

The **ALMANAC**

of the **MUSLIM
INTERNATIONAL
FORUM**

*«MISSION OF RELIGION AND RESPONSIBILITY
OF ITS FOLLOWERS IN THE FACE OF THE
CHALLENGES OF MODERNITY»*

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The 10th Muslim International Forum, which took place in Moscow from 10 to 12 December 2014, marked a turning-point in several ways. A whole range of significant resolutions were passed which have had an effect on the Forum itself and the Islamic community of Russia, as well as influencing the development of the whole Ummah at the present moment. About 500 more participants in the Forum from 20 different countries, including Middle East, Turkic World, Europe, South East Asia, China and the CIS countries, supported Russian Muslims' initiative to turn the Forum into an international organization. One of the most important intellectual tools of the new international Muslim organization, which should facilitate the search for solutions to the most pressing and topical problems of the Ummah, is the 'Almanac of the MIF'. This periodical is being published in two languages (Russian and English), and the first issue contains the presentations of the participants of the 10th Muslim International Forum.

Contents

Editor's note	8
---------------------	---

WELCOME SPEECHES

Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, <i>Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the 10th Muslim International Forum</i>	12
--	----

Sergei Ivanov, <i>Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office</i>	14
--	----

Igor Shuvalov, <i>First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation</i>	15
--	----

Yevgeny Primakov, <i>Academician, Diplomat</i>	17
---	----

Salah Mezhiev, <i>Mufti of the Chechen Republic</i>	19
--	----

PANEL DISCUSSION

1st session

“SPIRITUAL AND MORAL VALUES OF THE ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS AND THE EURASIAN VECTOR OF CIVILIZATION DEVELOPMENT”

Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, <i>Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the 10th Muslim International Forum</i>	22
--	----

Dr. Sheikh Ali Muhyealdin Al-Quradaghi,
Secretary General of the International Union of Muslim Scholars 29

Professor Vyacheslav Nikonov,
Dean of the Faculty of State Administration of the Moscow State University, Chairman of the Education Committee of the State Duma of the Russian Federation 35

Ayatollah Ali-Reza Araf, *Rector of "Al Mustafa" International University (Iran)* 38

Berel Lazarm,
Chief Rabbi of Russia, Chairman of Rabbinical Council of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia, Member of the Russian Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations 42

Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin,
Chairman of the Synodal Department for Church-Society Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, Member of the Russian Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations, Ph.D. 44

2nd session

“EURASIAN INTEGRATION AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD: RESPONSIBILITY AND POTENTIAL OF MUSLIMS”

Ayatollah Mohammad-Ali Taskhiri,
Secretary General of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought (madhhabs), Responsible for Rahbar (Supreme Leader of Iran) Affairs 48

Professor Mikhail Piotrovsky,
Dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg State University, Director of the State Hermitage Museum 51

Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf,
Member of the Board of Secretaries of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, Member of the founding Board of the Muslim World League 54

Professor Vitaly Naumkin,
*Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy
of Sciences, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences* 58

Professor Bakhtiar Effendy,
*Dean of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of Syarif
Hidayatullah State Islamic University (Jakarta, Indonesia)* 62

Serikbay Oraz,
First Deputy Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims of Kazakhstan 64

3rd session

“COOPERATION OF GOVERNMENT AND RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS IN THE NAME OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT”

Mufti Emirali Ablayev,
Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims of Crimea 68

Liu (Suleiman) Kejie,
*Deputy Chairman of the Muslim Community of China, Vice President
of the Beijing Islam Association, Licentiate of the Institute of Islamic
Studies of China, Imam of the Dongsi Mosque (Beijing)* 71

Priest Igor Kovalevsky,
*Secretary General of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Russia, Member
of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations* 74

Mufti Maksatbek aji Toktomushev,
Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan 78

Mufti Abu-Bekir Shabanovich,
Chairman of the Muslim Religious Association in Belarus 82

Ramil Belyaev,
*Imam of the Muslim Community of Tatars of Finland, Editor
of the Mähallä habärläre (Community's News) Newspaper, PhD* 88

Concluding remarks by Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, <i>Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the 10th Muslim International Forum</i>	92
--	----

**7th INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND EDUCATIONAL
MUSLIM THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE
“THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ISLAMIC THEOLOGICAL
LEGACY AS A CONSOLIDATING FACTOR IN THE EURASIAN
MORAL SPACE”**

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Görmez, <i>President of the Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Turkish Republic</i>	96
---	----

Musozoda Hoja Husain, <i>Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Center of the Republic of Tajikistan (Dushanbe)</i>	103
--	-----

Sulaymon Davlatov, <i>Rector of the Tajik Islamic Institute, Chairman of the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Government of Tajikistan</i>	105
---	-----

Ildar Muhamedshin, <i>Mufti of Estonia, Director of the Islamic Cultural Center ‘Turas’</i>	107
--	-----

Mufti Salih Kvaratskhelia, <i>Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Abkhazia</i>	111
--	-----

Dr. Amsal Bakhtiar, <i>Vice-rector of the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (Jakarta, Indonesia)</i>	115
--	-----

Ali Abbasi, <i>Deputy Rector on Scientific Work of the ‘Al-Mustafa’ International University (Iran)</i>	117
--	-----

Ibrahim Albakov, <i>Rector of the Islamic University of Ingushetia</i>	126
---	-----

Riza Ganiev, <i>Head of the Educational Programs Department of the Religious Board of Muslims of Crimea</i>	129
Uygun Gafurov, <i>Vice-rector on Spiritual and Educational Work of the Tashkent Islamic University</i>	136
Dilara Solodovnic, <i>Deputy Director of the Institute of Asian and African Studies of the Lomonosov Moscow State University</i>	143
Kerim Shamshadin, <i>Ph.D., Professor, Vice Rector of the Egyptian University of Islamic Culture “Nur-Mubarak” (Almaty, Kazakhstan)</i>	146
Mufti Romas (Ramazan) Jakubauskas, <i>Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims of Lithuania</i>	153
Ali Almukhametov, <i>Ph.D., Associate Professor, Head of the Education Department of the Egyptian University of Islamic Culture “Nur-Mubarak” (Almaty, Kazakhstan)</i>	156
Firdaus Vagapova, <i>Phd., Associate Professor in Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod—National Research University</i>	165
Andrey Sizranov, <i>PhD., Associate Professor in Astrakhan State University</i>	180
Vyacheslav Akhmadullin, <i>PhD., Associate Professor in Moscow Islamic Institute</i>	186



Damir Mukhetdinov

*Damir Mukhetdinov,
Executive Secretary of the Muslim International
Forum, Editor-in-Chief of the “Almanac of MIF”*

EDITOR’S NOTE

The 10th Muslim International Forum, which took place in Moscow from 10 to 12 December 2014, marked a turning-point in several ways. A whole range of significant resolutions were passed which have had an effect on the Forum itself and the Islamic community of Russia, as well as influencing the development of the whole Ummah at the present moment, no matter how grandiose such an assertion might sound.

The Forum not only created the conditions for a breakthrough in Russia’s foreign policy regarding the Muslim factor, but also formed the basis for a new line of development for the entire Islamic world.

The Moscow Forum 2014 brought together a truly representative cross-section of participants, including: Ali Muhyealdin al-Quradaghi, Secretary General of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, today’s leading legal-theological organization of its type; the President of the Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Turkish Republic, Mehmet Görmez; Ayatolla Ali-Reza Arafı, member of the Higher Council of the Cultural Revolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran; the since

deceased Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf (may the mercy of Allah be upon him), who was the indisputable alim of Central Asia and the CIS; and about 500 more participants from 20 different countries, including Europe, South East Asia, China and the CIS countries. All of them supported Russian Muslims' initiative to turn the Forum into an international organization.

Thus the main religious centres and the leaders of Turkey's Muslims, the Turkic world and Europe, the Arab countries, South East Asia and Iran, as well as Central Asia and the whole CIS, all agreed on the central role of their Russian coreligionists and through them of Moscow in creating a new organization.

The aim was to use the Russian Forum to consolidate all the healthy forces within the Ummah — spiritual, social, intellectual, cultural and so on — and to provide an honest and clear answer, of the sort that millions of believers throughout the world are earnestly awaiting, to vitally important and challenging problems. There have been previous attempts to create such centres. There have been purely theological associations, or bureaucratic organizations and clubs for heads of state, or political bodies. But what the Ummah is really in need of is a specifically religious 'brain-storming' centre.

The Forum held by the Religious Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation successfully expanded and deepened the strategic dialogue between Russia and the Islamic world. Moscow took on the role of a potential moderator and unifier of the unfocused and dispersed international Muslim space.

One of the most important intellectual tools of the new organization, which should facilitate the search for solutions to the most pressing and topical problems of the Ummah, is the Almanac of the MIF. This periodical is being published in two languages (Russian and English), and the first issue contains the presentations of the participants of the 10th Muslim International Forum.

In the mid-2000s Vladimir Putin called Russia "a Muslim country too", where the followers of Islam have the full right to develop relations with their foreign coreligionists. This thesis is now being implemented on the practical level.

In general, the Moscow Forum is a great mercy from Allah that is laying the groundwork for the future. We have a chance to show the whole Ummah and the rest of the world what we can do and so gain the pleasure of the Creator.

WELCOME SPEECHES



Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin

Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin,
Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims of the
Russian Federation, Chairman of the Organizing
Committee of the 10th Muslim International Forum

Alhamdulillah rabil-l-'alamin wal-aqibatu lil-muttaqin, wassalatu was-salamu 'ala khairi khalkihi sayyidina wa nabiyyina Mohammad wa 'ala alihi wa sahbihi ajmain, wa man tabi'ahum bi ihsanin ila yawmi-ddin
 Assalamu 'aleikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuhu!

Dear brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen! Let me welcome you to the 10th Muslim International Forum 'Mission of religion and responsibility of its followers in the face of the challenges of modernity'. I thank all of those who could not be indifferent and joined us in this large-scale event. We are very grateful to our partners co-organizing this Forum, whom we have the pleasure to work with.

I would like to stress the following aspect: initially the Forum, which we have been organizing annually, had been a live platform for the exchange of views and actualization of vital issues to find solutions for them. Within the framework of our Forum, Muslim establishment, intellectual elite, social activists and government representatives have always had equal rights to approach in cooperation the achievement of the main tasks of everyday life. Yet, our key goal is to work out such methods and guidelines that would subsequently contribute to social

cohesion, the integration of the people of different nationalities and religions and socialization of the Muslim Ummah.

The mission of religion and, accordingly, the role of religious organizations in the modern world is increasing. Our task is to transform this growth from quantitative to qualitative in order to enable religious organizations and leaders to cure successfully social ills, to maintain the civic engagement of our congregation in a positive state, and to promote peace and good neighborly relations to make them constant in our lives. We agree with the definition that the Russian President Vladimir Putin gave to the members of the clergy in the world today, saying that ‘clerics are the people of moral authority, that is why their aspirations must be for the benefit of society. Clerics must be educated, enlightened and able to offer a clear and canonically impeccable assessment of modern challenges and threats’.

And that is exactly why in the course of our Forum we have to express such ideas and develop such maxims that would contribute, above all, the preservation of peace and good neighborliness. I am sure that not only religious figures and intellectuals, but also the authorities would lend an ear to these ideas and verdicts, so that we can together develop new or update the existing mechanisms of interaction between confessions, the state and society.



Sergei Ivanov

Sergei Ivanov,
Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office

Dear friends! I greet you in Moscow and congratulate you on the inauguration of the 10th Muslim International Forum.

Over the past few years, the Forum has consolidated its position and prestige and became a notable event in the Muslim community of Russia and other countries. A reputable composition of the event involving a wide range of participants provides an excellent opportunity to address the most urgent problems that Muslim institutions face and to discuss the interaction with the public authorities and civil society institutions. It is also a favorable platform for skill-sharing.

Let me note that millions of people in Russia profess this ancient religion. The Muslim community is actively involved in the state's life, it develops a wide range of charities, educational activities, cares about the strengthening of family values, consistently and firmly opposes religious intolerance, radicalism and extremism.

I am confident that the Forum will be constructive, and the results of its work will serve the cause of peace and effective development of intra-Muslim and interreligious dialogue.

I wish the participants of the Forum every success!



Igor Shuvalov

*Igor Shuvalov, First Deputy Prime Minister
of the Russian Federation*

Dear Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin! Dear participants and guests of the Forum! Dear friends!

I am sincerely glad to greet the participants of the 10th Muslim International Forum!

Muslim Forum has become an integral part of the spiritual life of our country, bringing together authoritative representatives of the Muslim community not only from Russia, but also from many foreign countries.

Religion has been and remains an important factor in the development of any civilization. Its place in the life of a community is determined by various factors: the level of society's development, public awareness, culture, traditions and the influence of the related socio-political entities. Religion is the reality of human life.

Religions contribute to the consolidation of people, help the formation of nations, education, and the strengthening the state. However, sometimes extreme movements emerge among the followers of different religions. The adherents of these movements recognize only divine laws of their own and the correctness of worship of their own. Often these people prove their rightness though brutal methods resolving even to terrorist acts. Religious extremism, unfortunately, is a quite common and dangerous phenomenon of our time and a source of social tension.

At the same time, religion has always been and remains an inspirational and spiritual cause of preserving the life of any society; it helps to strengthen and perpetuate a particular social order, traditions and laws of life.

Today you will discuss many topical issues, the most important of which is the interaction between Islam and civil society. I sincerely wish all the participants of the Forum productive work, interesting and useful discussions, success and prosperity.

Good health, peace and mercy of God to you and your loved ones!



Yevgeny Primakov

*Yevgeny Primakov,
Academician, Diplomat*

Greeting on the occasion of the 10th Muslim International Forum ‘Mission of religion and responsibility of its followers in the face of the challenges of modernity’.

This Forum is very timely. There are processes taking place worldwide that involve, unfortunately, not simply Muslims who profess Islam, but also religious extremists. Disengagement from religious extremists is vital—the sustainable development of the world community depends on it. This need is crucial for Russia too.

We live in a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state, and only the spiritual and moral values of the Abrahamic religions can contribute to the strengthening of our Fatherland. President Putin has repeatedly stressed this in his speeches.

Against the background of a significant strengthening of religious extremism, the need in the activity of Muslims professing the true values of Islam is growing in Russia and in other countries. Such activity should not cause any alienation. The danger is constituted exactly by radicalism that seeks to get detached from the accepted forms of multi-religious society and to create a caliphate. I remember the then president of Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser saying that one can be guided by the Qur’an in his family life, but not run a state.

It is essential under the present circumstances not to accentuate the contradictions between Sunnis and Shiites, but to consolidate these two main branches of Islam.

The Muslim International Forum, which takes place on 10–12 December 2014 in Moscow, is a landmark event and the topics discussed at the Forum are very important for the world community. I wish success to the Forum.



Salah Mezhiev

Salah Mezhiev, Mufti of the Chechen Republic

To the Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin

Dear Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin!

Peace be with you, mercy and blessings of the Almighty!

I offer you my deep respect and express my sincere gratitude for your inspired work for the benefit of the Muslim Ummah, for your noble activities in the strengthening of spiritual ties between the brotherly peoples of our country.

The 10th Muslim International Forum 'Mission of religion and responsibility of its followers in the face of the challenges of modernity' held under your presidency in the capital of Russia and the topics suggested for the discussion in the framework of the Forum are relevant to all the people of faith in our multi-religious state, where a great attention is paid to all traditional religions.

Unfortunately, due to the tragic events in the city of Grozny I will be unable to participate personally in the Forum.

Thank you for your condolences on the death of police officers who died December 4, 2014 during an anti-terrorist operation.

On behalf of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Chechnya and myself, I ask you, as the Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the 10th Muslim International Forum, to welcome all the guests and participants and wish them successful work and the accomplishment of all plans in the future.



PANEL DISCUSSION

“SPIRITUAL AND MORAL VALUES
OF THE ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS
AND THE EURASIAN VECTOR OF
CIVILIZATION DEVELOPMENT”

1st session



Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin

*Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin,
Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims
of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the
Organizing Committee of the 10th Muslim
International Forum*

**THE MISSION
OF RELIGION
IS THE DISCOVERY
AND COGNITION
OF GOD IN THE HEART
OF MODERN MAN**

In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful!
Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds! Blessings
and peace of Allah be upon our Prophet and seal of prophets Muhammad,
his family and all his companions. Peace and mercy of Allah be upon us!

With the advent of the new millennium, our world, unfortunately, does not become more joyous and safer for all who live on this planet. New challenges arise before mankind. The world is getting more fragile. Entire regions are plunged into bloody chaos of civil wars and fratricide. Vast masses of people easily break off the old bonds of friendship and spiritual kinship. By expelling God from their hearts, they are taking a path of cruelty and violence. The world community increasingly fails to control the situation and to prevent a senseless bloodshed.

Certainly, such dissidence and dramatic events deserve condemnation. We do condemn them. However, at the same time, we cannot but ponder over the deeper causes of these phenomena and over the threats they conceal!

In our opinion, the emerging conflicts are essentially an outer manifestation of much more serious processes, both at the level of society as a whole, and at the level of each individual in particular.

What is this fundamental challenge? I am convinced that it has a nature grounded in values and civilization. Since the Renaissance, Europe had decided to abandon the Creator as a burdensome hypotheses and focused instead on man, his aspirations and primarily on his absolute independence. That is when this very kind of the anthropocentric mindset began to form, with its inherent individualism, self-centeredness, hedonism, orientation to the material world, preaching of greed and enrichment for the sake of personal goals, erasing of cultural diversity, unification of mankind and, finally, a spiritual crisis.

In the afterwards, this type of thinking was declared a universal value. By means of the colonial expansion, it covered the whole world. The new European ideology had been promising comfort and prosperity for all, but they turned out to fulfill these promises only for a few strata and classes. Today — and it is getting more clear — only the so-called ‘golden billion’ seems to lead a comfortable life. The rest of mankind is given a very different fate. In fact, the content behind the façade of the seemingly attractive ideas, as ‘freedom’, ‘individualism’, ‘human rights’, or ‘emancipation of labor’ is not at all attractive.

This type of thinking is unequivocally manifested in consumerism, which, in my opinion, leads humankind towards a spiritual abyss! In the 20th century, the doctrine of a total emancipation of the human Self transformed into a concept of 'I' as a thing-in-itself and ultimately asserted the primacy of personal desires over the public interest. Essentially, it advocates the emancipation of Self from any ethical and social norms, including those that had been established by the Abrahamic religions. Thus, let me cite the words from the Holy Qur'an:

Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire... That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return [3:14].*

Chasing an imaginary freedom, the ultra-liberals directed their society to the path of a new form of slavery, the slavery of instincts, illusive comfort and consciousness' stereotypes. Does not the Lord tell about this kind of slaves in the Holy Scriptures?

And you see many of them hastening into sin and aggression and the devouring of [what is] unlawful. How wretched is what they have been doing [5:62].

Ultra-liberalism attacks *traditional values* frankly and bluntly. The illusion of absolute freedom calls into the question of the fundamental values. The most striking example lies in the sphere of gender relations, the relations between the sexes. Today the supporters of the Western ultra-liberal approaches believe that a man's gender identity is the matter of his desire and personal choice. We, people of faith, believe that the Lord did not create man and the woman by accident endowing them with different biological functions. A high mission is destined for each of them on Earth.

It is easy to assume what the future world would look like if it were inhabited by sexless beings, whose reproduction would be a utilitarian process of genetic engineering. The world of half-men and half-robots who store their minds on removable media and live

* Hereinafter, all quotations from the Qu'ran in English are given in the translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

in a virtual space. Western futurologists and science-fiction writers already constructed something like that for us. Our mission — the mission of believers — is nothing but to reject ultimately the project of rupture with religion and spirituality that is imposed upon us and to call all the people to salvation.

And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful [3: 104].

Is humanity ready to answer this call?

The last century assured us that the geopolitical center represented by Western civilization does its best to achieve superiority in global dominance. It dictates their standard of living to the rest of the world, but bears no responsibility for the fruits of this hegemony, such as Taliban in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda, DAISH in Syria and Iraq, civil wars and turmoil. These are the consequences of their activities. More and more nations and countries are disenchanting with the idea of globalization and see no possibility for a harmonious coexistence of cultures in a politically unipolar world.

More and more governments speak of multipolarity as of the only possibility to overcome the existing challenges.

A verse of the Qur'an has an indication to this as well:

And if it were not for Allah checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted ... [2: 251] ...there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned [22:40], but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds [2: 251].

Currently Russia has set its sights on its making as an independent pole in the emerging multipolar world. The country's leadership in the person of the president of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin is seriously concerned about the designing of the strategy of the close-cooperation Eurasian project.

Since the Eurasian integration is understood not only as an economic project, but also as a traditionalist project, we can talk about the 'Eastern campaign' in the vein of the early 'Eurasionists'.

The head of the government states, ‘This is a project that would preserve the identity of people and the identity of historical Eurasian space in the new age and in the new world’.

So what is essentially the purpose of the modern Russia? What will a healthy conservatism of the future Eurasian identity be about? Firstly, it is the protection of traditional values, i.e. those moral norms and principles of spirituality that are propagated by the world’s leading religions. Secondly, it is the recognition of the ability of the various religions’ representatives and ethnic groups to co-exist and to carry out cross-cultural fertilization. Finally, it is moderation, ‘the middle path’, when a person’s lifestyle is balanced by religious practice.

Thus, the course proclaimed by the Russian leadership fully meets the realities of Eurasian civilization as well as the aspirations of Russian Muslims and other groups of our civil society. I’d like to emphasize that the interests of Muslims absolutely coincide with the interests of all the other religious communities. Our unity of interests is based upon the understanding that all of us are the children of Adam. As the Holy Qur’an says:

And your god is one God [2: 163].

The depth of our cooperation will largely determine the preservation of a traditionalism-based identity in Eurasia.

O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] [2: 208].

Thinking about the future of the Eurasian space, we, Russian Muslims, inevitably ask the question of who we are and what our place in the contemporary and future social reality of Russia and Eurasia is.

The concept of ‘Russian Muslimhood’ was laid in 1860–1880 by our outstanding educators Husain Faizkhanov, Shigabutdin Marjani and Ismail Gasprinski. The period of their passionate intellectual activity coincided in time and substance with the Arab ‘Islah’ and with the Ottoman ‘Tanzimat’. Unfortunately, ‘de-construction’ of Jadidism, i.e. *Russian Muslimhood*, had been interrupted in the Soviet era. It regains currency today.

We, Russian Muslims, identify ourselves simultaneously with the united Muslim Ummah and with the citizenry of Russia. It is not by chance that the Providence connected our destinies. Now it gives us, as a subject of socio-political activity, a chance to realize the potential of our powerful Eurasian culture and our shared history. I am convinced that by following this path Muslims are able to display much more activity, especially in the field of the protection of Russian and pan-Eurasian traditional values.

In this sense, Russian citizens are even more consistent conservatives than they are deemed to be. For me it is obvious that in a manner Muslims represent the core of the national conservatism. Therefore, I would define the limits of responsibility for faithful people as the following: to help save the stray from imminent death.

In this context, the mission of religion can be defined as the discovery and the cognition of God in the drained heart of emancipated man. It is there, in the fortress-like heart, the war against Shaitan is being constantly waged. Let me remind you a famous statement by Dostoevsky that ‘God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man’. It is not a coincidence that one of the important imperatives and precepts of the Qur’an reads:

And do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy [2: 208].

