr.

verse 2:191 states, “slay them wherever you come upon them” then they are misinterpreting scripture. We do not say that such people are outside the fold of Islam by that action; rather, they are criminals within Islam through their acts.

The difference between these criminals and real scholars is that they anathematize (*takfir*) everybody. The response to them is to encourage them not to make



further declarations of disbelief; we do not declare any Muslim a disbeliever. To declare another person a disbeliever is to approximate disbelief itself, because the Prophet ﷺ stated in a sound hadith, “Any man who says to his brother in faith, ‘O you disbeliever’ has caused one of them to bear the allegation.” So, if you are making a mistake by excommunicating another person, you may well end up excommunicating yourself. Such people are on the path to hellfire and not the path to paradise if they do not repent.

It is everyone’s obligation here to teach the youth the truth of the things that have been discussed.

Tell them: if you want to please God, then go and please your parents. The Prophet ﷺ said to perform jihad with your parents by serving them. Focus on being good to people, on praying in the masjid, on remembering God. This is the good you should be engaged in, instead of arming yourself, going out to murder people and then killing yourself and ending up in hell because of your act of suicide. The Quran says: “kill not yourselves. Surely God is all compassionate to you” (4:29).





BIOGRAPHY OF H.E SHAYKH ABDALLAH BIN BAYYAH

H.E. Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah is recognized by Muslim scholars around the world as perhaps the greatest living authority on the Islamic legal methodology known as *Usul al-Fiqh* (Principles of Jurisprudence). Beyond that, he is known for his scholarship drawing on scripture and traditional texts across all four major Sunni schools of jurisprudence to address the crucial contemporary concerns of Muslim communities. In recent years, he has been the driving force behind the establishment of the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace, which seeks to unite Muslim scholars around the world in pursuit of peace, and to address the crises facing Muslim communities worldwide.

Born in eastern Mauritania in 1935, the Shaykh grew up in a family known for its grasp of the Mauritanian classical curriculum. His father, Shaykh Al-Mahfoudh bin Bayyah was a senior judge and chosen twice as the head of Ulema (religious scholars) of Mauritania upon the country's independence. From an early age, the Shaykh demonstrated his exceptional memory and understanding of the Mauritanian texts.

Under his father's tutelage, he developed an advanced understanding of Arabic grammar and rhetoric, and knowledge of pre-Islamic Arab poetry. He also developed an advanced understanding of the Qur'ānic sciences: legal theory, syntax, language, orthography and the ten forms of Qur'ānic recitation. He specialized in the Maliki

school of jurisprudence, and was qualified to give authoritative legal opinions (fatwas).

In his early 20s, he was selected as part of a group of scholars to go to Tunisia for training in modern legal systems, which were to be introduced to Mauritania. He graduated at the top of his group, and on his return to Mauritania was appointed a judge, rising to become Minister of Justice, Minister of Islamic Affairs, and eventually Vice President.

When some government officials criticized his lack of fluency in French, he taught himself the language by listening to French radio with a dictionary in hand. He later surprised his critics by addressing a ministerial meeting in the language. His mastery of French has allowed him to study European thought and the history of ideas. He is rare among contemporary Muslim scholars for his knowledge of the work of Western philosophers and social theorists.

In the 1980s, Shaykh joined King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he taught several subjects, including Qur'anic studies, jurisprudence, and advanced level of Arabic, for over three decades. This allows him to combine the study of the scriptural sources of Qur'ān and Hadith, the various schools' approaches to *Usul al-Fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence), and *Maqasid al-Sharia* (the purposes of Islamic law). This breadth of study has allowed the Shaykh to develop a universal framework in which Islamic jurisprudence can be adapted to local contexts while maintaining its essential principles and purposes and ensuring its continued relevance in the lives of an increasingly diverse global Muslim population.

The Shaykh has developed theories of Islamic jurisprudence in secular or non-Muslim societies, called the Jurisprudence of Minorities (*fiqh al-aqalliyyat*). He is also an outspoken critic of terrorism, authoring several articles and books exploring Islamic responses to the issue. He has applied this work practically, not least in the successful efforts to secure the release of French war correspondent Florence Aubenas, and her translator Hussein Hanun, in Iraq in 2005.

Over the past 25 years, the Shaykh has taught students who have become some of the most prominent scholars in the Middle East and North Africa. In the late 1990s he started to visit the West, particularly teaching British and American students, gaining a following amongst prominent Western Muslim leaders. He has written several books and hundreds of articles and essays, mostly in Arabic, which are used by scholars around the world.

The Shaykh's work has not been focused on scholarship for its own sake, but on

applying it to address some of the most pressing issues facing global Islam. In 2008, he became the founding President of the Global Centre for Renewal and Guidance (GCRG), a London-based think tank that applies scholarship to strategic solutions to pressing intellectual and spiritual issues facing global Islam. This reflects the Shaykhs belief that ideas can only be defeated by ideas, and that Islamist extremism must be answered by sound reasoning drawn from orthodox, accepted sources of Islamic jurisprudence.