An ideological weapon is required to fight against ultra-liberalism, i.e. to fight against an unrestricted preaching of sin. Even a physical weapon can be utilized if there is a real threat to individuality, family or homeland. Therefore, when Muslims talk about the great jihad, they imply in the first place a struggle for the heart.

Islam exists only in a place that shelters submission of one’s will before the will of Allah. External challenges by essence nothing but an expression of the inner state of a person. Everyone—be it a man or a woman, a white or a black—bears the world in him- or herself, in his or her heart. As the great Jalaluddin Rumi astutely noted,

*... be completely clear-hearted,
Like the face of a mirror...*

The Lord calls each of us upon a responsible fulfillment of our mission. He guides us to the Straight Path:

So race to [all that is] good. Wherever you may be, Allah will bring you forth [for judgement] all together [2: 148].



Dr. Sheikh Ali Muhyealdin Al-Quradaghi

*Dr. Sheikh Ali Muhyealdin Al-Quradaghi,
Secretary General of the International Union
of Muslim Scholars*

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS STEM FROM A MORAL AND ETHICAL CRISIS

In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful!

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds! Blessings and peace of Allah be upon our Prophet and seal of prophets Muhammad, his family and all his companions. Peace and mercy of Allah be upon us!

In the 21st century, humanity is going through dangerous times that resemble the situation emerged on the brink of the First World War. At that time, colonial powers did their best to extend their hegemony over the entire planet by splitting the ranks of the Islamic

Ummah, by partitioning lands and by carrying out expansionist policy.

By setting nations apart, inciting the Arabs against the Turks and so on, they achieved the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Eventually, both the Arabs and the Turks were faced with a lose-lose situation, no one succeeded, no one won.

In addition, the colonial forces incited enmity among a large number of nations, causing what former US National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger referred to as 'man-made chaos'. As a result, the West secured its dictatorship over the greater parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. According to the Professor Roger Garaudy, a famous philosopher, the great powers insured their superiority and built their wealth at the expense of the riches of the captured continents.

Today history repeats itself. However, different mechanisms and means are employed. They again seek to reshape the world to further divide and split it even more. They adopt such tools as terrorism, extremism, sectarianism, and the like. By this the West endeavors to achieve a number of purposes: to distort the bedrock principle of Islam, i.e. mercy and humanism, to provoke internal wars, turmoil and unrest, and eventually to extend its hegemony over the entire Muslim world and its wealth.

The rise of the DAISH and increased activity of extremist organizations in general stems not only from external factors, there are definitely domestic reasons as well. Among them are tyranny, dictatorship and authoritarianism. They are supplemented by economic backwardness, unemployment, poverty and corruption.

All of this requires of us, scholars, broad interpretation and analysis. We witness nothing but moral problems. Everything, be that politics or economy, is embedded in morality. If there were no problems with the latter, if there were no spiritual crisis, today we would not face many adversities that we are currently spreading over the world.

We all face many challenges. We need cooperation and mutual assistance. We are partners on earth. In Sura Ar-Rahman, after Allah tells us about grace and knowledge, and the scales of justice, He says:

And the earth He laid [out] for the creatures [55:10].

This means that the Almighty created the earth for all mankind and all creatures. One group cannot dominate over another group and possess all its territories. No matter how hard colonial powers are bidding to capture the entire planet, they would not do it. This verse points out the immutable principle that the planet belongs to everyone. The essentials of morality and virtue designed to accommodate man on earth flow out from here.

All those principles of morality and ethics are present in Islam. They are based on love.

Perhaps Allah will put, between you and those to whom you have been enemies among them, affection. And Allah is competent, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful [60:7].

Allah tells in the Qur'an about those who was inflicting suffering on the Prophet (peace be upon him) and subjected him to torment. Thus, the Lord adduces one of the fundamentals, which is to perceive each other as a part of the single brotherhood. Sayyidina Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) confirms this: 'Whomever you meet, he is either your brother in Islam, or the same creature as yourself'.

The first thing Allah Ta'āla says is that diversity and difference of creeds, opinions, ideas, nations and tribes exists not to wage wars, but to know each other.

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted [49:13].

We, representatives of various creeds, have a problem of non-acquaintance among us. Each has his own source of information. If we sat down together, learn about each other, then the process of conversing would grow into a dialogue, a dialogue — into interaction, interaction — into cooperation, and then — into the unity of humankind. This is the teaching of Islam.

Islam teaches us that diversity is a natural thing and one of the traditions established by God. Moreover, Allah created man

for diversity: consciousness of one man does not resemble another's mind.

Thus, naturally there is a difference between me and another human being. Some find the truth in Islam, while others—in Christianity, third people—in any other religion. Islam is not limited to this, it endorses the brotherhood of man, it appeals for love through plenteous indications that are present in more than three hundred verses of the Qur'an.

Numerous verses confirm that we all descend from Adam, and Adam—from dust. Hence, our common origin is universal, we all are kinsmen. This is why we have to preserve our kinship. The first verse of the Surah An-Nisa confirms it.

O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer [4: 1].

The most important in this verse is ties of kinship between humans. All representatives of humankind are my kindred. If we go deeper into the lineage of our ancestry, 300–400 generations, we would find a common ancestor. We are relatives. That is why Allah bound piety to the maintenance of family ties. Any person in any part of the world is my brother in Islam or my blood brother. He is my relative, he is my cousin! Therefore, I am bound and committed to him. All the verses call us upon accepting 'the other'.

It is essential for us to go back to this fundamental value. If we succeed in it, we will achieve the brotherhood of human race and religious freedom. Allah says in the Qur'an:

There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion [2: 256].

Despite religion and the prophets who were sent down by Him, Allah protects honor and dignity of man, he does not allow degrading or forcing him even for the sake of His faith.

God grants man freedom in everything, 'You are free! Your distinctiveness is freedom. Your particularity is the soul that was

breathed into by God'. No one is allowed to encroach on another person's freedom, whoever he is, for there is a soul in every human, the soul breathed by Allah:

And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then they fall down to him in prostration [15:29].

The challenges we face are numerous, whether in the sphere of politics, economy or international relations... However, the solution lies in the revival of religious and spiritual values.

Responsibility should be distributed equally for all, be that Muslims or representatives of other faiths. It is not right to shift responsibility solely onto Muslims. Terrorism has no religion. When people talk about 'Islamic terrorism', unfortunately, we have to tell about terrorism in other religions. We witness terrorism in Burma among Buddhists, in Central Africa among the heathens, or in Palestine (these are actions of the Zionists against the Palestinians). Therefore, all of us are responsible.

Muslim ulama today also has to appeal to people to encourage love in them, especially with regard to minorities. Our brothers living in minorities have also both rights and responsibilities. Moreover, Muslim scholars should remain faithful to the agreements and acts of their governments. They have to realize that such important concepts of Islam as *Jihad*, *Walā'* (patronage), *Takfeer* (accusation of infidelity) are distorted. Many people do not understand them properly.

Muslim minorities as a whole have to participate in architecture of statehood in the countries where they live, same as the Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) did, when he suggested the plan of salvation for the Egyptians, though at that time the Egyptians were not devoted to the Oneness of God. So today's Muslim should be like him, they should provide their services, share their knowledge and use their influence in society for the benefit of all.

Together we should try to set the world to the right path, to eliminate the cause of sorrow and grief, the cause of *fitna* and wars. Indeed, this unrest is against the interests of Islam, Christianity or any other creed that respects human dignity.

Adherents of the three main religions, namely Islam, Christianity and Judaism, as well as other non-Abrahamic, but conventional religions, must agree on fundamental values, moral and ethical criteria, universal humanistic principles aimed to unite us. We must stick to these commitments, clarify them for people and cure sprawling diseases.



Professor Vyacheslav Nikonov

*Professor Vyacheslav Nikonov,
Dean of the Faculty of State Administration
of the Moscow State University, Chairman
of the Education Committee of the State Duma
of the Russian Federation*

**Dear Mufti Sheikh Ravil Hazrat, Dear Sheikhs and Muftis,
Your Excellencies and Distinguished Participants!**

I greet the participants of the Forum on behalf of the speaker of the State Duma Sergei Naryshkin and on behalf of the parliament of the Russian Federation overall. People of all faiths feel at home in Russia, because the Church and the state have never had pretention to domination and absorption of other traditions. Russia has always been a multi-religious state, while Islam has always been a historical religion in Eurasia. From Dagestan (Derbent) Islam spread to the Caucasus and the Volga region to stay there. The Mongol Empire was Islamicized under Uzbek Khan and later the Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates became a part of Russia. Russian Muslims along with Orthodox Christians fought off crusaders' campaigns. Ivan the Terrible's Cavalry was mostly made up of Muslims.

Qur'an began to sound in Russia under Peter the Great, when the first Russian translation was made. Islam became an official religion of

the Russian Empire under Catherine the Great, when the first Muftiyat was established in Ufa, and the Muslim elites got the same privileges as the Russian nobility. Russia has never faced religious separatism and Muslims primarily identified themselves through culture.

Muslims in Russia have never shunned politics: there were 25 Muslims in the first State Duma, who formed a faction of their own, and there were 36 Muslim deputies in the second Duma. Sadreddin Maksudov (Sadri Maksudi Arsal) served as the deputy chairman of the Duma and there are many Muslim deputies in today's State Duma. Seventy years of atheism were disastrous for the representatives of all religious traditions, including Islam, even though it was persecuted less than the Orthodox Church. During World War II, Muslims heroically fought for their country side by side with the adherents of other religions, as it has happened several times in our history.

Islamic education was developing in the country even during the Soviet era. Let us not forget that after the war the Soviet Union expanded contacts with the Islamic world in all areas: economic, cultural, military and technical. For decades the elites of all the Islamic countries have been speaking Russian among other languages, as they received higher education in Soviet and Russian universities.

In Kuala Lumpur at the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Vladimir Putin called Russia a 'country where Islam is a historical religion'. Thousands of mosques open in Russia today, hundreds of centers of Islamic education. All schools teach either the basics of religion or the basics of secular ethics at choice, and it is a personal choice which religious tradition he or she wants to study. Today there are 57 ethnicities in Russia associating themselves with Islam, while in eight subjects of the Federation Muslim nationalities are the most numerous groups among the population. Along with the two large Muslim historical areas in Russia, the Caucasus and the Volga region, the third one emerged: Moscow. Moscow today is a city with the largest Muslim population in Europe, more than one and a half million Muslims.

It is important that the Russian Muslim Ummah is mostly consists of the adherents of traditional Islam. The Islam, with which we share traditional moral values, the sense of personal responsibility and

religious responsibility to the state and society as a whole. Together we promote cultural diversity, which is our historical heritage, and we are against the dominance of a single system of values and a single model of the world. We are fighting together and pray for the peace in the long-suffering land of the Middle East. We appreciate that no Islamic state joined the sanctions against our country imposed by Washington.

I wish success to the 10th Muslim International Forum!

We are all the children of our Fatherhood, we are all the children of God!

Presentation with a computer program ‘The Holy Qur’an and Hadith of the Prophet’.

Russkiy Mir Foundation [*Russian World*] was created to promote the Russian language and culture, and we have always taken care that the Qur’an sounds in Russian. For this purpose a bilingual Russian-Arabic multifunctional computer program ‘The Holy Quran and Hadith of the Prophet’ was developed on request of the Foundation and with its support. I have the honor to present it to you, dear mufti Sheikh Ravil Hazrat. Now we have prepared an additional issue as a gift to the Muslims of the Crimea, and a new version for mobile devices is being developed, which is particularly important in our digital age. Today, every participant of the Forum will find in his portfolio a disc with this program, and all of you will be able to assess its capabilities studying the Holy Qur’an and Hadith.



Ayatollah Ali-Reza Arafī

*Ayatollah Ali-Reza Arafī,
Rector of “Al Mustafa” International University (Iran)*

ONLY THE RIGHT INTERPRETATION OF ISLAM ENTAILS JUSTICE

In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful!

There are plenty of ideas on what Islam should be like today. But only a pure and genuine interpretation can satisfy spiritual needs and diverse demands of all mankind. Various visions can be grouped as follows.

1. A petrified interpretation of Islam

This interpretation is petrified, radical and far from rationality. In this or that form, it can be encountered in different parts of the Islamic world, just as there are harsh and extreme interpretation of other religions. Its special features include a full or a partial denial of rational thinking, submergence into a false understanding of religion, commitment to the ideas that inhibit interaction between people and establishment of mutual understanding of humankind.

This radical vision and misuse or improper use of religious concepts has always existed among the followers of different movements.

It can be found today too. You and I can witness its growth in some parts of the Muslim world. We see ignorance and extreme obstinacy among the followers of certain trends. Similar processes are observed in other world religions.

2. A liberal interpretation of Islam

The second interpretation and vision of Islam and the heavenly teachings—as well as religion in general—holds a position opposite to the previous. This liberal interpretation is devoid of the values on which the heavenly religions and Islam are rested upon. In modern times we have been witnessing such attempts to interpret Islam and other religions that whittle away the fundamentals and the most important values. This is especially true of Sharia. Under this interpretation, religion is conceived through the lenses of materialism.

This frivolous western interpretation is neither supported nor accepted by us. The lines between Islam and religion on the one hand and an atheistic worldview on the other are blurred, and the aspirations for satanic forces and injustice are swelling. We reject that.

3. A pure interpretation of Islam

In our school and among many thinkers of the Muslim world—among those who represent various Islamic schools—there is a third interpretation and vision. It is pure, comprehensive and gives answers to vital issues. This is a civilized interpretation that embraces all the trends and symbolizes a tool for establishing good-neighborliness among humankind itself and between humanity and its Creator.

The correct interpretation must meet ten criteria.

1. Islam is a rational religion based on the primacy of reason. We are convinced that a rational philosophical view on the cognition of the world, nature, the universe and the human being is a competent approach. Such kind of rational thinking can create a fertile ground for the interaction between people and strengthen the foundations of religious and spiritual values of mankind.

This rational view tells us that spirituality and religious values are deeply enrooted in human mind. We do not agree that spiritual and moral thinking is rooted solely in pure sensuality and that the basics of the heavenly religions and Islam cannot be perceived through

rationality. Rational and philosophical wealth is embedded into the very essence of religions. It is painted in the color of divinity, spirituality and humanism.

2. *There is a method of the cognition of Islam, its teachings and practical prescriptions. It is called Ijtihad.* The genuine Ijtihad is seeking and giving the answers of time. Many radical juridical theological opinions speak of unbelief causing discord in the Muslim community. They have no roots in the fundamentals and proper methods of Ijtihad.

The correct method of Ijtihad is rationalization and legitimatization in Islamic research centers, in academia and in the milieu of the prominent figures of the Muslim community. Each speech and each religious ruling should be in harmony with the true Ijtihad and with the knowledge of timely needs. Unfortunately, many of today's religious decisions are not based on this methodology.

3. *Justice, spirituality and well-being are inextricably linked.* Under this Islamic vision, a man is in need of well-being to the same extent, as he needs spirituality and, at the same time, justice and equality. These three important human concepts—i.e. well-being, spirituality and justice—are not interpreted but with regard to each other they shall be placed inseparably under this interpretation of Islam. Their separation causes injustice and many problems for mankind.

4. *The needs of mankind should necessarily be taken into account.* The heavenly Abrahamic religions—including Islam and its various currents—should regard the interests of people and pay heed to their difficulties. Today the world is faced with the crisis of the family and with the problem of ecology; oppression, injustice and aggression are swelling; tough sanctions and embargos are introduced... Some arrogant forces are trying to make the international order unipolar. Islam and religion in general must deal with these issues.

5. *Requirement of interfaith dialogue.* Peoples' religions—especially the Abrahamic religions—have a lot in common. They can attain a common fundamental thinking, common ethical values and even common juridical and legislative decisions. The work should be done this to let the world understand it. There is a large-scale dialogue settled between Islam, Catholicism and Orthodoxy. It should be further intensified.

6. *Intra-Muslim dialogue.* This is what Imam Khomeini insisted upon, this is what we teach in our training centers. Mutual understanding between religions should be established between the various currents of Islam. All the Islamic teachings carry in themselves about eighty percent of common moral, legal and philosophical foundations. It is necessary to identify them to ensure rapprochement and mutual cooperation.

7. *No' to a distorted understanding of the great Islamic Jihad, 'yes' to legitimate and justly substantiated struggle and resistance.* Tragically, today the concept of Jihad—a very sacred idea—is distorted due to some radical teachings. It is a mistake. However, a lawful resistance against unjust sanctions and worldwide oppression is a desired deed. Fortunately, your country [Russia is implied] is free and independent, it stands firmly on its own feet in the face of world-wide crime and violence. These are legitimate actions.

8. *Rejection of the accusations of infidelity, conflicts and spite in the broadest sense.* We are convinced that friendly relations among all the Islamic currents are essential. We extend our hands for the sake of mutual dialogue, brotherhood, common actions and enlightenment in the name of mutual cooperation. Our hands are stretched towards various Islamic teachings as well as towards various religions.

9. *Islam is a civilization.* It can respond to vital wants and needs; it has a power of attraction. Muslim world should be united and friendly and, at the same time, the followers of Islam—including religious minorities in many a country—should take into account the interests of governments.

The hatred of some radicals that we are witnessing stems from the past, when some forces used to oppress Muslims and commit crimes against them. A large proportion of convictions of those who apply accusations of infidelity on daily basis has evolved under the pressure of colonization. It should be taken into account.

10. *The pursuit of establishment of meaningful inter-religious relationships is crucial.*

This is a minimum of principles of a pure and correct interpretation of Islam. Such an understanding and all its attributes and characteristics can gather the Muslim community together, can spread the idea of the unity of all people throughout the world and give a serious weapon of resisting against injustice and oppression.



Berel Lazarm

Berel Lazarm,
Chief Rabbi of Russia, Chairman of Rabbinical
Council of the Federation of Jewish Communities
of Russia, Member of the Russian Presidential
Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations

Today, as we see obscure and hard conflicts between nations in different parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, in Europe, what we see in Russia pleases us. Unfortunately, in different regions people exploit religion for their own purposes. They justify their actions by religion. Even, Heaven save us, they kill people and say that it is permissible. We all clearly understand that all religions are based on the belief in the One God. None of our Abrahamic religions allow treating our neighbor other than through showing love, mutual understanding and respect. If we talk about the relations between Jews and Muslims, we are all the children of the same father. Our forefather is Abraham, or as you call him — Ibrahim.

Imagine if today our forefather Abraham came down to us in this world and see what is happening with different regions. He probably would just be in despair, ‘What happened to my offspring, what happened to my children, why cannot they find a common language?’ Thanks God, there is a complete mutual understanding in Russia. And, probably, if our forefather Abraham came down to Russia today, I think he would be happy.

Why is it particularly in Russia, where such relations have shaped, why not in Europe, not in the United States, especially not in the Middle East? Perhaps the simplest answer is: it is the course of history. Today in Russia our Orthodox Christian brothers and our Muslim brothers are perhaps more religious and pious than in other countries. People in Western countries, as has been said earlier, try to find new ways of life in the name of liberalism, in the name of progress. Family values, religious values, traditional values are left aside. If that is freedom, then each person shall choose his own path.

Here in Russia, owing to the authorities, we reaffirm that the principles that unite us—a belief in the One God, family values, morality—are the things that have always protected us, it is spirituality that is so important for us. When we say, ‘Honor thy father and mother’, we are also implying honoring God. God is our common father, who wants all his children to live in peace. God, it has been said here, created people different. We are not all alike. Hair color, appearance, inner understanding, mentality are different, but God is One, and He wants to prove to us that we are all together. God is one, when all of us are friends.



Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin

*Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin,
Chairman of the Synodal Department for Church-
Society Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church,
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Cooperation with Religious Associations, Ph.D.*

I am happy to testify that I almost completely agree with my colleague and partner Ravil Gaynutdin. What has been said by respected Sheikh Al-Qaradaghi is also much in consonance with my thoughts and the thoughts of Orthodox Christians. I think that the next presentations will also show the consent of Orthodox Christians and Muslims.

Theologically we are different—it is obviously. But our thoughts about the state of society, its development prospects and the tasks of the believers are very much in tune, and in many respects these ideas match. We have common challenges and much has already been said about them today. Anthropocentrism, pseudo-humanism, prioritizing all the values and a social order of untransfigured sinful man, a man who is guided not by the highest ideals and values, but rather by low and often perverse interests. Another challenge we face is pseudo-economics, a system in which money ostensibly can make money endlessly. Another challenge is the assertion used as a universal yardstick by an emancipated person who emphasizes with his own life that he is

independent in his life from God, from society, from other people and from the state. However, all of these challenges today seem to be for us something that creates confidence. They become a central axis for deciding upon the arrangement of society, and not only in individual countries.

The supporters of pseudo-humanism, pseudo-economics and man's liberation from moral values are suffering an ideological defeat today. People, who know the worth of real moral principles, have already won indeed. Civilizations of sin, civilizations of vice have nothing to say to believers, and people increasingly realize that a civilization that exists only for the sake of pragmatic goals, and moreover—for the sake of vice, has no future. We think that our opponents know it too.

Therefore, same methods are continuously used against religious people, including Muslims and Orthodox Christians. After the ideological dispute is lost, our opponents would perhaps try to arrange a war between us, between Orthodox Christians and Muslims, or a war among each of us: between Christians and Christians, between Muslims and Muslims. Maybe they will try to subdue us through political, economic, informational and propagandist pressure.

In these conditions we need to be wiser and in particular treat each other with care in order to prevent our historical opponents from dividing us, from causing a clash between us or from forcing us to eliminate those who belong to the same religion, the same ethno-social community.

They attempt to impose spiritual substitutions upon us. Sometimes these are structures and communities, who seemingly speak on behalf of the believers of our religions, but they are in fact artificially grown radical groups, partly aware of the purposes for which they are promoted, partly not realizing it. But in any case they are created to weaken our peoples, our communities and our international bonds through them.

Such extremist groups exist in different religions. It is known that some of them hide behind Islam, some—behind Christianity. Somewhere there is neo-paganism. Experts argue that this ideology has no indigenous origin—it is implanted from outside.

In these circumstances, we need to be wise, to do everything in order to maintain genuine religious traditions that enable us to defend our interests and the interests of our peoples and to live in peace with other nations. We cannot be outargued or defeated with such arguments. The ideologists of hedonism and the so-called consumer society are unconvincing. And today it is necessary to ensure that any attempt to divide us and implant extremism would not provide success to our opponents, who want to weaken and humiliate our people.

What can we oppose to these challenges? We must, reject the sinful civilization, the civilization of usurious money detached from labor, reject consumerism, the civilization of controlled chaos, information and political manipulation, the civilization of spiritual slavery under the slogans of liberty, the civilization that provides power for only a few under the slogans of democracy.

We need to consolidate another real, genuine civilization of eternal and immutable moral values provided by eternal and unchanging God, the priority of the spiritual over the material, and of public interest over private, fair economy, where labor prevails over speculation, a civilization where people can live freely according their will as individuals and in communities, where the government listens to people and acts according to their will.

PANEL DISCUSSION

“EURASIAN INTEGRATION AND THE
ISLAMIC WORLD: RESPONSIBILITY
AND POTENTIAL OF MUSLIMS”

2nd session



Ayatollah Mohammad-Ali Taskhiri

*Ayatollah Mohammad-Ali Taskhiri,
Secretary General of the World Forum for
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TRUE AND FALSE VALUES

In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful!

If we scrutinize the crimes being committed and already committed in the course of human history, we will see that there are two main factors behind the crimes and behind the implications, they have for humankind.

The first factor is the lack of belief in values in general. If one does not believe in absolute values, if one does not adjust his deeds in conformity with these values, then he can commit whatever he wants. He will have no barriers or obstacles while committing any offense.

A believer acts differently, to the contrary. He is guided by the absolute truths and values. However, man can mistake some other values for what he believes to be the absolute ones. These, for example, are the values that predetermine tribalism and tribal hatred. These are imaginary values, not real.

Secondly, if a person absolutizes values, it can bring him to the path of barbarianism, to the actions appropriate for animals only. All of these problems and phenomena they generate—bloodshed, crimes and miseries—go back to either of the two factors.

When Islam emphasized true and absolute values, primarily, faith in Allah and belief in truth, it thus gave people Faith. This means that Islam armed humanity with means to reject both of the fallacious approaches that I mentioned.

Belief in God offers Muslims the true values and gives a tool to reject imaginary, false values. When one pronounces Al-Shahada ‘There is no god but the God’, he rejects imaginary values asserting the truth, the real and the absolute.

Something similar applies to civilization and culture. If a culture is based on humanistic ideals, it is a genuine culture. Culture based on instincts can suggest no truth. When we are guided by self-interest and narrow motives, we liken ourselves to animals. But human culture and civilization rests on something else.

If we believe in the value of a human being, then we can justly talk about human rights, justice and morality.

All the Abrahamic religions believe in the true nature of man. They give us faith and knowledge about the truth, they reject false concepts. They give us faith in dignity of Self and in human merits. This essence of human beings is granted by Allah. Islam is the faith that conforms with the true essence of man.

From faith in man, we turn to the true faith in God and faith in all the values offered by religion. All people believe in justice, all people believe in human rights. If we believe in all the original truths, we will create a necessary framework for mankind to advance towards peace and love.

Same as we are called upon by the human essence, we ourselves call upon to seek for the grounds, which would enable rapprochement with other people. This may be possible only on the basis of a logical, natural and universally uniting dialogue with the others. We believe that religion gives people the very ground on which they can build relationships based on peace, justice and mutual love.

This dialogue should encompass the unbelievers as well. The Qur'an speaks of this need. We have to talk to everyone proceeding from complete objectivity. Unbelievers will follow us and reach the straight path, and not the path of mistakes and crimes.

We all have to follow this righteous path. No one should be brought to account for these or that trespasses. Because we have to keep the grounds for dialogue. The Qur'an tells us of the need to maintain such a productive dialogue with Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Scholars should educate Muslims on the basis of genuine moral values. A religious person is a person who keeps in balance and harmony of all his spiritual and moral qualities.

Those acts, which we characterize as fanaticism, occur exactly due to the lack of religious education, for the true religious education rejects excess, radicalism or extremism. But we see it in the actions of such movements as DAISH, as extremist movements that distort the essence of Islam.

Islam, we know, says, 'The one, who accuses his brother of disbelief, is eventually proven to be a disbeliever himself'. The movements we witness in the Middle East today inspires fear and sheds blood. It has nothing to do with Islam.

It has nothing in common with our religion. It has more to do with the plans of the West, the plans of the imperialists, who want to divide our people and our countries, who want to disturb the state of natural human equilibrium, which Allah created.



Professor Mikhail Piotrovsky

*Professor Mikhail Piotrovsky,
Dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies,
St. Petersburg State University, Director
of the State Hermitage Museum*

First of all, I would like to say that I can not speak on behalf of Muslims. I think we are talking about responsibility, and it is a shared responsibility. I would mention a few areas, in which we all have to be responsible.

In fact, one of the important characteristics of the future that we want to build, which partially exists now, is religious tolerance. Tolerance, as we know it, exists, unfortunately, only when everything is well. When countries dwell in ‘good’ economic conditions, when there is political tranquility, tolerance is obtained easily. As soon as there is a distress of different types in society—psychological, economic, political,—religious tolerance is under threat. A desire for isolation emerges, a dash to ghettos. One rushes to a ghetto, one wants to drive the other into ghettos. Here the responsibility of those I am talking about starts: people of culture, the intelligentsia—both religious and secular. Because of this demonization, people are pleased to present the others as people with a huge amount of negative qualities, all of that ‘qualities’ of the other are made up and then attributed to a particular culture (...)

Another situation where we have to combine our efforts is the situation of mirrored stereotypes. There are stereotypes that pop up as a

result of demonization, they are hard to be sorted out. It is clear for all that when Islam is subjected to demonization, a set of things, where Islam is ostensibly 'bad', is invented. However in exactly the same way when other cultures are subjected to demonization, the list of their flaws is roughly the same. I will not go through it, but in fact, in any case we see accusations bandied around, which, firstly, have no foundation and, secondly, they are identical.

One such example is what is called 'radical ideas of jihad'. In fact, this idea is begotten by the crusades and it has the ideology of the crusades. This is a reflection of what religious intolerance has brought into a relatively tolerant medieval Muslim world. I believe it is rather useful to consider this kind of stigmas and their interdependence. At least, we try to do it in the sphere of culture, history and in museum life. Then things get much easier.

One more plot that we need to engage with together, which I call for convenience a 'Russian recipe', is a tradition of the interaction of the secular and spiritual, the interaction of Islam and the state, Islam and Christianity, institutional interaction in the Russian Empire. There are many examples in Russia, many studies about this wise institutional constructions. It has not always worked, but we know the story. We know the policy of Peter the Great, which eventually did not work out. We know the policy of Catherine II, the founder of our museum, for which we particularly respect her and appreciate.

There has always been a search for recipes, the recipes, which could help live and create what is mistakenly called 'Russian Islam'. Of course, no Islam is Russian. There is just Islam. But how beautiful is that term! Our great poet Velimir Khlebnikov wrote in his great poem 'Xacitarxan' [Hajji Tarkhan]:

'Oh, those Muslims they are just the same as Russians,
And Islam too can be Russian.

Those slightly narrow eyes are so sweet,
They are like slightly open window shutters...' (...)

There are many other traditions, which we maybe do not forget, but do not recall too often either. There is an experience of Russian Orientalism. It contributed a lot to make this sphere of knowledge non-missionary,

non-political, so that it does not mess up things and does not facilitate mutual demonization. We all know Rosen and Barthold, who harshly criticized missionary Orientalism for being non-academic.

Fortunately, Russian Orientalists scholars have a whole set of good traditions at their disposal. They include the reliance on particular facts and materials, reliance on archaeological researches, architectural studies of Muslim history, a remarkable collection of manuscripts, examined by Muslims and Christians alike. These are museum collections too. For example, the Hermitage is actively engaged in the presentation of Russian Islamic art in the world, in the form of permanent exhibitions, arranged according to geographic locations, and individual exhibitions of Islamic art.

Today our common goal and task, which we are dealing with in cooperation with our colleagues from academia and secular and religious universities, is the preparation of educational programs for advanced Islamicists. Next year we are launching a new program at St. Petersburg University. Together we coordinate our work, so that the teaching could be different but equally grounded. I want to believe that the programs would be just good enough (and here I imply not only our faculty, but Islamic universities in general) to make even a student of Al-Azhar study there with pleasure because we could always suggest something new. These programs will be based primarily on original texts (collections, manuscripts) and authentic materials. This is what has Russian Orientalism of various readings has always been.

Let me remind you that both Muslims and Christians has always been involved in the development of the tradition of Russian Orientalism. We have always been perceiving Islam as a traditional religion, a religion culturally equal to Christianity (...)

I think a few of these aspects and general considerations and the activities we are engaged with represent the very responsibility—our common responsibility—of Muslims and non-Muslims. Our shared responsibility of the people of culture is to ensure that people do not demonize each other, so that they understand that the differences are beautiful.



*Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq
Muhammad Yusuf*

*Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf,
Member of the Board of Secretaries of the
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Member of the founding Board of the Muslim
World League*

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful, praise be to Allah Lord of the worlds, peace be upon the best Prophet, his family and his companions, peace and mercy of Allah and His blessings.

The topic of our discussion is the responsibility of Muslims with regard to the challenges of our epoch. I want to say that the religion of Islam, the Hanafi school, came to show people their responsibilities, the responsibility of a person to his Lord, to the Prophet (peace be upon him), to the Qur'an, to people. A Muslim is entrusted with a huge responsibility. He is obliged to bear it to be a true Muslim, to obtain the mercy in this world and in the other world. We should be conscious of this responsibility. Every Muslim is obliged to study his religion properly in order to know how to live, how to worship the Lord, how to deal with Muslim and non-Muslim brothers and to learn answers to many other questions.

There are a great many challenges of the epoch. These days the major challenges are radicalism and extremism. Every Muslim should be

aware of his responsibility in order to resist extremism and terrorism. It is very important. It is said that terrorism and extremism have no religion, no nationality, no homeland. It's right. We see that Christians and Jews also face terror. But, unfortunately, the discussion of extremism in the first place concerns Muslims. That is exactly why we need to understand our responsibility to this problem and to cooperate in order to put an end to it.

In these few minutes given to me I would like to talk about my humble experience. We know that in the Soviet era the communist regime completely banned religion. During these 70–80 years, everything had been destroyed, in particular with regard to us, Muslims... books were burnt, mosques, schools. We were completely forbidden to study Islam. By the collapse of the Soviets, there had only been two Muslim educational institutions. One in Bukhara for 40 students and one in Tashkent for 50 students. This is for the whole Soviet Union! Once the Union has fallen and the country being freed, people became eager to study religion, but there was no one to teach them. The teachers who arrived from other countries brought along their own problem. We saw the first sprouts of 'jihadism' and other problems. There were explosions in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent, then revolts against the authorities.

I was overseas then. We consulted with the ulema and decided that certain steps should have been taken. The first thing I did when I got home, I wrote a book on the differences between Muslims. When we showed these differences, their causes and possible consequences, people were saying, 'Oh, sheikh, if only you had written that book ten years ago, nothing would have happened'.

We started teaching people the true religion of Hanafi school, Hanafi Fiqh. Praise be to Allah, the attempt was successful. Once a very reputed man from the government authorities visited me. He said, 'I have a request. Would you write a book on the Liberation Party Hizb ut-Tahrir? Many young people have joined this party. We have been imprisoning them. They are 17, 18, 19. I do not want this, they should be free. They must be true and sincere Muslims'. Then he added, 'I will not leave your house until you answer'.

So, I wrote the book ‘Religion is a council’. We did not accuse anyone of disbelief, did not insult anyone. All of us are brothers, we tried to explain it. Many have understood, but not all. That is why the following books have been written. People read them in prisons. They realized their mistakes. They addressed the authorities and were freed.

Many of the released were coming to me with gratitude. Some policemen themselves were giving young men these writings, saying, ‘Read this book’. Young people read and took the final leave of terrorism. In this way, thanks God, we were acting’.

Then we started thinking about how to raise the level of Islamic culture among people. Neither the Arabic script, nor the books that we needed had been preserved. We were eager to restore the Arabic alphabet. Thanks God, today we can conclude that there are books on all Islamic studies, reading them is very helpful. We use the method of sermons, exhortations, the Internet as much as possible.

Thanks God, now in Uzbekistan there are no problems. The neighboring republics—Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan—also use our books. Their state of affairs gets better in a way. A group of young people from Russia contacted me. These were Uzbeks working in Russia. They asked, ‘Sheikh, it is necessary to translate your books into Russian, because it is a global language. Many people can read it. But we do not see such books as yours in Russia’. Praise be to Allah, we contacted a publisher and translated the books; we will cooperate with Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin in this. He helps us with this and, God willing, we will witness the success of our actions, people will feel their responsibility to Allah, to religion, to the international community, to their brothers.

Every Muslim must correctly understand his religion. A true Muslim represents good for himself, for society and for the world. If a Muslim does not understand his religion properly, has a mistaken concept—it is evil to himself, to his family, harmful for society and for the world.

The responsibility must be comprehended by us, Muslims. We must strive to raise the level of our Islamic culture. Each of us must study their religion to be true Muslims and live with each other in love, friendship and cooperation.

I believe that this Forum is a favorable platform to meet, exchange ideas and make plans for future duty. I would like to say that today we have done a great job, and I think that the Muslim International Forum should have a permanent presidium, permanent general governance or something of this kind.

The Forum gathers and comes to an end, but the working body created here will work continuously, will monitor the implementation of the decisions of this Forum. We will keep in touch with the participants, ask them what they have done, what they offer and the like. I believe that it would be useful for all of us, Muslims and non-Muslims.

Praise be to Good.



Professor Vitaly Naumkin

*Professor Vitaly Naumkin,
Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies
of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Corresponding
Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences*

Your Excellency Chairman of the Council of Muftis of Russia
Mufti Sheikh Ravil Hazrat Gaynutdin!

Your Eminences!

Your Excellencies!

Ashab al-fadilati wa al-samaha!

Distinguished guests, colleagues and friends!

Al-salamu alaikum wa rahmatullaahi wa barakatuh!

First of all, let me congratulate you on this important event in the life of the Russian Muslim community, the 10th anniversary of Muslim International Forum. Our meeting is dedicated to the most important topic: the role of Eurasian Muslims in the modern world and their responsibility.

The world we are living in is going through a difficult time, a time of turbulence and instability. All of us, Muslims and non-Muslims of Eurasia, are put to test.

Speaking of this test, we should note the following. Firstly, it is the increasing pressure exerted by a significant part of Western countries, claiming the uniqueness and versatility of their cultural values, which

endangers our civilizational identity, the commitment to the standards of living that are flesh and blood of our peoples, the fundamentals of our state system and our moral and ethical principles. An aggressive version of secularism has nothing to do with the genuine humanism and is aimed at ousting religion to the margins of public life. Its imperative is nothing but to subdue our communities to the forces that seek to reshape the world according to their own civilizational templates. At the same time, the so-called pervasive massive culture based on boundless consumerism, money-grubbing and spiritual impoverishment bears in itself a mass de-culturalization.

Secondly, those, who are not satisfied with the endeavors of Islamic and Eurasian states and communities to achieve a rapid development and an increase of their role in global and regional processes on the basis of respect to the rule of the international law, non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, respect for the traditional—including religious—values, actively foment inter- and intra-confessional enmity. We witness a serious worsening of affairs between Muslims and Christians in the Middle East. A massive exodus of Christians belonging to the most ancient communities of the Christian world perturbs not only Orthodox Christians of our country, but Muslims too. The demographics, the demographic structure of the region undergo changes.

The relations between Sunni and Shiite communities and between the various schools of Sunni thought are no less tense. The stress is contributed sometimes by a short-sighted policy of certain local regimes based on greed and lust for power. A number of them did not stand the test of time. It cannot but influence Russia and our neighbors and allies in Eurasia.

Third, one of the scariest is the test, to which we are subjected by a sharp rise of the hellish forces of radicalism and terrorism. They use Islam as a cover and arbitrarily misappropriate the right to interpret religious doctrines. DAISH, Al-Qaeda, Jabhat al Nusra and other terrorist groups harm the high and bright prestige of Islam, helping both Christianophobes and Islamophobes, skillfully manipulating the extremists and seeking to destabilize the situation in the Islamic world, weakening its capacity.

The instability and chaos that rule a number of countries in the Middle East as the result of a gross foreign interference, deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the collapse of hopes for a quick solution of the Palestinian case deepens the hazard and expands the ranks of radicals. Unfortunately, the natives of the Eurasian states turn out to be recruited to these ranks too. The extremists succeed using utopian and often simply delusional projects. Behind them lurk either alien for Muslims geopolitical ambitions or simply man-hating ideological constructions.

It's time to admit honestly that evidently we all, including spiritual leaders and believers, are still not doing enough to confront the evil capable of undermining the relations of solidarity that have been crystallizing during the centuries. This evil is a menace to tolerance, constructive mutual enrichment and concord between the peoples inhabiting our country and the neighboring countries in the Eurasian space, the Muslim communities which more frequently show the aspirations towards integration in recent years. Undoubtedly, a growing political and economic interstate integration in Eurasia facilitates this process.

Under these circumstances, it is necessary to consolidate the efforts of all the Muslims in the Eurasian space in order to preserve and strengthen traditional values of our Islamic heritage. For centuries these values have been securing the coexistence and cooperation of all the faiths and nationalities. These are the very values that can rid us of misfortunes brought by radicalism, intolerance, the apology of violence and exceptionality. The story of the coexistence of Christians and Muslims within the unique settings of Russian statehood can set a pattern for many a state. We successfully overcame sophisticated attempts of our enemies to undermine our national unity, resting on shared religious and humanistic ideals of tolerance and forgiveness. Look at the blooming Chechen capital Grozny: the courage of the Chechen defenders of the united state becomes the pride of all Russians. They [Chechens] risk their lives to confront the criminal actions of terrorist thugs.

Complicated relations between Russia and Eurasian states on the one hand and the West on the other, deterioration of the situation in some parts of the Muslim world (practically disintegration of some states), the

ongoing conflict between the West and the Muslim world, unceasing wars and conflicts—all of these bear a threat and requires a comprehensive development of Muslim education. A component of general education should be embedded in religious education, while observation of the best patterns of national Islamic heritage must be accentuated. Great Tartar, Central Asian, Azerbaijani, North Caucasus ulema created a treasury of thought. Even overseas cultures can benefit from it. I would recommend our brothers in faith from abroad and the holders of various funds to take a close look at this undervalued heritage, to publish and disseminate in the Islamic world the works of these wonderful enlighteners, about whom Mufti Sheikh Ravil Hazrat has brilliantly told us.

Counteraction against the poisonous propaganda of the extremists, which they spread through the Internet and social media, blockage of their financial channels, prevention of the participation of our fellow brothers in faiths in the war waged by international terrorist groups abroad is another challenge.

Unimaginable technological advances of mankind allowing people at different ends of the globe to communicate with each other, see each other, access the information about events taking place in all the parts of the world create many positive opportunities as well as quite a lot of risks. Hyper-globalization gives peoples and countries favorable possibilities for development, based on the experience of the succeeded, highly developed states. However, it does not by itself entail eradication of poverty, misery, diseases, wars, overcoming of disasters, conflict, hostility and rivalry. This requires good will and cooperation of nations and states.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that my colleagues, Russian orientalist and Islamicists along with myself, are proud of our close ties between the academic community and Russia's Muslim organizations, particularly with the Council of Muftis of Russia. We are proud that our scholars make a contribution to enlightenment, the spread of knowledge about Islam, its history and culture in order to strengthen mutual understanding and mutual enrichment between different faiths and ethnic groups in Russia.



Professor Bakhtiar Effendy

*Professor Bakhtiar Effendy,
Dean of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University
(Jakarta, Indonesia)*

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, peace and blessing be upon you, peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, who was sent as mercy for the worlds, peace and blessings be upon his family and all his companions.

First, I thank all those who contributed to the organization of this Forum. Secondly, I would like to thank the chairman of this Forum Dr. Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, who gave us this wonderful opportunity to come to the capital of your great country, the city of Moscow, owing to which address you right now.

Dear brothers in this great faith, the Holy Qur'an says, 'O mankind, indeed We have created you and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another'. Another verse says, 'And hold fast to the Rope of Allah, and be not divided among yourselves'.

I came to Moscow from the State Islamic University in Jakarta, Indonesia, to tell you here in Russia about the experience of our work in Indonesia. Indonesia is located in Southeast Asia. It is the largest Muslim country in the world. In our country, democracy is put in action, and it functions much more successful than in many neighboring

countries. Why is that? Because Islam exists in our country and because the spirit of tolerance and mutual respect is indigenously inherent in Islam. This tolerance is present at all levels of our society.

Indonesia's population exceeds 250 million people, of which 88 per cent, i.e. the vast majority of the population, are Muslims. Our government encourages tolerance among different religions and their followers. Our government recognizes the existence of other six religions except Islam. These are Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism and a number of other religions. In Indonesia we are guided by five basic principles, which are called Pancasila and each citizen of our country who lives in this multi-ethnic, multi-religious society is guided by these principles.

Distinguished delegates and participants of the Forum! In 1980s we witness a regime change in Indonesia and democracy became a solid foundation for the construction of our state. Our newspapers and magazines assumed a patriotic character on the basis of freedom of the press. Our government combines the principles of central and local governance, protects the rights of our citizens and justice and advocates freedom of speech and a multi-party system. We are implementing the principle of the universality of elections (general elections) and the principle of a necessary balance between rights and responsibilities, as well as the rule of law.

There are different religious public organizations in Indonesia. The largest among them is the 'Muhammadiyah' association established in 1918. This association pursues the reformation of educational sphere to strengthen Islamic religious principles and to bring up educated citizens based on the principles of Islam. This goal was set when 38 per cent of our population were illiterate.

The second is the 'Revival of Ulema' Association founded in 1926. This association is also guided by a rationalistic approach to the interpretation of Islam. This association numbers more than 40 million members. These and other religious associations are responsible for Islamic enlightenment of Muslims and their upbringing in the spirit of rejection of terrorism and extremism. This work is in our interests and it is rather successful.

Finally, I would like to greet and give praise to our Prophet and say Praise be to Allah! Peace, mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you!



Serikbay Oraz

Serikbay Oraz,
First Deputy Chairman of the Religious Board
of Muslims of Kazakhstan

Praise be to Allah, who brought us to the straight path; we would not have come to this path, if our guide, our Prophet (peace be upon him and his followers) had not been leading us. Peace be upon you, mercy of Allah and His blessings.

Distinguished guests, colleagues, let me convey to you the greeting of the Mufti of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Hoja Mayamerov and all the Muslims of Kazakhstan. From the bottom of my heart I would like to express my deep gratitude to Ravil Hazrat for organizing such an important event.

Today we are discussing the most urgent topic, which involves not only Eurasia, but the whole world. Today the world's peoples and the Muslims need unity and religious harmony as never before. Not by chance in his speech in 1994 at Moscow State University our President Nursultan Nazarbayev voiced an idea of the foundation of a Eurasian Union in the CIS. Currently, this initiative has proved its viability. The establishment of the Customs Union of the three states was the first step of Eurasian integration. A popular Kazakh wisdom says, 'Life is where unity is'.

Only countries capable of resisting the challenges of globalization can achieve great things. Praise be to Allah, we are proud of these

achievements before the world community. Kazakhstan was the first in Eurasia to gather all the religious leaders around the same table and by this furthered the establishment of interfaith harmony. The next Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions will conventionally be held under the aegis of president Nazarbayev in Astana. This idea has been enthusiastically endorsed by the world community.

The construction of mosques and madrassas is carried out in our country with the support of the state. Our main achievement is unity, spiritual unity., Almighty Allah tells us, ‘O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you’. In the Middle Ages, our ancestors were carrying on trade through their numerous cities along the Silk Road, and thus they established links with the countries of Europe and Asia and were not remaining aloof from international relations and world civilization. The reason for this is the Silk Road passing through the most part of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. Mosques and historical monuments were built in the cities where the Silk Road lied.