This approach was applied in Mardin, Turkey, in 2010, when his organisation convened a conference to examine a fatwa issued by the 14th century scholar Ibn Taymiyya. His Mardin Fatwa is widely used by jihadi groups to justify attacks on both non-Muslims and Muslims who do not follow their understanding of Islam. The 2010 Mardin Conference revealed that a transcription error had been introduced in a 1909 edition of Ibn Taymiyya's fatwa, turning the verb "to treat" into the verb "to fight" and that jihadi groups were relying on the incorrect version. Under the Shaykh's leadership, the conference published a report entitled, *Challenging the al-Qaida Narrative: The New Mardin Declaration*, correcting the jihadi understanding of the fatwa. Three separate spokesmen of al-Qaida responded to this threat, attacking Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah by name.

In 2014, the Shaykh established the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace (ADFP) in Abu Dhabi, under the patronage of Sheikh Abdallah bin Zayed, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates. The vision of the ADFP is to address the crises facing global Islam from a framework of Islamic tradition and legal theory, applied to local contexts. Over 1,000 of the world's leading Muslim scholars from a variety of traditions, as well as academics and thought leaders, attended the ADFP's launch. The ADFP is the first global gathering of scholars designed to provide a response to extremism, sectarianism and terrorism.

Since the 2014 Forum, the Shaykh has travelled widely to advance its work, in North Africa, the Middle East, Far East and the West. This included a conference with the African Union on tackling the religious conflict in the Central African Republic, and the release of the Chibok girls by the Nigerian jihadi group Boko Haram. He has led Imam training initiatives in the US, UK and Europe, and spoken widely on the issue of global peace, including at the World Economic Forum in 2015 and 2017, and at the UN Countering Violent Extremism Summit in 2015. In 2014, the Shaykh's work and that of the ADFP were referenced by President Barack Obama at the UN General Assembly. Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah thus became the only Islamic schol-

ar ever to be publicly quoted by a sitting President of the United States.¹

In January 2016, the Shaykh convened the Marrakesh Declaration, as the culmination of an effort running since 2011 to address the issue of violence and oppression against minorities in Muslim majority countries. The Declaration applied traditional Islamic texts, and in particular the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ *Charter of Madina*, to affirm the Islamic principle of equal citizenship as prescribed by the Prophet ﷺ. It was signed by scholars and politicians from across the Muslim world.

In February 2018, following the Shaykh's initiative, hundreds of American religious leaders, scholars and politicians, as well as others from around the world gathered in Washington, D.C., to discuss the 'Alliance of Virtue for the Common Good'. This conference promulgated *The Washington Declaration*, calling on the leaders of the Abrahamic faiths to join together in a new Alliance of Virtue, using their shared values to promote the global commonweal.

In 2019 the Shaykh launched *The Charter of the New Alliance of Virtue*, a voluntary document that seeks to bring together religious leaders of good-will for the benefit of humanity. It is an effort across religions to enable their members to live side-by-side in peace and happiness and cooperate on the basis a theology of God-given human dignity that actualizes virtue and benefit for all. In 2020, the Shaykh used this document to press for an attitude of 'the Spirit of the Ship's Passengers' which is a Prophetic metaphor for the status of human beings as the passengers of single ship with a common destiny. The Shaykh continues to argue that this is the only possible means for facing the challenges of war, pandemics, and climate change that threaten humanity.

The Shaykh has received multiple awards recognizing his work and serves in the leadership of many organizations seeking peace, including as one of four Executive Co-Presidents of Religions for Peace, the largest interfaith organization in the world.



1 The White House Archives, 2014. See: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/24/09/2014/remarks-president-obama-address-united-nations-general-assembly>



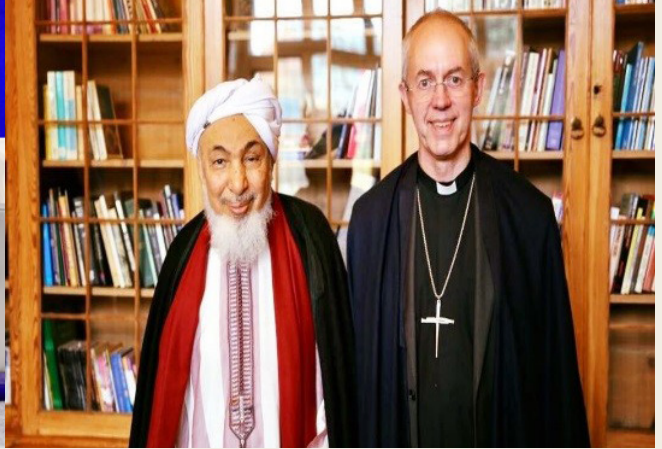
ABOUT THE ABU DHABI FORUM FOR PEACE

The Abu Dhabi Forum For Peace, under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates was established during the pinnacle of social strife in the Muslim world following the Arab Spring. The Forum works earnestly to bring an end to conflict and establish peace through facilitating spaces for dialogue and the dissemination of a discourse of moderation. It strives to allow its participants to put behind them the differences of the past and focus on a secure, peaceful societies future together.