The scholars who descended from our ancient cities made an immeasurable contribution to the development of Islamic civilization. Such scholars as Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Yusuf Balasaghuni, Ahmed Yasawi and Mahmud al-Kashgari made a significant contribution to the development of science and education.

The idea of the Eurasian integration imposes a great responsibility upon the entire Muslim world, particularly upon public Muslim figures. From this perspective, the followers of Islam and its leaders should join and support these steps. In addition to economic goals, there are other common aims that unite us. These are harmony, unity, skill-sharing in the sphere of religion, mutual understanding, spiritual and cultural ties, and others.

In one of his speeches, the Russian president Vladimir Putin emphasized that the integrational bounds between Russia and Kazakhstan had proven effective on global level and in the Eurasian space. The friendship between Kazakhstan and its neighboring countries has deep historical roots. Kazakh people have a saying, ‘Relatives are from ancestors — neighbors are from God’.

We, same as Russians, have adopted a peaceful existence with neighboring peoples as a vital tenet. In the Qur'an Allah commanded Muslims to help each other in performing good deeds. Muslim leaders should always contribute to the establishment of religious stability in the world, for religion is a spiritual pillar of the state. We adhere to the path of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions, who said, 'Beware of division, and adhere to the jama'a (the Muslim community)'. By this he was emphasizing the importance of staying with the majority.

Speaking about the current potential and responsibility of Muslims, first of all, we imply the faith—Iman. Faith is a supreme value. When a faithful doctor treats people with compassion, a faithful teacher knowledgeably teaches children good manners, a faithful builder is a master of his craft, then the potential of the Islamic world will only increase.

Islam pursues the objective of establishing peace and justice in society and the state. And a person is brought up according to this principle. Only through virtuous deeds one gets closer to the Creator. In the Qur'an, the Almighty said, 'And obey Allah and His Messenger and do not quarrel for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart'.

The preservation of peace between different religions and peoples is a key issue of our time. A representative of any religion would be interested to maintain stability and peace. From this perspective, the world is responsible for the development of inter-religious dialogue. The organization of more forums of this kind is essential. First of all, they reinforce mutual understanding between religious leaders and call society for unity. The truth is that this kind of dialogue of religious leaders contribute to the achievement of great goals.

The tradition of this kind of forums originates from the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), and for this reason Muslim scholars have always been claiming that Islam is a peaceful religion. I hope that in this way a barrier for committing misdeeds can be created. Let Allah be pleased with you for your attention!

Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatu-Llahi wa barakatuh!

PANNEL DISCUSSION

“COOPERATION OF GOVERNMENT
AND RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS IN
THE NAME OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT”

3rd session



Mufti Emirali Ablaev

*Mufti Emirali Ablaev,
Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims
of Crimea*

EFFORTS FOR THE SAKE OF HUMANITY

In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful!

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds; blessings and peace of Allah be upon the Prophet and seal of the prophets Muhammad, his family and all his companions. Peace and mercy of Allah be upon us!

Over the past year, the changes in the Crimea were extremely turbulent. In one day sweeping changes happened in the lives of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Under these circumstances, various kinds of sects tried to intensify their activities. We decided that the only way in such a situation is to make it clear for the members of the top brass and law enforcement agencies that destabilization is inadmissible. We were trying to block the activity of marginal organizations. We also invited to the Crimea Ravil hazrat Gaynutdin, the head of the Russia Muftis Council to be engaged in dialogue with the new local authorities. By his virtue and due to our positive stance and unification against conflicts and bloodshed we were able to overcome the challenges with dignity.

We have been dwelling in our historic homeland, the Crimea, for more than 27 years. During all this time, about 300,000 Crimean Tatars have returned from Uzbekistan. The Crimea numbers more than three hundred of functioning mosques. There are also eight madrasas and a number of training centers for hafizes.

We believe it is our duty to preserve it all. We want to protect it and enlarge our heritage.

In the course of 27 years, we have been trying to build a bridge of understanding between us and the non-Muslim population in order to build adequate relationships and good neighborliness. It was very hard to establish a constructive cooperation, but in spite of all the difficulties, we succeeded.

When the new political order in the Crimea had settled, the first thing we did—we declared that the bridge of good neighborliness should be preserved, while a halt of the dialogue with representatives of other religions is inadmissible. We did our best, for these are the main values of ours.

In all this time, many acts of vandalism happened in the Crimea. Dozens of tombs and gravestones were destroyed with sledgehammers. This happened, for example, in the cemetery of Simferopol. The vandals who did it were trying to inflame a conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims. But they appear to have miscalculated. We were urging people to remain calm in order to ensure that people do not respond to the provocation. And we managed to keep peace in spite of everything.

Last year, on the eve of Kurban Bayram [i.e. Eid al-Adha] the Central Mosque of Saky was burnt down; in the early days of the holiday an attempt to set on fire another mosque was perpetrated.

What is the purpose of all this? Of course, we understand that this was done to enrage Muslims, to incite them to burn churches in a flash of emotions. That was what the provokers wanted.

However, we told that that we would build ten new mosques in place of one incinerated. But in any case, we would not give in to provocations. We would not do what some unscrupulous people did to the places of cult. This is what we had experienced before, what we had gone through. We had already seen that horrors.

Since the establishment of the new government in the Crimea, we want to see what laws will be adopted; we will look at the behavior of the authorities. We incline the people in favor of constructive cooperation and dialogue. We are waiting for this.

We have the Book. The truth and all the principles of the Islamic religion are described there in details. We have the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in our hands. We have only to follow it.

In 1917–1918 the first mufti of our peninsula Noman Chelebijhan tried to restore the rights of the Crimean Tatars. A Kurultay [i.e. council, assembly] of Muslims was assembled and the government was established.

Then in Khan Saray Chelebijhan—and he was a very educated man—pronounced the following principles. ‘I see the Crimea and Crimean people as beautiful flowers that grow together. They are all of different colors, different scents. But together they are a beautiful bouquet. That is how I see the future of the Crimea—as a cooperation of nations’.

It is this principle that we follow in the Crimea. This is what Islam calls us for. This is precisely what the great mission of Muslim religious leaders is about: it is to assist different people to gather in a single beautiful bouquet.

Islam was not sent only for the Arabs, Turki people or for certain nations. I think that unity and mutual assistance should be our ultimate goal.

Islam is a religion that ordains peace, kindness and universal humanistic values. It concerns not only Muslims—let me emphasize it—but all the people.

Therefore, if we would say that we were trying to build bridges of tolerance and good-neighborliness just for the sake of the Crimean Tatars, that would be wrong. We try to do it for the sake of all mankind. I think this should be our slogan and the main objective.



Liu (Suleiman) Kejie

*Liu (Suleiman) Kejie,
Deputy Chairman of the Muslim Community of
China, Vice President of the Beijing Islam Association,
Licentiate of the Institute of Islamic Studies of China,
Imam of the Dongsu Mosque (Beijing)*

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

Dear guests! Peace be upon you and Allah's mercy and his blessings. First of all, I thank His Excellency Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, the chairman of the Council of Muftis of Russia, for his invitation to be here to discuss the problems of the Islamic world and the challenges we currently face.

Today I will talk about the role of Chinese religious organizations and their collaboration with the government in the development of society and its stabilizing in China. China is a multinational state, its government pursues a policy of equality and solidarity, respect for human rights and freedom of religion, freedom to follow their traditions. China is also a multi-faith state. The Chinese profess different religions, among which are Islam and Christianity (Catholicism). Each religious denomination in China carries out its religious activities independently, it builds religious institutions, publishes texts of sermons and religious magazines; it works to satisfy its own needs and does everything that is required to guarantee the freedoms defined in the Constitution of

the country to ensure the respect of the rights given to people, including traditional rights and the right of Muslims to perform their rituals, as funerals and so on. Muslim community is provided with a piece of land to bury the followers of Islam according to the tradition.

The history of Islam in China is rather ancient. We profess Hanafi Islam. We received a new opportunity of development after China had become the People's Republic in 1949. The government pursues a policy of equality between people and guarantees the freedom to practice their religions. Day by day, the role of religious communities is increasing and economic and cultural levels are constantly growing.

The number of Muslims in China now exceeds 23 million. They are represented by ten nationalities. Among them are Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Tatars and others. Chinese Muslims populate different regions of China. Now the number of mosques has exceeded forty thousand. There are more than fifty thousand imams. The Islamic Association of China, which represents Muslims of different nationalities, was established in 1953.

It rests upon the solidarity of Muslims of all nationalities. The Association has a number of local offices, which play an important role for Muslims and their interaction with the government. To date the society has more than 500 branches. In China, they operate among a wide range of Muslim social strata and represent their interests before the state.

As has been mentioned, 23 million people in China profess Islam. The Islamic Association of China founded the Islamic Institute in 1955. The Institute is a higher education institution of Islamic Studies in China. It prepares highly qualified imams. Today, the number of Islamic institutions in different parts of China grows. They provide various forms of assistance to the Islamic community, ensuring the stability of the whole society. Islamic Society conducts a variety of activities with the support and under the patronage of the Government of the PRC.

Firstly, the government fully supports the implementation of a policy of religious freedom. Chinese Muslims of all nationalities have an opportunity to participate in social and economic development of their society, so that it could achieve the highest level.

Secondly, the Muslim community of China works to inculcate patriotism to the Chinese motherland through explaining the basics of the

Islamic faith, passing the ideas of the religious books, conveying the spirit of Islam, promoting Islam among all ethnic groups and ensuring stability and unity in the society.

Thirdly, we believe that a further strengthening of higher education and the training of highly qualified personnel for the Islamic community, as well as increasing the role of Islamic institutions are essential.

Fourth, the Association works to deepen Islamic research in order to enhance and strengthen Islamic traditions. Thus we seek to spread their ideology through teaching Islamic culture, which can help to direct the development of Islam in the right direction.

Fifth, we work to help the institutional organization of Hajj activities in order to improve the quality of services provided to pilgrims, so that the pilgrimage is problem-free.

Sixth, the Islamic Association of China maintains friendly relations with the world's Islamic organizations to achieve international cooperation in order to strengthen relations between Chinese Muslims and the Muslim world.

Seventh, we are improving monitoring activities in accordance with Islamic law.

Eighth, we provide activities to assist the believers to solve their life problems. The Islamic Association of China operates in various districts through its branches to provide the connection between all the Muslims of the country. The Association sends its representatives to local offices to learn about the activities of Muslims in the field, helping them to solve religious and other problems dealing with society building and the maintaining of stability.

On behalf of the Chinese Association of Muslims, I would like to invite you to visit China so that you can see what development Islam and Muslim's life have reached in China.

In conclusion, I once again thank the Organizing Committee for their efforts in organizing this Forum, and I wish the Forum success. I wish all the participants of the Forum success, health and well-being. I pray to the Almighty to help us. Thank you very much. Peace be upon you, mercy of Allah and His blessings!



Priest Igor Kovalevsky

*Priest Igor Kovalevsky,
Secretary General of the Conference of Catholic
Bishops of Russia, Member of the Presidential
Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations*

Dear Mufti, dear brothers. I too can address all of you with the words ‘As-salamu alaykum’, as this expression is also used in Latin culture and the culture of the Catholic Church. The words ‘Pax vobis’ — ‘Peace to you’ — is widely used and it is a manifestation of spiritual kinship in all the Abrahamic religions. About 20 years ago, a bishop in Poland told us, then young students and future priests of the Catholic Church, during a spiritual talk that the Abrahamic religions shall converge. This process is inevitable.

We are different. We have different creeds, different views on many issues related to life we have different religions. Despite this, we have common spiritual roots, as evidenced by the recent visit of Pope Francis to Istanbul, when he also visited a mosque.

Indeed, there is a number of tremendous challenges in the world we are living in. They are related to justice, conceptualism, materialism, and moral. It turns out that the solution of these problems unites us.

The Catholic Church is respectful to all the believers in one God, the Merciful and Compassionate, the Creator, All-Wise and Faultless. The aim of all the Abrahamic religions is to lead man to God. We believe that every person is created by the Creator.

Previous speakers beautifully quoted Sacred Books saying that God created different nations so that they may know each other. Every person carries the imprint of the Creator in himself and is able to glorify the Creator. And so, every person is also a subject of morality.

The Catholic Church, proceeding from the Sacred Books of Christianity, emphasizes the virtues of an individual. I have also heard about these virtues in today's speeches of the esteemed participants. This is the very thing that unites us all. The virtue of man is in his mind, in his free will. However, the question of 'what freedom is' is an eternal question.

Human freedom is not permissiveness, but a great responsibility. My freedom ends where the freedom of another person begins. Therefore, man is by nature is a being that is designed to live in society, in Latin he is called *Homo Socialis*. A creature that lives in a community, a social being.

The goal of any community is *Commune bonum*, i.e. the common good, a set of conditions of social life, in which people can exercise their values. First of all, religious values. After all, all of us are believers in the One God, we are well aware that this belief for us is the supreme value. The principle of subsidiarity is what is important in human relations, in the relations between man and society.

It is impossible to consolidate the dignity of the human person without caring about social groups. I can never be happy alone on my own. 'But woe to him who is alone', these are the words found at the very beginning of the Bible. And one of social groups, a very important group, is a state. We, the representatives of different religions, live in different socio-ethnic systems, we belong to different cultures, but all of us share the institution of a state, existing in one or another form of government. After all, the state originates in natural law; in a law, which is inscribed by the Creator in his creation. And the purpose of such a state is 'common good' that we are all aware of.

The essence of the state is always characterized by three elements: a social element, a legal element, and also it is a moral element. If we miss out one of these elements, we, of course, would come to a discord in the relations between society and the state, a man of faith and the state. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to establish the relationship between religious organizations and the state.

All power as such, as an institution, comes from God. Our Christian scriptures emphasize this, and I know that our Muslim brothers also uphold the very same concept of law and power that comes from the Creator. In fact, power, state power, is an expression of God's will itself. Only it as a social principle should specifically manifest itself in justice and in concern for the welfare of citizens, for the good of the population. It is the very natural law, which is have to be implemented.

There is a primary principle of autonomy and independence existing in the relations between religious communities and the state. Religion and the state, as a secular power, have different objectives in terms of the various aspects of man's good. The state as a secular power is concerned (it should be, at least) about taking care of a natural welfare of man, of its citizens' well-being, of peace, stability and socio-economic development. Religion cares about a supernatural purpose of man. For we are summoned by the Creator to eternal life. The Creator appeals to us to fulfill our mission in this world.

That is why religion and the state are prescribed not only autonomy but also interaction between them. Man is an integrated personality. My natural purposes cannot be torn away from supernatural predestination, my material well-being cannot be torn away from my religious needs. All of this is interconnected in man's life. The Islamic world, it seems, understands this truth very well. Many Christians probably should learn, precisely from the Islamic world, this great truth that man overall shall strive to all benefits and relationships and that the state and religion, it turns out, should also consider man's well-being.

The experience of cooperation between the state and the Catholic Church in different countries is very diverse. There is model of special agreements (the so-called Concordat) existing in the countries, where the Catholic Church is strong and practiced by the majority of population. The situation is different in other countries, where the Catholic Church is a minority, particularly in Russia. There the principles of relations are built on mutual respect for the rights of religious minorities, but at the same time on the readiness of the Church to inculturation, that is studying the culture of a country, where it is present. This process can be rather effective.

It would be wrong to call the Catholic Church in Russia sort of a bastion of a Western life-style and European culture. We are quite a specific organization and, in general, world Catholicism should not be equated with the contemporary Western culture.

We also face an acute personnel issue in the Catholic Church—we are undermanned with priests. The representatives of different countries, including Indonesia, help us. We have a Catholic clergy from this Muslim country. A great diversity of cultures consists in it too. There is much talk in Europe about the need of intercultural dialogue. A lot is said about Islam in Europe and about the Islamic factor in the context of immigration. However, few people remember that Muslims traditionally have been living in the countries of Western and Central Europe, as well as in Russia. For example, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Poland with Polish Tartars, who, incidentally, used the Arabic script even writing in Polish, while still serving their state. There are many examples of this kind. For Islam, same as Christianity, is one of the world's religions. The specificity of a world religion is that it is able to advocate its values among different cultures, and by this adapt its high moral ideals to the needs of a particular group of people. This is by what we, Christians and Muslims, are united. All people have the same nature, and the whole humanity strives for spiritual and moral values: truth, goodness, beauty and holiness.

Each community of people is a spiritual value in a sense. Just like every religion is a value, and the highest value. That is why the problem of spiritual and moral unity of people is as acute as never before. Not in a religious sense, let me emphasize that: we have been and we are different religions, but we can still witness spiritual and moral unity of those who profess different religions, who speak different languages and belong to different cultures. For human society itself, the world community, is also a legal community, which is responsible for the world it is living in, for the goods that it uses, and it is responsible for each other. We are all the children of the same Creator, and all have a duty to remember this and to execute the will of God.



Mufti Maksatbek aji Toktomushev

*Mufti Maksatbek aji Toktomushev,
Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims of
Kyrgyzstan*

I would like to express deep gratitude to the organizers of the 10th Muslim International Forum for holding this important event. Indeed, this forum discusses the most pressing issues of the entire Muslim Ummah.

Let our Lord — Allah Ta'ala — except the efforts of Muslim religious and public leaders, the representatives of academia, experts and thinkers working for the benefit of the Ummah. For many years we have been paying attention at this Forum, which pursues the building of the relations and cooperation between the community of Muslims and the state. By these means, all interested parties eventually could reach a substantial progress in inter-religious and inter-ethnic questions.

I am grateful to all the participants and pray the Almighty for mercy and grace for everyone!

The development of a healthy society, which partly is a guarantee of a stable future, is impossible to imagine without the interaction between the state and religious organizations. Today's world has undergone profound changes. The processes of globalization entail strong interdependence, integrity and dynamism.

Modern society, both at the global, regional and local levels, is more than ever in need of strengthening stability and preserving peace.

Peacekeeping increasingly requires from public leaders and religious establishment to include into the list of their priorities the development of mutual understanding, respect for cultural diversity and resistance to intolerance.

It is easy to see in our daily lives Islam's growing influence on the behavior and life priorities of the youth. This makes the cognition of Islam and its values vital for the building a culture of peace and non-violence in society.

Today we are witnessing revolutions and civil wars. Not only politicians, but also spiritual leaders are in search of a solid ground, a platform that would allow communities and governments to carry out reforms and evolve without destructive disorder.

The knowledge about the world, interpersonal relationships, behavior and purity of intentions is reflected both in secular sciences and in holy writs. The study of the theory and practice of conflict prevention and resolution, public policy, humanitarian and religious values broadens the horizons of understanding of the issues of war and peace. Cooperation and skill sharing in peace-building stimulates people's eager activity in the promotion of peace.

Everyone at his own level can carry out certain activities to assist the formation of a culture of peace, mutual respect and understanding in society. Peace and well-being are universal values. These are the values shared by world religions, including Islam.

Upbringing a personality of high moral standards and building a community strengthened by powerful spiritual ties and a common citizenship is one of the priorities of Islam as a religion. Our countries' societies face the same challenges. Consolidation of peace and stability and bolstering democracy through the joint efforts of religious establishment and public leaders in collaboration with the state is an important step for the prosperity of our nations.

There is a number of answers to the question of why and how we eluded serious conflicts on religious grounds. However, I want to focus only on two of the factors of successful development.

The first one is a more democratic approach to the steering the ship of state. In recent years it has been reflected in religious progress too.

Due to a more tolerant attitude and absence of state repressions, the believers in our countries do not regard the state as an enemy that threatens their beliefs and practices. Therefore, our traditional religious schools are loyal to the state and support society's secular organization and the existing constitutional order.

The second aspect is the religious community itself, which has enormous potential and resources to solve its internal problems. There is an idea of peaceful coexistence at the core of every religion. Today we can witness that there is a healthy competition emerged among different religions. And those win in the so-called 'struggle for souls' who truly carries the message of peace. These are the adherents of this method who just squeeze radical and aggressive group out of the country.

Besides, we should not disregard a positive influence of religion on the moral, social and economic state of the population in the country. It is no secret that moral and spiritual climate in our society has changed dramatically owing to Islam. One cannot deny a positive role of religion in the making of a healthy society.

This year the Defense Council of our country hold a meeting chaired by the President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev. The Council arrived to the conclusion that the state of religion in the country must be enhanced and strengthened. To this end, throughout this year the representatives of the presidential apparatus and the government, along with the representatives of religious organizations and civil society and the most prominent experts in religion affairs have been working together on the concept of the relations between the state and religion, which would bolster religious situation in the country and make it more positive.

Among the issues that this concept addresses the most frequently voiced is the idea of traditional Islam as a factor that would further allow the followers of various religious practices to coexist and develop constructively.

Definitely, there is no such concept as 'traditional Islam' in the Islamic doctrine itself, for Islam is universal wherever. However, there is a difference between Islam as a doctrine and Islam as a religious practice.

With Islamic teaching spreading across the world, it has been gradually adapting to local specificities and has been developing its own

unique features. It so happened that for the past 14 centuries Islam in Central Asia has also been developing in its unique way and got closely interwoven with local cultural, geographic, economic and political characteristics.

Islam in Central Asia is represented by the Hanafi madhhab, which is the most tolerant one. This is due to this tolerance that people of different faiths, beliefs and nationalities in Central Asia have always been getting along well; and in the long history of the region there have been very little conflicts on religious grounds. The history corroborates it. The Hanafi madhhab is the most open-minded to the development of science, economy and trade and other spheres necessary for the well-being of mankind.

It is possible that today traditional Islam based on the Hanafi madhhab could help religious and nonreligious community not only unite, but also learn to respect the diversity that has formed until today, the diversity which we have to appreciate and preserve for the well-being of society.

The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Kyrgyz Republic is actively involved in the discussion of new religious concepts. It supports the initiatives aimed at the maintaining of peace and stability in the region, as well as at the positive development of the country. Confidential relations between the state and religion based on cooperation, rather than confrontation, are essential for happy and exciting future. As our Prophet (peace be upon him) advised, we should keep to the middle path, the path of peace and cooperation.

Today, at this Forum, we note that one of the good examples of interaction between the state and religious organizations for the benefit of society is the establishment of training courses for religious leaders of our region in Moscow by the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia.

To conclude, I would like to express once again my gratitude to the organizers of today's event in the person of Sheikh Ravil Hazrat Gaynutdin, and to thank all the brothers who have contributed to our meeting.



Mufti Abu-Bekir Shabanovich

*Mufti Abu-Bekir Shabanovich,
Chairman of the Muslim Religious Association
in Belarus*

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

Dear brothers. This day for me is very good and enjoyable. With the deepest satisfaction I have listened to our esteemed muftis and theologians, their interesting speeches, the representatives of other religions, the representatives of the state and academia. I am very well and pleased to find myself among our Muslim family.

I hope you will be interested to hear, so to say, straight from the horse's mouth about the status of our true religion in a geographically central European state of Belarus. Belarus, as we know, is a deeply secular state. The bulk of the population of Belarus are Orthodox Christians. According to studies, about 80–88 per cent of the believers are Orthodox Christians, about 12–14 per cent are Catholics, slightly more than one per cent are Muslims, and there is also up to one per cent of Jews, the rest are Lutherans and other representatives of Christianity.

The Belarusian population almost reaches ten million. Almost—because the country lost every third citizen during the years of the Great Patriotic War, and by 2000 it made up for the number of population. But not due to the natality of the indigenous Belarusian population, but due to newcomers, migrants. This process is still on today. The

indigenous population of Belarus, unfortunately, declines by 30 thousand annually, including the Tatar population.

This month marks the 617th anniversary of the Tatar Muslims relocation from the Crimea. The Crimea is the historical homeland of Belarusian Tatars, Lithuanian and Polish Tatars. It is a single family that resettled in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which was further divided into three modern states. Our original Islamic roots are in the Crimea. That is why the meeting with my brothers, the Tatars from the Crimea, as well as with Tatars in general and with all of you, dear Muslim brothers and sisters, is a real groove. It is a family holiday. I feel the deepest mental and spiritual satisfaction, for I find myself among such a great Muslim family. I would like now to change the title our Forum, not a 'mission', but 'the answer' of genuine Muslims to the challenges of modern time. Because such an answer has already been voiced by the speakers. During these days spent in presenting various reports and speeches, we must focus the creation of something that could really answer to the challenges of our time.

So, we are about 100–120 thousand Muslims in Belarus. The story, as you see, is wonderful. From aliens with their culture we have turned into the indigenous population. By the way, the Crimean khans had committed twelve raids in Belarus ravaging cities and villages. And there were such cases, as recorded by historians, when local Tatars along with indigenous people were setting out against this army of wonderful soldiers and were saying before the fight, 'Keep in mind that you are conquerors, you are on the offensive against us, Muslim Tatars, on our land. We are living together in our habitat and we will defend until the end the freedom of the land. If you want to break the law of Allah, we would be considered as defenders, and you — as unjust conquerors'. And twice the Crimean warriors left the battlefield not engaging with the enemy. I give you this example so that you may understand that for six centuries the Tatars living among the local population have had no domestic clashes. This means that those Tatar warriors who were defending these lands, these people, defended everything. And Belarus is a wide corridor of warfare. Since the Middle Ages, 212 wars have gone through Belarus from east to west, from

west to east, from south to north and from north to south. Imagine how everything was ravaged as residents were enduring and suffering various conquests. These were all kind of aggressors, even French and twice—Germans.

By the way, during the First World War the hostilities were stopped by Russian troops near Minsk. Anyone who visits Belarus and enters Minsk from the west, from the large village of Rakov, it is exactly where the border lied. The front passed through Tatar settlement, which had mosques and at the same time Orthodox and Catholic churches. The military used minarets and churches as observatories. And, naturally, precisely those objects were shelled.

Our Mizars, Muslim cemeteries, were generally at higher elevations. So, all the military tried to capture exactly these heights, they were making reburials there to built bunkers. It was the First World War. Imagine how many were killed among the civilian population, including our Tatars, not only indigenous Belarusian. So many Muslim Tatars from the Russian army defended the land and did not let the great German army go further. They were buried in our Muslim Tatar cemeteries.

Currently we confirm this information by the data that we receive from the archives of Moscow, Poland and Minsk. Little of historical data remained in Minsk, but there is a circumstantial evidence present. There are names, addresses of the buried soldiers. There were military hospitals in Minsk, and the soldiers who died of wounds were buried in the so-called Mohammedan cemeteries.

Only in the Minsk Mohammedan cemetery about 260 Turkish warriors were buried. There were more than two thousand of Turkish soldiers held in captivity during the Balkan War of 1877–1878. All this data allows us to get the right for the destroyed Mizar in the center of Minsk. And we have already got the right to this protected area from the state: 11 years ago a stone mosque was laid there instead of the one, which was built in Minsk in 1902. In 1936 in Soviet times the previous beautiful stone mosque built in Minsk by Tatar Muslims and other Muslims was closed. In 1962 it was demolished along with other temples. Before the demolition it had been used as a grocery store and a warehouse.

There were more than a hundred Tatar settlements in the entire Belarusian territory. Of these, about 82 villages had mosques. There were madrasah-schools in the largest of the villages functioning under the largest of the mosques. Secular education was provided too, and, as we know, at that time not all our people had an opportunity to receive a secular education. However, every child starting from seven years, both boys and girls, were receiving religious education. That is why happened what our brother from the Catholic Church has told us.

There was a family book in every Tatar family in Poland, as well as in Lithuania, and especially in Belarus. It was called Kitab. Various religious legends were written in this book, possible translation of the Qur'an heard from educated people, as well as they were putting there records and events about their family and community, and even the state, and sometimes even weather. And so, they were writing in Kitabs purely in the Belarusian language, Belarusian *mova*, using Arabic script, because they could not write in any other script. Naturally, the Belarusian *mova* of the 15th-16th centuries was different from today's *trasyanka*. Until today researchers discover these Kitabs and translate them, studying from this samples the purest Belarusian *mova*. They are sincerely grateful to Tatars, who adopted Belarusian *mova* as their mother tongue. And it is a great paradox today, for, as scientists say, if a nation loses its language, it also loses its nationality.

Tatars surrounded by Belarusian culture lost their language. It became as a foreign for them. But this does not mean that they assimilated. Just young generations were going to different schools: to Polish schools, when Poland possessed the territory, to Lithuanian schools, to Belarusian schools. All this led to the loss of the language, but praise be to God, they did not lose their faith. They did not lose Islam, the Lord has been protecting us and our beloved ancestors for such a great period of history.

During the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the revival [of culture and religion], all of us, intellectuals, activists, set to work to revive the Tatar nation, to revive what was left: religion, Tatar language and culture. To date, our family grew in numbers due to migrants to such an extent that in quantitative terms they have already surpassed

our indigenous Tatars. Today, 32 Muslim nations live with us. There are a lot of representatives of Central Asia, praise be to God, Tajiks, Uzbeks, there are also Kyrgyz and Kazakhs. They have their own typical problems with adaptation, with the state, law, cultures, with the level of development, education and upbringing. The children of immigrants fall out from one cultural milieu to find themselves in Belarusian reality.

There are many complications. That is why I give you this information, so that you, dear fellow muftis, could consider such a process and such a situation, that it is necessary to be in touch with the Belarusian Muftiyat in order to help people in trouble. We provide what we can. Imams visit the dorms of educational institutions, where, incidentally, a lot of foreign students are receiving education. Students from many Arab countries study different professions, because the level of education in Belarus is one of the exemplary in the CIS, both higher education and specialized secondary education. We work, but when people get into trouble — they come to mosque.

We organize trainings. There is a madrasah functioning today. I am pleased to report — with gratitude for all, Shaikh Muhammad Yusef and Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, who took an active part in the restoration of our mosque in Minsk, which I told you so much about. It seats one and a half thousand of worshipers. This is a great building. We preserve all the architectural features and restore them. We have been constructing this mosque for 11 years. And finally, our brothers from Turkey took up the matter. They found a sponsor and assign means from waqf funds, we expect to inaugurate the mosque in 2015. We will send invitations to all who wish to come to our common festive — the triumph of the victory of our true religion and our Hanafi madhhab. This madhhab survived and it preserved us, and we preserved it. And so I truly reaffirm that our religion has always been and always will be existing in the Eurasian space to give a fitting rebuff to the challenges of modernity.

Muslims are treated very well in the blissful country of Belarus, because everyone is convinced that Muslims are true patriots, they are not hypocrites, but straight people. A hundred per cent respect is a guarantee. Hence, there is the respect of the authorities too.

However, there are ill-wishers: we feel a boom of Islamophobia increasing. Therefore, I wholeheartedly support the proposal that has already been voiced today: to create a permanent platform. It would help us in consultations and in providing answers to these challenges, so that we could address not only faithful Muslims, but all the world's believers and governments. We are able to make estimates, and it should be done. We should direct education, direct manpower.

I thank you for your attention and sincerely wish you all success. I ask Allah to keep us on the right track.



Ramil Belyaev

Ramil Belyaev,
Imam of the Muslim Community of Tatars
of Finland, Editor of the Mähallä habärläre
(Community's News) Newspaper, PhD

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

Dear Ravil Hazrat Gaynutdin, Damir Hazrat Mukhetdinov, dear organizers of this Forum and all those who helped organize this Forum, dear esteemed members of this assembly. I greet all of you on behalf of the chairman of the Muslim Tatar community of Finland. I congratulate you on behalf of the chairman of the Muslim Tatar community of Finland on the fact that we gathered here today and launched a discussion platform to talk about very important issues.

The Western press writes a lot today about the sanctions against Russia, and when I was booking a ticket to participate in this Forum, I was pondering about its preparation and organization. Because it is said a lot in Helsinki that everything is bad in Russia, there is no money. Here I come and look: there is a very large and high-profile conference organized in the center of the Russian Federation, in the center of Moscow near the Kremlin, in one of the most prestigious places. So, praise be to God, I want to thank the Almighty and you, dear organizers of the conference, for the invitation to join this joyful Islamic event in the center of the Russian Federation.

The importance of this Forum has been repeatedly stated and there is nothing to add. It has been said that the Forum is a very good platform. I would like to express my solidarity with the words of dear Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq that we, the Muslims of Finland, would also like to see this Forum as a kind of annual platform to meet and address the most important questions of Muslims' lives, not only in the Eurasian space, but perhaps in the whole world.

Our conference is entitled 'Mission of the religion and responsibility of its followers in the face of the challenges of modernity'. What are those challenges we face? I would like to mention just two of them. First, of course, it is the responsibility of Muslims before the state, and the second is a state's understanding of its responsibility before Muslims. Naturally, here we should mention the experience of the Muslims of Russia, the Muslims of the imperial Russia, where supportive and tolerant relations between the people of different religious faiths, in particular, between the state and Islam, had been built.

Russian Islam goes beyond the boundaries of the Russian Federation and the Russian Empire, it successfully manifests itself in many other countries. Particularly, let us have a look at what happens in Finland, where I am lucky enough to work for almost eleven years, as Damir Hazrat has already mentioned.

As you already know, the Tatars in Finland are the descendants of the Mishar Tartars from Nizhny Novgorod province. In the late 19th century, around 1870–1880, they came to Finland for the first time through St. Petersburg. They were merchants looking for new opportunities for their, as they say today, assets. They found Finland a very comfortable place for business, some of them opened their first shops in 1911, where mostly cloth and various household goods were traded. The official dialogue with independent Finland—as we remember, Finland gained independence in 1917—began in 1925. Why in 1925? Because in 1923 Finland adopted the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations. And in 1925 the Muslims of Finland, i.e. Tatars, registered their first religious community. Ever since, our Finnish religious Muslim organization, although it is composed of Tatars, is called the Finnish Muslim community.

The following year will mark the 90th anniversary of our official history, although the unofficial history is older. Before me, the respected mufti of Belarus has said that Muslims fought for Belarus. Russian Muslims fought for the independence of Russia and the Soviet Union. Just same as the Tatars who lived in Finland were fighting for the independence of Finland. In the so-called Winter War, or Russo-Finnish War of 1939–1940, or during the World War II, 177 people from among Tatars, whose total number was only about a thousand people, were in the war, of whom 10 died defending their new homeland.

It should be noted that after the war, Finland went through a stage of the construction of a new social infrastructure. Here again, Muslim Tatars were actively involved. And for a long time, until the early 1990s, Tatars had been the only representatives of Islam in Finland. The Finnish authorities fully supported and paid attention at the Finnish Tatars for their comprehensive beautiful integration of Islam into the social structure of Finland, a European state, while actively protecting and promoting the interests of Finland and Finnish society.

This was reflected in the fact that, firstly, they started to invite the leadership of the Tatar community to the celebration of Finland's Independence Day on 6th December to the official presidential reception, or to join official state's delegation to different countries, such as the Muslim countries of Africa and the East. Later the representatives of the Finnish authorities began visiting the Tatar community to see with their own eyes what a mosque looks like. They realized that Islam and Muslims have been there for centuries, while they 'have known nothing of them'.

The things began to change in 1992, when a large numbers of refugees from Arab countries, from Somalia, from other African countries found themselves in Finland and formed a large Muslim community, where Tatars are a minority today. Because among 60,000 of Muslims living in Finland only about 700 are Finnish Tatars.

It should be noted that the government of Finland and the Finnish Tatars still maintain a very good dialogue. The Finnish authorities have a particular regard to Tatars as a linguistic minority and the oldest Muslim formation. This became apparent, for example, last month. We have already discussed this with some colleagues during the break. So, what

happened? Happened the following: on 16 November at 16:22 a moving text broadcasted by a central information channel of Finland showed that the United Arab Emirates listed the Muslim Tatar community as a terrorist organization. It is clear that for us it was like a bolt from the blue, and we were left in confusion: 'How come?' Here we have to mention a swift reaction of Finnish authorities at the level of Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja, who, although it was a day off and late evening, gave an interview to the channel, saying that it must be some sort of mistake, that 'our Tartars cannot be terrorists'. Indeed, when we actually read the text of the petition, some other organization was mentioned there, the name of which was simply confused with ours.

The important is the quick response of the Finnish authorities and their care for Tatars, i.e. for that tolerant and religiously tolerant Islam that has formed in the territory of the Russian Empire and Russia over the centuries. It seems to me a very beautiful example, and, praise be to God, trained in Russia imams today work beyond its borders.

In this regard, Damir Hazrat, I would like to appeal to you to include in the resolution of today's Forum a point, where we could address not only the Muslims of Eurasian, but all Muslims in the world with an appeal not to condemn each other. The United Arab Emirates is a Muslim country, and suddenly there is a message from a Muslim country, 'We accuse you that you are a terrorist organization'. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that Muslims are a single organism. If an organ becomes ill, it concerns the whole body, the whole body suffers from fever and pain. Imagine when a body heats itself. It is doubly regrettable. Thus, my suggestion is to include such a clause, so that Muslims do not label each other, but on the contrary, so that they defend each other against such negative phenomena.

In conclusion, I once again want to thank you for inviting me and for the opportunity to speak. And I hope we'll see you again at such wonderful forums, not only in Moscow, but also in other countries, perhaps in Finland.



Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin

Concluding remarks by Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the 10th Muslim International Forum

Dear co-organizers and participants of the 10th Muslim International Forum in Moscow. Let me once again express my deep respect and thank you for participating in the Forum.

Dear participants, at the very beginning of our joint work, I emphasized not by chance the words ‘the unity of society’. We are hopeful that public institutions and the institutions of power sooner or later will find such symbols and ideas that could be shared by all strata of our society and, what is equally important, all major religions of our country and, in a broader sense, various religious denominations in the Eurasian space.

I am convinced that today’s debate, as well as the adopted document—the Joint Declaration of the participants of the 10th Muslim International Forum—has become an important step in this direction.

Over the past few years, we match the timing of the Muslim International Forum with the timing of the International Scientific and Theological Conference, for we believe that the main role in a steady

progress, in the development of political thought should belong to the people of science. Therefore, tomorrow, in the framework of the 10th Muslim International Forum, the 7th International Scientific and Theological Conference ‘The role and significance of Islamic theological heritage in consolidating Eurasian spiritual space’ will be held.

The 10th Muslim International Forum is attended by the most respected religious leaders and theologians, representatives from the world’s largest Muslim countries. Today, we see here the representatives of Turkey as a mouthpiece of Sunni Muslims from all over the world, the representatives of Iran—as a center of Shiite Muslims, the Commonwealth of Independent States, Western and Eastern Europe, China, Indonesia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia. Thus, a healthy alliance of social forces along the axis Moscow—Ankara—Tehran is emerging in the capital of Russia in these days. The position of Moscow as the capital of the largest Eurasian power is extremely important in the post-Christian countries of the Western world, same as in Muslim countries. We are witnessing the birth of a new social platform for discussing and solving our common problems and challenges.

I draw the attention of our partners to the Resolution of the 10th Muslim International Forum, which contains a proposal for the establishment of an international organization ‘Muslim International Forum’. I would like to invite our brothers, colleagues and partners to support the provisions of the Resolution and encourage the initiative to create the Muslim International Forum, to become co-founders of this organization, representing a permanent platform for cooperation. Guided by the call of the Almighty, who says ‘Enter into peacefulness, the whole of you’, we intend to conduct a dialogue in a search for a public consensus on the main problems of mankind.



7th INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
AND EDUCATIONAL MUSLIM
THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

“THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF
THE ISLAMIC THEOLOGICAL LEGACY
AS A CONSOLIDATING FACTOR IN
THE EURASIAN MORAL SPACE”



Prof. Dr. Mehmet Görmez

*Prof. Dr. Mehmet Görmez,
President of the Presidency of Religious Affairs
of the Turkish Republic*

THE MAIN PROBLEM OF THE UMMAH TODAY

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful!

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds! Blessings and peace of Allah be upon our Prophet and seal of prophets Muhammad, his family and all his companions, and those who truly follow them until the Day of Judgment!

Today humankind has reached such a point of development that nature can no longer sustain us. The deeds of humans entailed disorder in the universe. Allah's signs in the Universe are reduced to the level of material phenomena, while the meaning inherent in each creation of Allah, the metaphysics concealed in the physical world, is more often ignored. Knowledge is exclusively constructed upon the foundation of reason; its main component—divine essence—is crossed out. People have pushed away the revelation of the book that created all civilizations on earth, i.e. Qur'an.

Man is brought down to the level of a solely physical being, a material beings; humanity rushes for enjoyment at impetuous speed. The universe is

reduced to the level of a planet. Another life, eternal life, is forgotten; people who came to this world to believe destroy with their own deeds the perfect order of the universe and sow the seeds of discord and strife.

That is what we see in the Islamic world too. Wherever we cast a glance, we see tongues of flames. Muslims in the most ancient center of Islamic civilization — Damascus, Baghdad, as well as in other regions of the Islamic world — ruthlessly destroy each other, demonstrating their militancy and violence, no matter how painful it is to admit.

Allah the Almighty tells us in many verses of the Qur'an about the purpose of the creation of man on earth. But here is a verse, which consists of a perfectly lucid notion of our arrival:

It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein [11:61].

Allah created us on earth not to let us provoke dishonor, but to build upon the earth, improve and adorn it. Allah created us on earth to beatify it. This petit verse was the primary cause for a great scholar Ibn Khaldun that incited him to write a tremendous philosophical work 'Fi Tabiat-il-Oumran' (On the nature of social life), in which he thoroughly examines the idea of how humankind shall enhance and beautify the earth.

There is a town called Otrar (formerly known as Farab) on the lands, that used to be the territory of the Soviet Union, namely in Kazakhstan. It is the birthplace of al-Farabi, the author of the famous 'Treatise on the views of the residents of the virtuous city' (Al Madinat-u-l-Fadila). It was also written as a reflection of this Almighty's verse.

Many scholars of Islam created philosophical schools reflecting on this verse. Indeed, the greatest mission of man on earth is its improvement and flourishing. We came into this world to improve our dwellings, to do good, to keep distemper from advancement, to prevent evil from growing, to create, to make reconcile and to beautify.

Yet I have to stress with deep sadness that human beings fall into fallacy of thinking that they are reforming and improving everything, while in fact they nothing but spread discord. One of the verses of the Qur'an reads as following:

When it is said to them: "Make not mischief on the earth," they say: "Why, we only Want to make peace!" [2:11].

In one hadith our beloved prophet, merciful Messenger (peace be upon him) likens this world to a ship, all humankind is gathered there as travelers.

They go by ship, but even before they put out to sea, the people have divided it into parts: one part is Western Europe, another one is South Asia, the third is Russia, the fourth is Anatolia, the fifth is the Arabian peninsula. They travel that way. And this ship is the whole world. When the ship reaches the middle of the sea, those who are at the bottom of the ship, decide to break through the bottom in order to replenish their water supplies. Our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) commands that if those at the top go down and convince those at the bottom that this ship is common and belongs to all mankind and if this hole is not made, then all the people will be saved. But if they provide the inhabitants of the lower decks an opportunity to do whatever, then all people will perish. And these are the words of our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him).

After this preamble, I want to ask frankly ourselves, i.e. Muslims. What is the function of Islam—a wonderful religion sent down to earth by the Lord as mercy to the worlds—in the resolution of vital issues of our time? What are the duties and responsibilities of Muslims in the face of the future?

We, Muslims, do we sow discord and strife on this earth, or, on the contrary, are we zealous to cease discord for the sake of salvation and reconciliation? We, children the mighty civilization that has made the greatest contribution to the flourishing of the world, what is our state today? This is what we shall concentrate on.

If you ask me, what the biggest problem of the Islamic world today is, I will tell you. The most acute issue is the acquirement of accurate and reliable knowledge about religion. Today the biggest trouble of the Islamic world is to give accurate knowledge about Islam and to pick up a proper methodology of teaching in schools.

If we fail to teach Islam in schools, universities, mosques, madrasas without dividing knowledge to profane and religious, without separating the verses of the Universe from the verses of Qur'an, without setting off intelligence against revelation, mind—against heart,

wisdom — against knowledge, justice — against mercy, if we fail to create a synthesis of these concepts in teaching, then we will not be able to respond to the appeal of God.

Let me repeat myself, it is crucial for Muslims today to gather and unite reliable knowledge about Islam, to wed wisdom to knowledge and moral to justice, to teach this synthesis of knowledge to our children and youth. If we fail in it, we will not be able to resolve the deadlock.

Of course, no one would argue that what is happening in the world of Islam today is the result of the intrinsic state of religion. However, it also stems from two century-long domination of colonialism, oppression, dictatorship, occupation and wars. As a consequence, we witness generations of Muslims with a wounded conscience, who grow up in ignorance under the influence of these external factors. These generations mistakenly consider deep-seated rancor as their own thoughts, their own ideology, and their own faith. They interpret these feelings as Islam, which leads to rather tragic consequences. But along with this, we must consider that they find support in faith.

The crisis that the Islamic world is going through is begotten by alienation of sacred wisdom from profane knowledge. The division of knowledge into religious and secular is our great disaster. Let me put it that way. We shall notice that math is a religious science to the same extent as secular, so are physics and chemistry, while tafsir and hadith are no less profane sciences than religious or theological. Because we cannot oppose the verses of the Book to the verses of the Universe. For the Book is the eternal translation of the Universe, i.e. the Qur'an is the Book of the Universe. Same as there is an order in the heavens assigned by God, there should be a certain harmony on earth.

We should create a system of education that would not split education to religious and non-religious, would not separate religious sphere of knowledge from social sciences, economic sciences.

Take Musa Bigiyev. He came to Turkey before the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in the last years of the Ottoman Empire. He proposed a new system of education. Then he went to India with the same mission. This outstanding scholar wrote a treaty 'The system of

Islamic community' ('Nizam-ul-jamiati islamiye'), which deals with the question of a proper Islamic university. He argues about it in Egypt, with Muhammad Abdo, Rashid Reza, Ali Abdurrazak. In Turkey he argues with the local ulema. The cornerstone of his ideas is the refusal to divide theological sciences and philosophical.

Truly, sacred wisdom and cognition are inseparable. It is not right to set apart sacred knowledge and natural sciences. It is wrong, because both stem from the verses of Allah. Today we must in particular remember the thoughts and ideas of our eminent thinker; we must revise the whole system of education, the entire system of training of ulema and other professionals.