The Forum takes an academic and theological approach to the problem of violence, holding that any violent act begins as ideology before emerging as action. Wars are waged in the realm of ideas before they devastate the physical world. Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah, the Forum's founder, teaches that we must construct defenses of peace in the heart and mind and inculcate a correct understanding of Islam. This is one of the primary roles of the scholarly elite and religious leadership in our time.

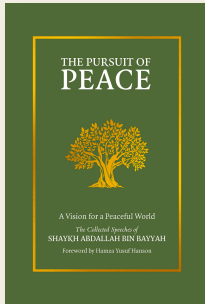
Likewise, the Forum focuses on securing the rights and safety of religious minorities living in Muslim lands. *The Marrakesh Declaration* launched in 2016, calls on Muslim states to accord the rights of equal citizenship to all minorities in their midst on the basis of The *Charter of Madina* and the Islamic values of benevolence, solidarity, human dignity, peace, justice, mercy and the common good. Most recently, the Forum has focused on elevating interreligious cooperation from the discourse of shared rights and responsibilities to the heights of a common conscience and genuine loving kindness towards the other. This is profoundly showcased in the promulgation of the 2019 *Charter for a New Alliance of Virtue* and the 2021 Abu Dhabi *Charter of Inclusive Citizenship*.



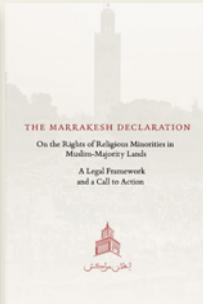




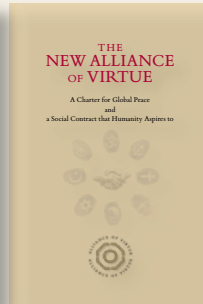
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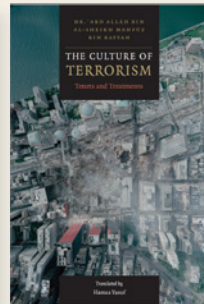
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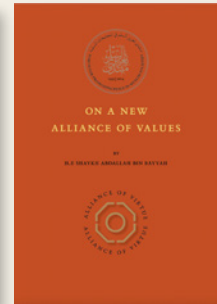
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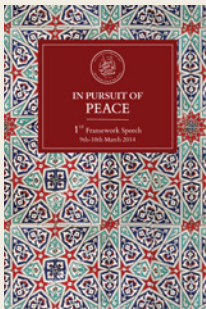
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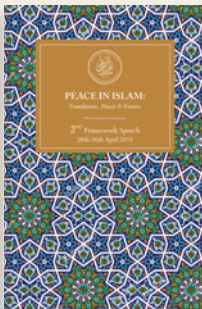
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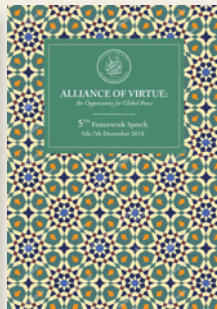
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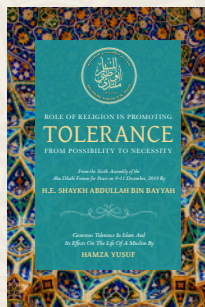
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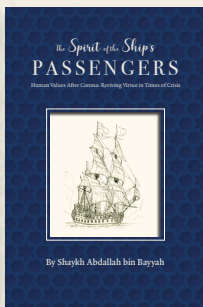
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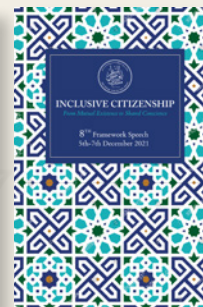
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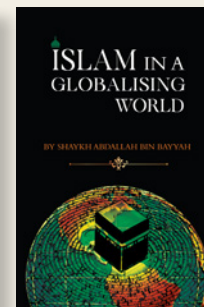
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Promoting Tolerance
2019



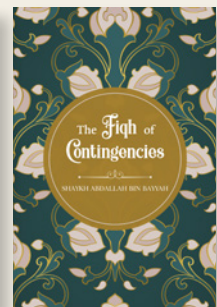
7th Assembly
The Spirit of the
Ship's Passengers
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