Recently such an interpretation of religion sprang up that casts a shadow over the entire Islamic world, over the immutable principles of good, justice and compassion of Islam. I am talking about a perverted logic that has spread widely throughout the Islamic world, about its tremendous harm to our civilization. According to this logic, the truth was monopolized by our ancestry, while we cannot but accept as a given what they used to say. The followers of that logic say that we are unable to find the truth. At the same time, the apologists of this concept fail to hand down the wisdom of the ancestors. Instead, they create a truth of their own presenting it as the heritage of the past. This is the first.

Secondly, they violate the fundamental principle of Islamic civilization, the principle that forbids Takfeer, i.e. it prohibits to declare a Muslim an unbeliever or an apostate. Never in the history of Islam there has been such a rejection of Muslims by Muslims. There is nothing like this in the essence of our religion. First, they attribute to themselves the possession of true knowledge declaring it the truth of the ancestry. Then they accuse of blasphemy anyone, who refuses to accept their words as the ultimate truth. It is not permissible in Islam. Their perverted rationale entails wars against their own Muslim brothers, whom they accuse of heresy and of refusal to accept their 'truth'. They consider their war jihad.

Therefore, a great mission is entrusted to the scholars of Islam. Their duty is to understand the damage to Islamic civilization caused by the division of sacred wisdom and knowledge, to understand fatalistic fallacy of that logic. According to that logic, either madhhabs or

Fiqh, either methodology or Ijtihad are worth nothing. Is it acceptable? According to that logic, all the schools of Fiqh are intrinsically heretical, while the people of Tasawwuf (i.e. Sufism) who cherished our hearts and uncovered the depths of divine knowledge are proclaimed ignorant.

But who are they themselves? They consider themselves the bearers of truth. But they misjudge completely, for a profound methodology is needed for the interpretation of religious treatises.

The verses of Qur'an and the text of hadith must not be reduced to the level of human laws. Divine wisdom of the verses of the Book can only be disclosed through a proper method of study. We do have such an experience gained throughout fourteen centuries. One cannot create something new ignoring this legacy, denying it and cutting off all that has been accumulated over the centuries. This is but an attempt to destroy the whole Islamic tradition of knowledge accumulation.

We, Muslims, ought to go hand in hand, to share knowledge following the path of truth, and keep away from misappropriating the truth. This is where the hardship we are experiencing today emerges. The *truth* is that *it* is in no one's hands. Truth is an ideal, a purpose, a path that we all follow and learn.

Islamic civilization has left us a gift of great value. That is tolerance and respect for opinions different from ours and believes that exist next to us; that is an ability to build relationships in the framework of morality and law.

The concepts of good and justice are essential for Muslims in terms of building relationships with other faiths' representatives. Remember, in the early years of the Islamic state there were citizens who worshiped fire. But no Muslim ordained to throw them into fire, since they worship it to let them burn. Muslims have always strictly honored the principles of our Prophet (peace be upon him), the principles of patronage, protection and respect for other religious beliefs.

We have been developing relations with all nations and all faiths in peace and justice. Even a century ago you would not have found a church, a mosque and a synagogue built side by side in a European capital. However, five centuries ago in Istanbul, Baghdad, Damascus,

Egypt, in Russia's Muslim regions there were mosques, churches and synagogues standing side by side. We have always considered the principle of the inviolability and sanctity of places of worship sacred, we have never harmed other religions' shrines.

What do we see in the Islamic world now? A Muslim ties a bomb to himself, enters a mosque, blows it up, he destroys mausoleums and graves. Statues of Buddha had been standing in the Bamyán valley of Afghanistan for centuries, until they were blown up in the 21st century. Hundreds of ul-ema, adepts of Fiqh were living there. Had an idea to blow up the statues ever occurred to any of them? Such 'brightest minds' emerged in Afghanistan in the late 20th century along with an unceasing war. That is why we have to know the origins of our civilization and evolve our heritage.

So, why all of that is happening? We have to ponder over it. Peaceful coexistence lies in the sphere of moral and legal dialogue.

Recently the leader of Catholic church visited Turkey. We had a private conversation with him, and I told him that if Christians want to broaden the dialogue with Muslims, then they should abandon those dogmas and rigid framework of dialogue that have been imposed upon us decades ago. It is impossible to develop relations according to those instructions and methodology. On the contrary, we must develop a new platform of dialogue. For example, the Jerusalem criteria based on the principles of our civilizations and moral precepts of peaceful coexistence of all the Abrahamic religions.

A dialogue between the nature and the tenets of faiths is impossible, that is why there can be no dialogue between the Trinity and Tawheed (i.e. the oneness of God). But there can be and must be a dialogue between Muslims and Christians. We should focus on a dialogue constructed in the framework of norms of morality and law.



Musozoda Hoja Husain

*Musozoda Hoja Husain,
Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Center of the
Republic of Tajikistan (Dushanbe)*

In the name of Allah, most Merciful, most Compassionate!

As you know, for more than 70 years we had been living in the Soviet Union. Then the states got independence, among them is Tajikistan. As we know, the unity of Muslims in this country rests upon the doctrinal teaching. It exists due to following the only madhhab for over 1000 years. I will not talk about it much. Dr. Görmez and other speakers have already talked about that in details.

As for the differences, there are differences. These are the disagreements between the elderly and young people, including appeals to the youth to follow some heretical madhhabs. Nowadays, some young people resort to the Internet. They get fatwas there and do not know, who a mufti is, who sends them these fatwas, where these fatwas are sent from. Therefore, those who issue these fatwas, especially on the Internet, should think about not turning their fatwas into temptations.

It is necessary to carry out rituals and the hajj properly, to be consistent in the doctrine. When you talk to these people, they say, 'This is heresy, paganism, polytheism', and the like. Therefore, there are differences between the old and young people. It is the duty of ulema and imams to fix the situation, because these differences are illegitimate.

We are engaged in the problem of education. I myself wrote a book that calls for the condemnation of fanaticism and talks about the virtues and the high morality of Imam Abu Hanifa.

Over time, divergence of opinions between the young and the elderly has become apparent with regard to folk customs and beliefs. The government of Tajikistan attaches great importance to the population, freedom of religion and freedom of worship.

All the fatwas should be particularly cautious treating the Hanafi madhhab. In 2009, President Rakhmonov hold an international conference in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. Books and articles are published, TV programs are broadcasted throughout the year. Thus the discrepancies are given much attention. Unfortunately, there are differences up to date, but they have somewhat diminished.

The ranks of Muslims should unite. For this we gathered here today. We, theologians, bear on their shoulders a task of actualizing tolerant Islamic teachings, which are suitable at all times and in all places, the teachings which are free from excesses of whatsoever.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the significance of those voluntary deeds that have been done here, in particular, the training seminars for the representatives of religious organizations and imams in Moscow. Yesterday we talked about it at the beginning of the conference, discussed the issue. It was received with a great enthusiasm and satisfaction. The ulema and ustads were talking about it. We were talking about the strengthening of the relations between the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, including Tajikistan.

I ask Allah to give success to this conference for the benefit of Muslims. Peace be upon you, the mercy of Allah and his blessings.



Sulaymon Davlatov

*Sulaymon Davlatov,
Rector of the Tajik Islamic Institute, Chairman
of the Committee on Religious Affairs under the
Government of Tajikistan*

Peace be upon you, the Mercy of Allah and His Blessings!

Currently, religion becomes a source of spiritual values for many people. The laws that exist in most of our countries provide people the opportunity to go back to their spiritual and religious roots. However, we—educators—have a question: how and in what form shall we use such opportunities?

For many centuries, Islam has existed in the life of the peoples of our region, including the Tajiks. Rituals and traditions are among the major internal factors that influence national ideas and our lives. Therefore, with the advent of general religious freedom since 1992, religion in Tajikistan again has been gradually reviving and the process of the establishment of the institution of religious education takes place. The issue of Islamic education in the Republic of Tajikistan is at the center of the attention of the competent authorities. In the current socio-political context, and particularly in the context of looming globalization, we still believe that there is a need for a unified educational space, the development of common textbooks and for the designing of management programs for the existing religious schools.

The president of Tajikistan emphasized in one of his speeches that religious education and public education in our country are completely free; they are an integral part of citizens' rights and freedoms. In general, it is the expression of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Although according to the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan religious schools and madrassas are separated from the state and act on their own, we can not be indifferent to the fate of thousands of young people and teenagers, who are trained in more than twenty secondary religious schools. Proceeding from this, we believe that the activity of the Tajik Islamic Institute is essential to provide the abovementioned schools with specialists. By this we can raise the status of the Tajik Islamic Institute and involve the graduates in all activities, so that they could contribute to the upbringing of the young generation in Tajikistan.

One of the first steps in creating an effective Islamic education in the country has been the unification of religious education in accordance with state standards. The Tajik Islamic Institute is an example of this. The Tajik Islamic Institute must meet all the needs of our society and act in conformance with the realities of our time in the country. It should be standards-based and should satisfy all the immediate needs of the country in theologians, clergy and professionals in the field of religion, Qur'anic studies and philology. The educational process is constantly monitored in accordance with the requirements of the labor market standards, with the set of disciplines. The fact is that nobody has the right to prepare half-baked graduates, especially the Tajik Islamic Institute, since semiliterate imams are not needed in society. In this case, we would have to replace them with those who studies overseas. To make a practicing Muslim out of a future scholar, special subjects are taught in our Institute along with the fundamental religious subjects to prepare highly-skilled specialists.

Positive aspects of the cooperation between the state and Islam will bring positive results in the nearest future. Qualified ulema prepared in our country would be able to resist not only pseudo-Islamism and extremism, but also non-traditional and alien to our society sects and movements. Our graduates can also continue their studies at other universities.



Ildar Muhamedshin

*Ildar Muhamedshin,
Mufti of Estonia, Director of the Islamic
Cultural Center ‘Turas’*

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

Dear participants! I greet Mufti Sheikh Ravil Hazrat Gaynutdin and the Council of Muftis of Russia, which, praise be to Allah, do not forget the communities and Muslim societies existing in Eastern Europe. May Almighty Allah bless them and all of us.

First, I would like to tell a little about the history of the Muslim community in Estonia. The history of Muslims residing in Estonia began about 150 years ago. In the mid-19th century, Tatars arrived in Estonia from the Nizhny Novgorod region, just as they were coming to St. Petersburg and Helsinki.

First, their staying was temporary and afterwards the Tatars become permanent residents. By the beginning of World War I and the October Revolution, there were several hundred Tatars residing in the territory of present-day Estonia. Once Estonia gained independence in 1920, the descendants of Tatar settlers decided to stay to live there. They were joined by those who fled from the Bolsheviks.

In 1928, an Islamic community was established in Estonia. It mainly consisted of Tatar merchants. The formation of the community took place from 1920 to 1940. Largely the Muslim community of

Estonia was similar to the community of Muslim Tatars in Finland, since they were related to each other in terms of ethnicity and social composition. And actually many Tatars of Estonia and Finland were relatives. As you know, the distance between Tallinn and Helsinki is just 80 kilometers. We are divided by the Gulf of Finland. According to the tales of the elderly, Muslim scholars and educators used to visit us, including those who emigrated from Russia for obvious reasons. Every year, Muslim scholars used to come from Germany to summer courses to train local Muslim Tatars in Estonia.

When Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 and the communist period of our history began, a great misfortune befell the Islamic community. Many members of the community were forced to emigrate to America, Australia, Sweden and other countries. Officially, any display of religious life was prohibited, and you know it well. Another group of Tatars came to Estonia after World War II, there were about 50 families of Nizhny Novgorod Tatars. That was in 1948. They immediately got acquainted with the local Muslim community, as they shared a common religion. Estonian Tatars feared that ‘communists’ came to them. But they quickly became close, when they saw that these were the same Tatars like themselves: they read the same religious books, perform prayers. The rapprochement began from the elderly. Praise be to Allah, even in the years of the Soviet rule, people used to gather for holidays and Friday prayers.

We have a Muslim cemetery. During the perestroika years, the revival of cultural and religious societies began. The first book, which our Muslims could read, was the book ‘Ibadat al-Islamiya’ by Abdurrahman Kaya, a Turk who was an imam of the Islamic community of Finland in the fifties and spoke well the Tatar language.

I hold the position of mufti since 2002. I completed my training and our Muslims elected me. Since then, I try the best of my abilities to assist the revival of Islam in Estonia. Praise be to Allah, we have reached some success. Although, of course, our success is rather modest comparing to what is happening in Russia, in other countries, where Muslims are a historical majority.

So, in 2007 we opened an Islamic cultural center, which we called ‘Turas’ (Legacy), because, first of all, our task was to preserve the

cultural heritage of the Muslim peoples of Estonia. The second task is to familiarize the people of Estonia with the correct, true Islam. It often happens that people get to know about Islam and Muslims through the media that often distorts things.

During the meetings with the leaders of the cultural societies of Estonian Muslim peoples' I have been saying that the activities of many cultural societies are limited to the organization of national holidays, demonstrations of folk songs and dances. At the same time, there were no schools, where one could study the Tatar language or the languages of other Muslims. I have always been saying that if you want to survive as Tatars, you should be Muslims. Be Muslims and you will remain Tatars. If you lose your religion, it will only take 15–20 years until you 'dissolve' and disappear as a nation. The number of Tatars in Estonia is small. After 1991 the border was closed, and people became unable to come as they did before.

I wanted to touch upon the subject of Muslim heritage. Firstly, it is important for the current generation of Muslims, whose ancestors were Muslims, especially for young people to realize what treasures their ancestors possessed. It often happens that some of our young people become practicing Muslims, but they know only the present and know nothing about the past. If they had an opportunity to see old books, they would understand that Islam is not an 'innovation', it is the religion that was always practiced by their ancestors.

Secondly, it is important for those people who convert to Islam—Estonians, Russian and representatives of other nationalities. They sometimes think that there is no 'other' Islam except the one that they have read about in some kind of little book (perhaps, a radical one) or heard from one or two preachers and have come to believe in just this version of Islam. It is essential to encourage them to study our ancestors' Muslim heritage. It must be that beacon, which would guide our Muslims to the right path.

In early October 2014, we organized an exhibition, which was held at the National Islamic Library. The exhibition was called 'Estonian Islamic community and its cultural heritage'. In the first place, we presented old books, which were passed to our center by old people. These are

the books published back in Kazan, among them are the Qur'an, books in Arabic, Farsi, in Old Tatar. There we presented a manuscript that a member of our community was presented by an elderly representative of the Jewish community, who himself had found the manuscript in his childhood on the ruins of a synagogue smashed up during the war. He kept it in the Soviet time and handed over to a representative of our community, who in turn passed it to our Cultural Center.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude for the great work being done in the Council of Muftis of Russia and 'Medina' Publishing House, for the great work of Sheikh Ravil Hazrat Gaynutdin and for the work of the team of young religious leaders who surround him.



Mufti Salih Kvaratskhelia

Mufti Salih Kvaratskhelia,
Chairman of the Spiritual Administration
of the Muslims of Abkhazia

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds! Peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad, his family and all his companions! As-salamu Alaikum wa Rahmatu-Llahi wa barakatuhu!

Dear Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin! Dear participants of the 10th Muslim International Forum!

First, I would like to thank the organizers of the Forum in the face of esteemed Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin for the invitation and organization of such an important and high assembly.

Dear participants of the Forum! People in the world and even people in the post-Soviet space know little about the situation with Islam in our young republic. So, within the scope of the round table 'Re-establishment of the schools of Islamic theology in the post-Soviet space: new opportunities, experience and challenges' I would like acquaint you with the position of Islam in Abkhazia.

As we know, the process of the revival of Islam in Abkhazia, same as in other post-Soviet republics, has begun in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when atheistic restrictions imposed upon religion were lifted.

By that time, Islam as such almost did not exist in Abkhazia. Historically, by God's will, a part of our people living in Abkhazia consider

themselves Christians, and another part—Muslims. But largely neither have a clear idea about religious dogmas and devotional duties of the religions which they identify themselves with. The religion of Abkhazians is, we can say, an alloy of misconceptions, beliefs and rituals of Christianity, Islam and ancient pagan beliefs. Until now, the Islamic identity of ethnic Abkhaz Muslims has been ‘pending’. There was the only old mullah alive, who was there since the Soviet times, performing salat, reading Qur’an and performing other religious duties.

In 1992, the Georgian-Abkhaz war burst out. It culminated in the victory the Abkhaz people and in the proclamation of Abkhazia’s independence. During that hard war period, volunteers from the North Caucasus republics, as well as the descendants of Abkhazian Muhajirs who had fled their homeland in the 19th century due to the tragedy of the Russian-Caucasian war, started to come to aid from Turkey, Syria, Jordan etc.

The first mosque opened in these difficult days in Gudauta, where a prayer room was allocated in a local community center, an imam was elected. Funeral rites for the dead Muslims, the soldiers of the Abkhaz militia, were performed here too.

The first president, who took a leading role in the national liberation movement of the people of Abkhazia and in the formation of the young Abkhaz state Vladislav Ardzinba has always considered himself a Muslim. This fact is the pride of the Muslims of Abkhazia.

In 1999, at the initiative of the Muslims of Abkhazia and the Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey and with the support of the first President of the Republic of Abkhazia Ardzinba, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Republic of Abkhazia was established. In particular, Ardzinba, being a professional orientalist then, stressed that the Orthodox Christianity should not lay claims to a monopoly in the spiritual life of the country, since an Islam is an integral part of Abkhazian history and culture.

In 1999 the first Congress of Muslims took place, which elected a chairman of the Spiritual Board, a repatriate from Turkey and a citizen of Abkhazia, Adil Gablia. In the same year the administration of the town of Gudauta allocated old building of the former City Council

for a mosque at the request of the chairman of the Spiritual Administration. At the same time one-story building for a mosque was allocated in the capital of Abkhazia, Sukhumi. Praise be to Allah, to this day, every day azan is pronounced in these mosques, prayers are performed and weekly sermons are held. On Fridays the prayer hall in the mosque in the city of Sukhumi can not accommodate all the comers, who have to pray in the courtyard of the mosque.

The most important sacred Muslim holiday, Eid al-Adha, was declared a public holiday and an off-day in the Republic of Abkhazia. Today, not only Abkhazians returnees and representatives of other Muslim peoples of the Caucasus visit the mosques of Sukhumi and Gudauta, but also the indigenous population of Abkhazia.

The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Abkhazia was established in order to meet the religious needs of Muslims of Abkhazia, to revive Islam and promote its values, to enhance the spiritual, moral and religious knowledge of the population in order to create necessary conditions for worship and spiritual development. The Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Abkhazia maintains contacts with the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation, with the Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, as well as with numerous representatives of the Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey on various religious aspects.

In 2006, the chairman of the Spiritual Administration Gablia took part in the World Islamic Conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he was representing the Muslims of Abkhazia. In the following years, the leadership of the Spiritual Administration have participated in many international events held in Russia, Turkey and other countries of near and far abroad.

Since September 2014, the Spiritual Administration, in conformance with the new law on Religion adopted in Abkhazia, was transformed into a religious Islamic organization the 'United Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Abkhazia'. This law better meets the interest of religious communities and opens up greater opportunities.

In Abkhazia the number of people interested in Islam in everyday life, learning about Islam and adhering to its norms is increasing

from year to year. The Spiritual Administration organizes religious ceremonies and helps Muslims to fulfil the norms of Sharia, it delivers sermons, holds charitable activities, pursues to provide those eager to learn about the religious doctrine with religious literature and other print and digital materials.

Today, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims and all the Muslims of the Republic of Abkhazia are experiencing an acute need for Islamic education, enlightenment of the public and enhancing of the Islamic Call. In this regard, the construction of a new mosque in the capital of the republic, the city of Sukhumi, is very important.

As you known, for a long time Abkhazia has been a tourist region, and here Abkhazia has a huge potential, which we could use for the benefit of Islam and Muslims. For example, we see a potential in the development of the tourism sector, aimed at the satisfaction of needs of Muslim tourists from Russia and other countries, i.e. creation of 'halal' recreation: sanatoriums, hotels, catering, separate closed beaches, etc. We also see it useful the organization of summer camps for Muslim children from Russia and other countries. And here, of course, we cannot do without Muslims' investments.

All of this, we believe, will benefit the Muslims of our countries, attract Muslim tourists to the republic, provide additional opportunities for 'halal' recreational facilities, contribute to the interaction of Muslims, enhance the image of Islam in our country and balance the inter-faith relations.

The Spiritual Administration sees its mission in increasing the spiritual and moral standards of the population and strengthening the moral foundations of society, the preservation of spiritual culture and the revival of the ancestors' morals, countering religious extremism and maintaining inter-religious and inter-ethnic peace in our land.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds!



Dr. Amsal Bakhtiar

Dr. Amsal Bakhtiar,
Vice-rector of the Syarif Hidayatullah State
Islamic University (Jakarta, Indonesia)

Peace be upon you, the mercy of Allah and His blessings!

Praise be to Allah, who brought us to the right path. We would not have been on this road if not for God. I bear witness that there is no god but God, and Muhammad is his Messenger.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, who invited us to the 10th Muslim International Forum in Moscow.

Dear participants, when we study Islam, we see that Qur'anic verses dedicated to Aqidah unite Muslims in all corners of the world: in the East and the West, the North and the South. Along with this, in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith teachings we see information about natural sciences and social sciences in general. For example, there is an awareness of engineering, medicine, biology. Most Qur'anic verses concern knowledge and the requirement of knowledge. The first verse that was revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) is 'Read, in the name of thy Lord who created'. Another verse says that science is very important, it appeals to believers to be careful, 'Are those who know equal to those who know not?' Secondly, there are cosmogonical verses, which cover physical and social issues.

If we consider technology, we see that in ancient times, when the Muslims of Indonesia wanted to perform the pilgrimage to Holy Mecca, the whole year was required—six months to reach Mecca and six months for the return journey. Today aviation allows us to complete this in a week. Thus, technologies are crucial in our era. By this means, Indonesia's residents can fulfill the obligation of Hajj. That is why we pay attention at the verses, which have to do with technologies and have a cosmogonic character, which encourage us to develop modern technology. This is exactly the sphere, in which we have to make jihad in Islamic universities and in Islamic states in general.

In our Islamic University in Jakarta I am a teacher at the Faculty of the Fundamentals of religion. We do not distinguish between dogmatic verses and the verses dedicated to cosmos and the universe. Because they have the single source, which is Allah Almighty. Therefore, we should put together these verses, so that they become a ground of cultural development for all Muslims. I apologize for my brevity.

Peace be upon you, mercy of Allah and His blessings.



Ali Abbasi

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**POSITIVE SOCIAL
EXPERIENCE AND COHESION
IN THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY
OF THE GRADUATES OF
ISLAMIC SCHOOLS BASED ON
THE PRIMACY OF RATIONAL
SCIENTIFIC METHODS,
INCLUDING PHILOSOPHY**

A historical look at Muslim religious schools

For centuries there has been a large number of religious educational centers in the Islamic world, which indicates that Islam pays special

attention to teaching and learning, and Muslims have always been ardent in the mastery of science and knowledge. We see that Islamic religious centers can be found in all corners of the Islamic world handed down for us as a legacy of the previous era of Muslim civilization. These are the educational centers of Baghdad, Nishapur, Isfahan, Balkh and Herat, Al-Azhar University, Mustansiriya, Zaytuna and the historical schools of Najaf and Qom. By the way, it has been said a lot that such famous European universities as the University of Paris, the University of Montpellier and the University of Oxford, which for the most part emerged after the 12th century, were founded proceeding from the experience of Islamic schools.

The curriculum of Islamic centers has been undergoing changes at different stages of history, which has been occurring under the influence of various philosophical schools. It should be noted that the historical experience of Shiite and Sunni training centers in teaching religious sciences has much in common, while still there are some differences. One of these differences is, for example, the tendency of Shiite centers towards the study of rational sciences and philosophy, which manifested itself particularly distinctly in the last century.

The ultimate goal of the study of religious sciences is the achievement of the true and deep understanding of the teachings of religion, as well as a correct interpretation of its basic texts—Qur'an and Sunnah. This true understanding requires the mastering of sciences, which have been taught in religious schools for centuries. Arabic language, including Sarf, Nahw, Balaghah and other disciplines, has been an indispensable subject of the study, and all students have paid considerable attention to its mastery. But in most cases, the most important purpose of the establishment of Islamic educational centers has been the study of Fiqh, Islamic jurisprudence.

In traditional Islamic schools Fiqh has been considered the main and definitive discipline, while explanatory books on rational sciences have not attracted much attention there. The life of Ghazali, who was the brightest representative of these kind of religious schools, exemplifies this. At his time, he wrote a work that refutes philosophy; to this day this work continues to influence the discipline exposing philosophy in a bad light.

Muslim schools that subsequently gained ground in Anatolia (Asia Minor) during the epoch of Seljuks, also largely concentrated their efforts on teaching and studying of documentary sciences, rather than rational sciences. For example, it was agreed in the vakuf charter of the madrasah founded by Jalaluddin Karatay in Konya that the subjects to be taught in the madrasah are Sharia, Hadith, Tafsir, Usul, Furu and Hilaf (perhaps Hilaf implied the teaching of different opinions in Fiqh, or—a different understanding of theological questions).

Of course, it should be noted that in some Muslim schools such disciplines as algebra, geometry, astronomy and other natural sciences were taught too.

Logic, as an individual science, also used to be taught in Muslim schools. And, despite some objections from a group of religious scholars, many treaties and textbooks have been written on the subject, and it has been a part of the curriculum of many Islamic centers. We must admit that Ibn Sina's book on logic is still the best work in this area.

In the same way, the science of Kalam for a long time and for many centuries has been popular in Islamic educational institutions among the followers of Sunni Islam. Sharh al mawaqif and Sharh al maqasid are among the books of this scholarly area.

It should be noted that among Sunni scholars there have been such personalities as Fakhr ad-Din Razi, who were demonstrating their inclination to philosophy. The book *Al Mabahis al mashriqiya* and the commentary written by Fakhr ad-Din Razi to Ibn Sina's book *Al Isharat* are the evidence of this disposition. However, we must admit that after the 6th century philosophy and rational sciences in Sunni schools, especially in the Arab world, has not been prevalent anymore.

We can say in this regard that the Indian subcontinent is very different from the Arab countries, particularly this difference clearly manifests itself after the 9th century Hijra. According to the findings of some researchers, the teaching of Ibn Sina's book *Al Ishrat wa al tanbihat* was widespread in India for many centuries. In India these

books were published before they were published in Iran. Besides, the interpretation of Athir al-Din al-Abhari's book *Al Hidayat al asiriya* was taught in India too. These interpretations were conducted by different scientists. The most famous of these interpretations was the one written by sayyid Hussein Mibadi, and over the centuries dozens of scholars in Hindustan were writing their commentaries to it. Another interpretation was performed by Mulla Sadra Shirazi, and again there were commentaries written on it in the Indian subcontinent. This book is a tutorial for teaching philosophy. For more than two hundred years, the teaching of philosophy and other rational sciences was provided in the curriculum, developed by Nizam ad-Din Lakunhavi, even in Indian traditional educational institutions. Mawlana sayyid Munazir Ahsan Gilani, a graduate of Dar al Uloom of the city of Deoband, translated into Urdu a significant part of *Asfar* written by Mulla Sadra, and this translation was published in two volumes.

It is necessary to focus on the following: after Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, theoretic Irfan became widespread in the Islamic world; the subject in fact was nothing but a rational analysis of sensory and intuitive discoveries. However, in most cases this discipline of rational science echoed solely in Sufi environment, while theoretic Irfan had no recognition in most of famous Sunni schools.

The interpreters of Ibn Arabi's thoughts lived in different parts of the Islamic world, from Maghreb and Anatolia to Iran and Hindustan. Sadr ad-Din Qunawi, Kaisari, Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, Muayyiduddin Jundi are the brightest of their representatives.

To conclude this part, we consider it necessary to specify one thing. The movement of Mu'tazilites which sprang up among Ahl al-Sunnah in the first century of Hijra is an example of a propensity towards rationalism, but, unfortunately, in some areas they went to extremes. This group was unable to continue its scientific existence; referring to history, we see that no religious centers, which could teach the concepts of Mu'tazilites and influence the minds of Muslims, were established in the following century. Besides Mu'tazilites did not do anything significant in philosophy.

The path and development of rational sciences in Shiite religious schools

Despite the fact that there has been ups and downs in the history of rational sciences in Shiite religious schools, still we can say that more attention has been given to rational disciplines there.

A lot has been said on the fact that Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ikhwan as-Safa and Suhrawardi were Shiites. Ibn Sina's presence in the court of the Buyid dynasty that openly adhered to the Shiite doctrine corroborates this. Since the era of a famous Shiite scholars Haji Nasir ad-Din Tusi, Shiite Kalam has been gradually becoming more and more rational. The book *Tajrid al i'tiqad* by Nasir al-Din Tusi, which later became one of the books adopted for teaching in Shiite schools, is an example of rationality in the study of Kalam. Many Sunni scholars got interested in the book so much that some of them wrote interpretations and comments on the text. The most famous of these interpretations is the one by Fazil Kushchi.

Haji Nasir ad-Din Tusi is the author of an important book interpreting Ibn Sina's *Al Isharat*. In this interpretation, he responded to all the reproofs that Fakhr ad-Din Razi brought forward to criticize Ibn Sina. The interpretation of *Al Isharat*, and later the commentary of Al-lama Hilli on the chapter on logics in *Tajrid al i'tiqad* for many years was used as textbooks in Shiites learning centers.

However, the apex of this historical path was the establishment of a distinguished school, *Al Hikmat al mutaaliya* (sublime wisdom), whose founder was Sadr al-Mutaallihin Shirazi (Mulla Sadra). His book, *Al Asfar al arba* (four travels) has been the best book on philosophy in the Shiite training centers for already four centuries. We can say that the rapprochement between rationality, the texts (Qur'an and Sunnah) and intuitiveness (*Irfan*) became possible after the foundation of this school, when the achievements of rationality, the text and intuitiveness got harmoniously intertwined.

Also, it should not remain unseen that over the last several decades the ideas refuting rational methods in religion have sprung up in a number of Shiite schools. These sort of ideas formed a school called *Tafkik* (division). Studying their materials, one should not jump to the conclusion that they

completely deny rationality and rational thinking. According to their beliefs, rationality, which they call a natural rationality, only assists the understanding of religious teachings. But they neglect philosophical rationality and do not regard it as proving anything. They believe that natural rationality conceives good and wrong, verifies the truth and disproves falsehood. Outwardly, it appears that under rationality they imply obvious and unquestionable concepts conceived by reason. Therefore, rationality, in their view, can not be an argument in unobvious and disputable matters; in such cases, they say, one need to refer to the texts (Qur'an and Sunnah).

The place of Islamic philosophy in Muslim culture and civilization

It should be emphasized that Muslims were not confining themselves to the exposition of Greek philosophy, but deepened and expanded many of its materials; they also added to it a huge number of new issues and questions, and after that they reaped the harvest that had not been reaped previously. Allama Tabatabai says that Greek philosophy only dealt with some two hundred topics, but Muslims brought the number of philosophical themes to seven hundred.

In addition, Muslim philosophers benefited from Islamic texts, i.e. the holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his family), and from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). Many Qur'anic verses assisted Islamic philosophers, especially those belonging to the school Al Hikmat al mutaaliya, they applied the holy text to perfect topics and questions considered by philosophy. They used such verses as 'He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant and the Intimate' (Qur'an 57:3), 'To Him belong the best names' (Qur'an 20:8), 'Nor is there to Him any equivalent' (Qur'an, 112:4), 'We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth' (Qur'an 41:53). They also benefited from the preaching of the Master of Believers Ibn Abi Talib in Nahj al Balagha and from the hadith from the Imams of Ahl al-Beyt (peace be upon them), found in such collections as Al Kafi by the Sheikh Koleini and Tawhid by Sheikh Saduq.

Such Mulla Sadra's books as the interpretation of Usul al Kafi, Asrar al ayat wa anwar al bayyinat, Risalat mutashabihat al quran are vivid examples of how Muslim sages adopted religious texts, trying to comprehend a philosophical truth and prove the connection between rationality and harmony and the texts.

With such features, Islamic philosophy was able to promote the development of a rational environment in Muslim civilization. And we must agree that during such historical periods when rationality and rational thinking were shrinking, always it created a fertile ground for the development of all sorts of movements and ideas diminishing the importance of reflection and calling for primitive thinking.

Rational science in contemporary Shiite education

We consider it necessary to recall two outstanding personalities who had a tremendous influence on modern thought, especially in the field of Islamic philosophy. The first person is Imam Khomeini, who was a prominent figure in various fields of Islamic sciences, from Fiqh and Usul to philosophy and Irfan. Given that previously religious schools mistrusted and disparaged the teaching of theoretical Irfan, the historical role of Imam Khomeini, who largely reduced this distrust and suspicion, cannot be denied. Unlike in former times, today religious schools easily adopt books on theoretical Irfan such as Fusus al hikam and commentary on this book or Irfan treatises like Misbah al hidaya.

The second person is Allama Tabatabai, who brought up a new generation of teachers and professors of Islamic philosophy. He turned the teaching of various philosophic schools (Mashsha, Ishraq, Al hikmat al mutaaliya) into a common thing in the religious educational centers of Qom. The interpretation of the Qur'anic concept of Al Mizan performed by Allama Tabatabai is also an example of rational view on religion. Religion, which is now capable of giving humanity the answers on social and spiritual issues. Religion, which is based on rationality and profound spirituality and is able to resolve many difficulties that arise before humanity today.

In fact, Allama Tabatabai has opened new horizons for those seeking Islamic wisdom. He can rightly be called the founder of comparative philosophy among Islamic philosophers. His book 'Fundamentals of Fiqh and the method of realism' is a priceless and superb example of comparative philosophy. The topics and issues raised in this book, are the most treasured questions that open the gates of dialogue between Muslim philosophers and modern thinkers and intellectuals, they clearly shows the strength and depth of Islamic philosophy.

Another two books by Allama Tabatabai, *Bidayat al hikma* and *Nihayat al hikma*, are presently considered the basic textbooks of philosophy in the official curriculum of religious centers. His students, among whom are Ayatollah Subhani, Ayatollah Javadi Amuli and Ayatollah Misbah Yazdi, continue to teach philosophy in religious schools and are among the most famous religious philosophers of our time.

The place of Al Mustafa University in the teaching of rational sciences

Al Mustafa International University, which establishment is the result of invaluable experience of the activity of religious schools, shoulders the responsibility for the education of experts in religion, who are seeking unity and acquainted not only with religion, but with the era in which they live.

When thousands are coming together from different countries in search for the truth, this gathering becomes a unique opportunity to teach these people rationality, free-thinking, high spirituality, morality, respect for others and self-discovery in the shadow of monotheism and worship of Allah.

The message religious schools convey to the world today is that in addition to the traditional Islamic sciences, which has long been taught in all Muslim centers, contemporary educational institutions can establish a connection with the new humanities. The crucial thing for religious schools today is a reasonable analysis of the basics of the humanities and the refutation of a number of their erroneous tenets. And, of course, this preliminary task cannot be carried out, unless rational

science is summoned for help, particularly philosophy. In our opinion, there is an abyss between the established humanities and the humanities that we want to see. It is obvious for all that the establishment of humanities was largely dominated by the views of scholars detached from religion, as well as by their view of human being. Therefore, in order to create religious humanities, one must get acquainted with the basics of the prevailing humanities, then reasonably and logically refute them, and then give humankind a new framework that could replace them.

Abundantly clear that it is impossible to deny the need to study philosophy and rational sciences. How can we establish a linkage with the adherents of different ideas and ideologies without using the language of rationality to let monotheistic worldview form a new science, and on this basis a new civilization?

Today, the younger generation in religious schools and Al Mustafa University is face-to-face with this difficult task. By establishing philosophic schools, institutions for religious studies and many organizations for the study of rational sciences, Al Mustafa University seeks to bring up the scholars who will be able to meet this challenge.



Ibrahim Albakov

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Rector of the Islamic University of Ingushetia*

On behalf of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Republic of Ingushetia and Khamathan-Haji Barzиеv Islamic University of Ingushetia allow me to express my greetings on the occasion of the 10th Muslim International Forum.

Every year the Forum brings together the representatives of Muslim religious organizations and educational institutions from all Russia's regions and many foreign countries. This event is an important event in Muslims' life, which gradually becomes a platform for an effective interaction between religious establishment, the representatives of government, culture and foreign diplomatic missions. Today we are extremely interested in a broad skill sharing in the field of religious education, the strengthening of traditional values, resistance to the spread of the ignorant and radicalized ideas among the youth.

Ingushetia is known to all, it takes a rightful place not only among Russian regions, but also in the Muslim world. The cooperation and collaboration between the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ingushetia and the Islamic University of Ingushetia on the one hand and our brothers from other regions of Russia on the other are fruitful and effective. Islam along with the state's legal norms, general traditional values and Adab (modes of behavior) cement the bonds between the Muslims of the North Caucasus and encourage us to evolve for the

benefit of our country and our society. Therefore, the North Caucasus republics demonstrate a growth in all spheres of citizens' life, including religion. Undoubtedly, our participation in the 10th International Forum is yet another opportunity not only to share our achievements, but also to benefit from the experience of our colleagues.

Various topical issues are discussed during the Forum, but the central issue is the "Mission of religion and responsibility of its followers to the modernity".

Today Russian society has entered a post-secular stage, characterized by the return to religious values after the collapse of the atheist regime. Our fathers and grandfathers were able to preserve these values during the time of hardships. This return is characterized by a rapid growth of religiousness: spiritual needs sharply increase and people, often unwittingly, referred to dubious books and preachers. One of the results of this period for our society was the spread of various sects and doctrines unacknowledged by Russia's traditional religions. Unfortunately, these processes have not spared Russian Muslims. But today the state of affairs of Russian Muslims has improved and currently gains momentum due to the increasing efficiency of the religious organizations of Russia's Muslims, the growing number of Muslim schools and due to the publishing of Islamic literature. The situation among Russian Muslims has evened and got a stable development trend.

Along with the qualitative growth of our Ummah, the responsibility of Muslims to Allah, to the precepts of our Prophet Muhammad (may Allah honor him and grant him peace), to the surrounding society increases too.

Our religion is sent down by our Creator with the loftiest mission—to lead people out of darkness into the light of God, opening the gate to the mercy of Allah and His Paradise. These awards require patience, wisdom, discipline, piety, performing of good deeds and abandoning of evil. To comprehend it all, we were given the Holy Qur'an and the Blessed Sunnah, the acts of the enlightened Saints Aulia and the covenants of our ancestors. Therefore, we can say that primarily the most important mission of Muslims is studying and acquiring of knowledge instead of ignorant judgments. Only solid knowledge can help us

maintain true beliefs, it nourishes us to help preserve our spiritual core, raise our children in a spirit of piety and not in the spirit of the modern destructive anti-culture in the present-day globalist society.

Our peoples are our wealth and the only real resource. Neither wealth and savings nor industrial and financial capacities can be compared with the value of a personality. Therefore, in today's environment, we need to consider carefully and wisely the path that our youth takes. Parents must make significant efforts to breed their children; Muslim religious leaders must put together all their wisdom and patience to save the young from spiritual and physical fall, from choosing false paths of life.

In Ingushetia, religious organizations, Muslim educational institutions, the authorities, public and charitable organizations understand today their great responsibility to future generations, they work in unison for the benefit of citizens. Despite some problems, we can state that there is a trend of stable development in the religious and educational spheres of our region. A great help for us is the interaction with our brothers from other Russian regions and exchange of experience at such venues as the Muslim International Forum.

Finally, I ask Allah to grant good to our country and Russian society. I ask Allah for peace for us and our children, for friendship and stability among the peoples of Russia.



Riza Ganiev

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ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN THE CRIMEA

The issues of Islamic education in the Crimea for a long time has been worrying both the representatives of Islamic organizations and general public. The concern about this issue arose in the early 1990s and it manifested itself in a number of projects that have been implemented since then. However, there is still a number of open questions awaiting further strategic actions.

Firstly, the understanding of the perspective of Islamic education in the Crimean actualities is required. In a sense, the opportunities of the development of Islamic educational institutions depend on external and internal factors. The former, in particular, includes the particularities of Russian legislation and a coordinated stance of the authorities, both central and local. Internal factors in this case imply the resources of Muslim organizations themselves and their position concerning spiritual and educational activities. The challenges arising today before the system of Muslim education in the Crimea are overall understandable: these are

the training of muezzins, imams, huffaz (i.t. those who has completely memorized the Qur'an) of various levels. These is also the training of the future teachers of Islam and the leaders of communities, the enlightenment of young people, and the education of scientists able to give an adequate answer to the contemporary religious problems of the Muslim community in the Crimea. Not only primary and secondary Islamic education can provide Crimean Muslims such opportunities, but higher education too, the development of which is one of the priorities for the Spiritual Administration of Muslims (also known as the Spiritual Board or Muftiyat) of the Crimea.

Same as in many other former Soviet republics, the history of Islamic education in the Crimea is divided into two periods: before the 1920s, i.e. since the initiation the state's struggle against religion, and since the beginning of the 1990s, i.e. since the period of Islamic revival. Crimean realities are exacerbated by the tragic events of 1944, when the absolute majority of Muslim Crimean Tatars were forcibly expelled from their homeland. Therefore, the peninsula, being a part of the Ukrainian SSR since 1954 (and, consequently, of the independent Ukraine), since the early 1990s has been constructing Muslim religious institutions almost 'from scratch'.

We find the earliest information on the Islamic education in the Crimea as early as during the reign of Uzbek Khan (1313–1341) who built the first madrasa. At that time, mosques used to be the centers of religious education, similarly as in other parts of the Islamic world, where the most prominent local scholars and guest-teachers were gathering their students. According to Ahmed El Kirimi (d. 1446), the student of a famous lawyer Sheref bin Kamal El Kirimi (d. 1441), there were over three hundred scholars working on their own writings and teaching students in the Crimea in the 14th century. Finally, in 1550 the most famous Zircirli Madrasa was established under Bakhchisaray, it is rightly regarded as the first higher education institution of the Islamic Eastern Europe. According to an Ottoman traveler Evliya Celebi (1611–1682), several schools were situated in the city of Kefe (modern Feodosia). But the policy of the Soviet government, which ended up in the crime of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944, left these achievements behind.

The secondary Islamic education has somewhat different opportunities: in this case the activity of religious schools, whose students attend public schools under the program of 'evening education, is permissible. As a result, the graduates receive two diplomas: one is a state-accredited diploma and the other is a diploma of religious education. Although there are only a few such Islamic schools in the Crimea, in general the government meets their wants, though it is not a guarantee of a trouble-free activity without misunderstandings.

The most common and numerous in the system of Islamic education of the Crimea are primary schools (so-called Sunday schools). Their activity, though subjected to the registration under the religious establishment, does not require any special permits and, therefore, they are the most prevalent within the structure of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Crimea and are available almost in all the mosques of the peninsula.

The program of such courses, organized for the people of different age categories, includes an initial course of the Arabic language, reading and memorizing of Qur'anic surahs, Hadith, Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life story, worship, doctrine and some aspects of Islamic law. Sunday schools of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Crimea also teach the Crimean Tatar language in order to strengthen the knowledge of the native culture.

To date, there is a network of madrasahs in the peninsula that provide both secular and religious education. Such kind of madrasahs, cooperating with public secondary schools of the Crimea, award a diploma of secondary education in the first place and, secondly, upon the graduation, a graduate can hold the post of muezzin, imam-khatib or a teacher of religion subjects, depending on the acquired knowledge, course units and the kind of a program. Madrasahs, in their turn, are represented by the institutions of first, second and third levels.

There are six schools of this type operating today under the auspices of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Crimea (excluding the branches, which operate as preparatory courses under the Spiritual Administration). They have their own charters and certificates of registration. One of the first of such madrasahs under the Spiritual

Administration was the one founded in 1993 in the region of Kebir Jami, where the Spiritual Administration itself was situated.

Another madrasah founded in 1993 and functioning under the Seyyit-Settar religious community is one of the first madrasahs of this type. More than twenty students can attend it simultaneously and more than two hundred have graduated from there. However, currently the ever-growing Spiritual Administration, consisting presently of eight special departments, which meets all the requirements of today's Crimean Muslim Ummah effectively and professionally, has simply sidelined the madrasah. Today its place is filled by daily courses on the fundamentals of religion, the reading of the Qur'an, the basics of Islamic law, etc.

The second madrasah that used to function under the Spiritual Administration and registered with the Seyyit-Settar community, is closed for reconstruction of the mosque, the administrative building and the building of the madrassah. Upon the completion of the reconstruction, the organization will meet all the modern requirements, as fire and epidemic safety. The process of reconstruction has begun and soon the Crimea will get a new and modern madrassah. Hopefully, the fate of the madrasah under the Muftiyat (i.e. Spiritual Administration) will be lucky and its life will be back on track as soon as, if God wills, a new Cathedral Mosque in Simferopol, located on 22 Yalta street, is build, where a new building of the Spiritual Administration will be placed.

The largest of the Islamic schools in Crimea, a madrassah under the Spiritual Administration in the village of Azovskoye known as Azovskoe madrasah, operates in Dzhankoy region since 1998. Its first building was built by the local community, then several other buildings were attached to complete the complex of the madrasah. Today the training period in the Azovskoye madrasah is three years. General subjects are taught in full by the teachers of the State Crimean Tatar National School to be attended daily. The children are taught the disciplines of the religious curriculum after their general school classes. In addition to the general Islamic disciplines, the students are taught the Turkish language, the history of religion, the history of Madhhabs, Tasawwuf, Kalam and the history of the Crimean Tatars. According to

the available data, 600 people have studied in the madrasah and 250 students have graduated from there, of whom more than 40 are imams in various cities and villages of the Crimea. Today there are more than 120 students (males and females) in the madrasah, more than ten of the teachers are Crimean Tatars, who graduated from either Turkish universities or the same madrasah and were awarded a diploma of the teacher of religion. Moreover, among the teachers are the graduates of Crimean pedagogic universities. This trend is typical for other religious schools of the Crimea, which operate under the Spiritual Board.

We can say the following about the other madrassahs: there is a Higher Madrasah under the Spiritual Administration functioning since 2003, where boys and girls are admitted. The students receive their general education in ordinary public schools. To date, more than forty boys and girls are the students there.

The Higher Crimean Madrasah of Huffaz was founded in the same year under the Spiritual Board. Students of 12–16 years old are studying there the Holy Qur'an. For this period, the Madrasah of Huffaz has obtained significant results: for the first time in the recent history, there are huffaz, who participate in various international competitions of the Qur'an's memorizing.

In 2007, a madrasah, generally known as the Krasnogvardeyskoye Male Huffaz Madrasah, was founded in the village of Krasnogvardeyskoye. It put a special stress on the studying and memorizing of the Qur'an. Thanks to this madrasah, the Crimea has obtained a few Huffaz after a long halt during the era of the Soviet rule. The graduates of the madrassah have also been participating in various international competitions for the memorizing of the Qur'an and have won prizes. Today there are eighteen regular students, who also attend secondary schools.

In October 2009, in the town of Sary Krim training courses under the Muftiyat were established to continue the traditions of Khan Uzbek, who built here one of the oldest mosques in Crimea. The Islamic Development Bank assisted its restoration. Today, it is capable to accommodate twenty five students and provide them with permanent residence. In 2010, the courses of the same type with the capability to receive twenty students were opened in the town of Saky. In 2010 too,

the courses in the town Bilohirsk were established; later they were relocated to Sovetsky village due to a throughout reconstruction of the central mosque in the city of Bilohirsk. They also can accommodate twenty students. The preparatory courses under the Spiritual Administration operate also in the mosque in the city of Sevastopol, where about twenty boys are taught.

The textbooks used in all the madrasahs under the Spiritual Board are represented by numerous books published by the Muftiyat itself in the Crimean Tatar language. If we summarize the data on the Islamic educational institutions, we can say that there are more than 300 students studying there.

The situation with the university-type Islamic education is quite different.

It should be mentioned that international cooperation, which implies the sending of students abroad for in-depth study courses, is an important element of the training of the future university-bred specialists. Since the early 1990s, Crimean students have been extensively drawn into the Turkish educational system. These are the graduates of the Crimean madrasahs, who have an opportunity to receive religious education in Turkey. Quite a few of them enter Selcuk University (Konya), Istanbul University and Marmara University (Istanbul). Until today, the Spiritual Administration has been sending the students to receive education in foreign higher spiritual educational institutions.

The universities of other countries, as Al-Azhar (Egypt), the Islamic University of Medina, Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University (Saudi Arabia), as well as higher educational institutions of Russia (the Moscow Islamic University and the Russian Islamic University) are popular among the Crimean students too. Some of them receive education in Islamic universities and institutes in Lebanon and Yemen. Although it is rather hard to estimate the number of the Crimean students studying Islamic courses in these countries, the available data indicates that there is quite a number of future theologians, lawyers and experts in the Arabic language among them.

Drawing conclusion, we can say that being a territorial unit of the Russian Federation we are positive about the preservation and

enhancing of our madrasahs functioning under the Spiritual Board. The question of the development of our own educational institutions of higher education, which would meet the needs of the Muslim Ummah of the Crimea, is relevant today.

The next logical question is about the possibility of the establishment of a state-accredited Islamic university in the Crimea. As we all know, the Moscow Islamic University has this accreditation, and Russian legislation provides this opportunity to the federal subjects. The founding of such a university in the Crimea (or, at least, an equivalent program in the governmental high schools) may contribute to the training of broader specialists with fundamental knowledge of the Islamic faith, who are at the same time aware of Russian realities. In this regard, the cooperation with the Islamic educational institutions in other regions of the Russian Federation would play a crucial role, especially in the field of academic exchanges, joint conferences and the publication of textbooks.

We, the Muslims of the Crimea and, in particular, Crimean Tatars believe that what we say by the will of Allah will come true soon!



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**THE ROLE OF THE REVIVAL
OF THEOLOGICAL LEGACY
OF THE ANCESTORS IN
RESISTING RELIGIOUS
EXTREMISM. THE
EXPERIENCE OF
UZBEKISTAN**

Dear guests, participants of the Forum, ladies and gentlemen!
I express my gratitude for the invitation to present my paper.
The weakening of traditional Islam and the growing influence of the ideas of religious radicalism. Over the period of Soviet rule in Central Asia, due to the repressive policy and stark governmental atheism,

a significant weakening of the role of a traditional model of Islam, which belongs to the most liberal and tolerant to 'religious dissidence' madhhab—the Hanafi legal school, took place. This tradition had been formed over the centuries and had been representing the synthesis of Islamic teachings and local pre-Islamic traditions.

At the beginning of the 90s, the shortage of qualified personnel among the clergy (imams, teachers, theologians, experts in Islamic studies) played the crucial role in the weakening of the positions of local Islam and stimulated the growth of radical previously uncommon in the region movements.

The process of the revival of spirituality through the import of religious ideas turned out to be rather painful: the unity of traditionalists was undermined and favorable conditions for an uncontrolled spread of different religious trends was created.

This complex growth of the ideas of religious radicalism was caused as well by ordinary Muslims' ignorance about the inner nature and humanistic ideas of Islamic religion. Despite the fact that there are significant differences between traditional Islam and religious extremist ideas, the later acquired a sufficient number of supporters among the population.

By the time various radical Islamic organizations from outside acting under the slogans of returning Muslim peoples of Central Asia 'the true' Islam had been actively penetrating the region, an ideologically and informationally lusting part of Muslim population, instead of acquiring knowledge about Islam's creative essence, got acquainted with the teachings of radicals and avidly absorbed them, including the so-called ideology of 'pure Islam' and 'Islamic caliphate'.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, an uncontrolled process of religious revival began. The construction of mosques and madrasas was placed on a broad footing in every small village and every large city neighborhood. Their numbers are hard to be estimated. If in 1989 there were only 89 mosques, their number reached more than three thousands in 1993.

Almost every mosque opened 'Qur'an courses' or some other kinds of religious schools. The total number of Islamic schools (madrassas) in

Uzbekistan in 1992 exceeded one hundred. Of these, only 20 were directly administered by the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan.

It should be noted that in many of these madrassas any educational and methodical documentation was absent. The lessons were given by people with no religious education.

The problem of limited and insufficient number of qualified religious personnel caused by a chaotic establishment of religious organizations (mosques and madrassas), an uncontrolled appointment of imams, illiteracy among the majority of clerics (often Ummah was headed by people who had little to do with religion to the least) entailed the failure of an effective religious resistance to the penetration of extremist religious ideologies.

The abovementioned factors and circumstances determined the primacy of the revival of Islamic traditions traditional for the region, disclosed in the scholarly writings of great thinkers of Mawarannahr, it also stressed the need to improve the system of Islamic education and training of qualified religious personnel.

As underlined by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov, ‘it is necessary to rise above this issues in order to help the enlightened and tolerant Islam to confront by its own means militant fanatic forces that try to dominate Islam’.

A great importance was attached to a creative essence of the traditional model of Islam to resist unconventional ideologies; it was also crucial to get things going in a large-scale explanatory work among the population, which would reveal, on the one hand, the content and nature of spiritual and moral values of Islam, and on the other—would show negative aspects of extremists’ ideology to weaken its positions.

The scientific legacy of the great thinkers of Mawarannahr. Since olden times Mawarannahr (Transoxiana) has recognized worldwide by Muslims and non-Muslims alike as being at the cutting edge of science, culture, and, in particular, the development of Islam from a theoretical point of view.

According to scholars, the Central Asian region used to be a source of two powerful outbursts of scientific and cultural rise in the 9th–12th and 14th–15th centuries. These years are rightly considered by the world’s scientific

community as the era of 'Muslim Renaissance', which had its beneficial effect on the process of Renaissance in other world's regions.

The whole world knows the names of such great scholars as Imam al-Bukhari, Imam al-Tirmidhi, Abu Hafs al-Bukhari, Abu Mansour al-Maturidi, Burhaniddin Marginani, Abu al-Layth al-Samarqandi, Abul Mu'in al-Nasafi, Abu Hafs al-Nasafi, Ubaidulla ibn Masud al-Bukhari and others who made an invaluable contribution to the development of Islamic sciences.

The Muslim world is acquainted with their works, which, according to contemporary Muslim theologians, raised the study of Islamic sciences as Tafsir, Hadith and Fiqh to the level of scholarly discipline. It should be noted that this outstanding figures of religious science opened up a new era of Islamic civilization by their scientific work and invaluable treaties.

At their time, the main cities of modern Uzbekistan such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, Margilan, Tashkent or Shakhrisabz, Termez used to be the centers of Islamic thought and Islamic education. The activities of theological groups as 'Abu Hafs al-Bukhari' in Bukhara, 'al-Iyadiya' and 'al-Djuzjaniya' in Samarkand played a particularly important role and had a great impact on the formation and evolution of Muslim theology.

During the years of independence, Uzbekistan has been carrying out a consistent and systematic work in the reconstruction and development of local Islamic values, gradual introduction into scientific circuit a rich scientific and cultural legacy of their ancestors, which had been previously considered purely religious, and in organization of an integrated study in the reconstruction and improvement of the burial places of great thinkers and saints.

A large number of international conferences and seminars has been organized in Uzbekistan dedicated to vital religious issues, as well as on the occasion of important dates for Muslims and in commemoration of Mawarannahr's world-famous Muslim theologians. A telling illustration of this is an international conference 'Historical heritage of scientists and thinkers of the medieval East, its role and importance for modern civilization' hold in May 2014 in the city of Samarkand.

Noteworthy is a powerful impetus to the in-depth researches and popularization of the priceless scientific heritage of these scientists, the disclosure of the urgency and relevancy of their scientific discoveries for modernity.

Another important religious and educational achievement is the creation of catalogues of the written heritage available in repositories, bibliographic reference books on them, as well as the implementation of projects aimed at a guaranteed preservation of this heritage, digitization of manuscripts and provision of public access to the digitized versions of ancient written sources through the Internet, translation of scientific manuscripts into the world's major languages, creation of documentaries about great thinkers and scientists in collaboration with the leading TV channels of the world, specializing in popular science and historical programs, involving to this acknowledged domestic and foreign researchers.

There are other facts indicating positive changes taking place in the religious sphere. In 2007 the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) declared Tashkent the capital of Islamic culture, which was the recognition of a consistent and systematic work in this direction.

Changes in the state policies concerning religion, as well as fundamental changes in education made it possible to solve a wide range of issues related to the improvement of the system of religious education in Uzbekistan.

In order to further educational methods and enhance the output of the learning process, structural changes were made and the improvement in the educational process was registered. The aims of professional Muslim education transformed too. New approaches to the development of educational standards and certification of scientific and pedagogical staff were worked out. It entailed emergence of new requirements to the intellectual level of religious personnel, proceeding from the need of reacting to the burning matters of our time.

The Tashkent Islamic University (TIU), which was established in 1999 on the initiative of president Islam Karimov, plays a special role in the system of measures of the revival and in-depth study of the

religious and spiritual legacy of the ancestors and the training of qualified theologian personnel.

Essentially it is a secular institution, which is at the same time inextricably tied to the education system in secondary and higher religious organizations.

The results of the research both in the country and within the university on the theological legacy of Hanafi Maturidi are implemented in the educational process of the TIU and other Islamic educational institutions of Uzbekistan enriching theoretical basis of the teaching.

Within the scope of the Program on the improvement of Islamic studies, the teaching staff of the university developed and published textbooks and manuals, such as 'Sunni teaching', 'Madhhabs and trends in Islam', 'Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh)', 'Kalam (Islamic theology)', 'The basics of Hanafi madhhab', 'Ilm al-faraid', 'The study of Islamic sources' and others.

In recent years, by the efforts of the Research Centre for Islamic Studies at the University a number of fundamental works have been conducted on the following topics: scientific analysis of the sources of Mawarannahr; formation of a correct world-view of the younger generation based on the sources of Islam and the spiritual heritage of the ancestors; disclosure of a harmful nature of religious fanaticism and its threats to our spiritual values; practical methods of strengthening ideological immunity of the youth; methods of improving the culture of religious tolerance among young people, etc.

A special role of the Tashkent Islamic University should be noted in organizing and conducting spiritual, educational and explanatory work among the various segments of the population, including young people.

In this regard, one of the most effective means of ideological education is 'Ziyo' students' studio, which prepares on a regular basis TV and radio programs under a common title 'Towards strengthening the faith' to promote humanistic, patriotic, good moral and ethical ideas. The programs are broadcasted on the central Uzbek television and radio channels.

Concluding what has been said here it should be noted that over the past 23 years of independence, Uzbekistan has gained an extensive

experience in the revival and in-depth study of the priceless religious heritage of the ancestors, in the training of professionals capable of the formation of an adequate attitude to religion and of raising awareness among different social strata about a creative essence of religion.

Thus, the revival of the religious heritage of the ancestors and strengthening of the position of Islam's traditional model are important factors in creating a solid foundation for the resisting religious extremism, ensuring religious harmony, stability and progress in society.



Dilara Solodovnic

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**THE STRATEGY OF THE
UNESCO CHAIR REGARDING
THE TRAINING OF ADVANCED
ISLAMICISTS IN THE
INSTITUTE OF ASIAN AND
AFRICAN STUDIES (IAAS,
LOMONOSOV MOSCOW STATE
UNIVERSITY)**

In September 2014, a UNESCO Chair was established in the Institute of Asian and African Studies (Lomonosov Moscow State University, MSU). The name of the Chair is 'Asian and African Studies: Modern methods of studying and teaching'. Currently [*the report was presented*

in December 2014] it initiates its work, takes its functional shape and defines its objectives of development.

The IAAS MSU has long-lasting and productive relations with more than 40 leading universities in Asia and Africa, based on international agreements, of which 24 agreements are dedicated to the projects of university education in Muslim countries.

Traditionally, the tasks of the UNESCO Chair, in our opinion, should cover: skill sharing; exchange of information and knowledge regarding the whole complex of issues in Oriental studies in cooperation with international partners; promotion of academic mobility among students and faculty staff; organization of joint conferences, seminars; establishment of common scientific and educational projects.

Today, a special importance is attached to the activity of the Chair due to the country's turn to the East, which defines the essential geopolitical components of the country's policy. Besides, right now the problem of the preservation of national identity of Russia's Muslims and their simultaneous integration into the Russian socio-cultural space is realized fully (see Crimean events, the situation in the Chechen Republic, Dagestan, hostilities in the Middle East, DAISH). Thus, the Chair can not ignore the contemporary socio-political state of affairs.

There is an analogue of UNESCO, ISESCO (Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), which includes a Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World (FUIW), a kind of analogue of the UNESCO Chair.

The Russian Islamic University (Ufa), the Russian Islamic University (Kazan) are the members of that Federation. The Russian Islamic University in Kazan has been elected to the executive committee of the FUIW.

Today the IAAS MSU is carrying out the order of the Government of the Russian Federation regarding the development of a unified concept of 'Islamic studies' program. To this end, the university is working closely with the Moscow Islamic Institute (under the Council of Muftis of Russia). This activity pursues the creation of educational programs aimed at the training of unique specialists in Islamic studies: the Islamicists who combine the knowledge and skills in Islamic

theology and secular Islamic studies, capable of establishing communication between the Spiritual Administration of Muslims and the muftiyats of the country, public authorities and socio-political and public agencies, including the media.

The IAAS MSU UNESCO Chair would like to support the intention of the Moscow Islamic Institute to join the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World (FIUW). Thus, taking this opportunity, we address Said Kamilev, Professor in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the representative of ISESCO and FIUW in Russia, who is present at the Forum today.

A cooperation agreement between the IAAS MSU UNESCO Chair and ISESCO-FUIW, represented by the Moscow Islamic Institute, would encourage a joint project on the designing of a program of international education for managers and specialists of the Spiritual Administrations of Muslims and muftiyats.

We believe that this should be a permanent system of continuous education, training and retraining of Muslim representatives. The implementation of such a project could become that 'soft power', which would greatly enhance Russia's image on the international scene. It would emphasize Russia's potential as a multi-religious country that defends its own school of Islamic studies at the international level, the school that rests upon exclusively Russian national traditions of humanism, religious tolerance and love of fellow men, the school that we would like to be respected.

The situation in the international arena is rather complex; it encourages us to develop 'complex systems' that could produce a synergistic effect. I hope that the cooperation between the IAAS MSU UNESCO Chair and FUIW ISESCO would become one of such projects in the future.



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ON THE UNPUBLISHED WRITINGS OF A THEOLOGIAN AL-SIGHNAQI

For a long time in Kazakhstan the life and work of al-Sighnaqi have remained unexplored. This is due to the fact that the works of the scientist, as well as the information about him, is written in Arabic and the manuscripts are stored in libraries around the world, while religious character of the text makes it difficult to study them. Valuable information about this outstanding personality can be found in Arabic writings relating to the period of the Middle Ages. They contain valuable unexplored material relating to teachers, students, academic environment, as well as works written by the scholar. The works on Hanafi Fiqh, in particular, a book called ‘En-Nihayah’ contains statements and inferences of

the scientist. We find the following information in the work of al-Baghdadi al-Babani entitled 'Hidaya Al-arifin' (the guidance of the knowledgeable): 'al-Hussein bin Ali Hajjaj bin Ali al-Sighnaqi Husam al-Din is an outstanding expert in Hanafi Fiqh, who lived and died in Aleppo in 711; among his works are 'al-Tasdid fi sharh al-tamhid kaua'id', 'al-Kafi sharh usul al-bazdaui', a complete interpretation of 'Al-Mufasssal' treatise on grammar by az-Zamahshari entitled 'al-Muassal', 'Al-Najah fi at-Tasrif', interpretation of the book 'Al-Hidaya' by al-Marginani intitled 'en-Nihayah', interpretation of the book 'Al-Muntahab fi usul al-madhhab' by Al-Ahsikasi entitled 'Al-Wafi'.

The information about the life of al-Sighnaqi is rather scanty, there is no precise information about the time of his birth. The data about his death differs too, historians have expressed different opinions on that. Thus, Haji Khalifa says his death is dated to 710/1310, while Al-Babani indicates that al-Sighinaqi died in the city of Aleppo in 711/1311. In other sources, the year 714/1314 is indicated as the date of the death of al-Sighnaqi. According to Ibn Taghribidi, the scientist died on the way to his homeland and was buried in Merv in the territory of modern Turkmenistan.

To date, there are no indications that al-Sighnaqi was a judge or hold any other position, or that he left behind any considerable fortune, which allegedly means that the scholar little worried about high positions and the affairs of the perishable world, all his valuable time he devoted to teaching his students and creative work. His gift and ability, as well as the whole his life, were given to achieve the only goal: taking a thorny path in search of knowledge, its dissemination and persistent and sincere service to this knowledge.

Relying on our own research, we can say that the work of al-Sighnaqi exceed nineteen volumes, each of them has several hand-written copies in libraries around the world. Given the value of the manuscripts from scientific point of view, the process of search, collection, description and study of all the manuscript's version require limitless and rather laborious work.

The works of Al-Sighnaqi

Like most of his contemporaries, Al-Sighnaqi was engaged in explanation and interpretation of other authors' works.

Today the works of al-Sighnaqi attract a great interest of the scientists in the Arab world. This is clear from the existing research; in particular, there are three Ph.D. dissertations written basing on Al-Sighnaqi's works; the first is by Ahmad Mohammed Hamoud Al-Yamani in Cairo, the second is by Fakhr ad-Din Muhammad Sayyid Kanat in the city of Medina in Saudi Arabia and the last one is by Ahmad Hassan Ahmad Nasr ad-Din in Mecca.

Al-Sighnaqi's works

1. 'Al-Wafi fi usul al-fiqh' (A detailed explanation of the basics of Fiqh). The book was prepared for publication by Dr. Ahmed Hamoud al-Yamani and was published in 2003 as a solid three-volume study bolstered by scientific commentary.

In this work al-Sighnaqi offers a detailed explanation of Husam al-Din al-Ahsikasi's (d. 644/1247) book entitled 'al-Muntakhab fi usul al-madhhab' which used to be a popular textbook on the basics of Fiqh.

2. 'An-Nihayah fi sharh al-Hidaya' (Comprehensive explanation of Al-Hidaya). The book is a thorough interpretation of a well-known work of Burkhan al-Din Ali Hussein ibn Abu Bakr ibn Abd al-Jalil al-Ferghani ar-Rishdani (511/1118–593/1196) entitled 'Al-Hidaya' (the guidance). According to the indication at the end of Al-Sighnaqi's book, the work was completed in 700/1300, at the end of the month Rabi'ul-awal. The meaning of Arabic 'al-Nihayah' is 'end, completeness', which gives a reason to assert that al-Sighnaqi, being among the firsts who interpreted 'al-Hidaya', believed that the fullness and completeness of his proposed interpretation would rid the community of scholars of writing alternative explanations for the initial book. However, composition of books dedicated to the description of 'al-Hidaya' has not stopped.

Today, there are about sixty books dedicated to the interpretation of 'al-Hidaya' treatise, the first and most famous of which is the six-volume work of al-Sighnaqi. Al-Sighnaqi's interpretation was used as a supplementary textbook to teach 'Al-Hidaya'. Jamal al-Din was able to

locate the work of al-Sighnaqi 'al-Nihayah', which as a result was entitled 'Khulasa al-Nihayah', i.e. 'the summary of al-Nihayah'.

3. 'Al-Muassal fi sharkh al-Mufassal', available in interpretation 'al-Mufassal', is a three-volume work interpreting al-Zamakhshari's treatise on grammar. The famous work of Abu al-Qasim ibn Omar Mahmoud al-Zamakhshari (d. 1075–1143) entitled 'Al-Mufassal fi sun'a al-i'rab', shortened as 'al-Mufassal', is dedicated to Arabic grammar and was an object of as-Sighnaqi's interest. This interpretation is his third most popular work after 'al-Wafi' and 'en-Nihayah'. Researches on this work have been conducted at the University of Umm Al-Qura in Mecca, where a doctoral dissertation was written on the subject.

4. 'Al-Kafi sharkh al-Bazdawi' (comprehensive interpretation of Bazdawi) is a detailed explanation of a book of Imam Fakhr al-Islam Abu al-Yasser Ali bin Mohammed al-Bazdawi (400/1010–482/1089) 'Kanz al-Wusul ila Ma'rifat al-Usul (the treasure of the knowledge of the bases of Fiqh). According to the instructions of al-Sighnaqi, he finished the interpretation of the abovementioned book in 704/1304 at the end of the month Jumadal-Ula. This voluminous work was published in 2001 in the Saudi capital Riyadh in five volumes.

5. 'Al-Najah at-tali talu al-marah' is dedicated to the morphology of Arabic language.

6. 'At-Tasdid fi sharkh at-tamhid fi qau'id at-tawhid' (an excellent interpretation of the book 'Introduction to Tawhid') is an explanatory work to the book in the field of aqidah by an outstanding scholar of Mawarannahr Abu al-Mu'in Maymun Mohammed Al-Nasafi Makhuli. According to the author of the book 'al-Jauahir al-Muddiyah' Abu al-Wafa al-Qurashi', he possessed the original copy of this one-volume bulk work, 'Al-Tasdid'. The interpretation of Al-Sighnaqi was based on a verbal source. According to Ibn Taghribirdi, 'al-Tasdid' was verbally transferred to Sighnaqi from imam Hafiz al-Din, who in turn had heard it from Abu Bakr, the author of the book 'Al-Hidaya'. From him the chain of transmitters goes as the following: Diya al-Din imam Mohammed bin Hussein al-Huseini, Ala al-Din Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Samarkandi, imam Sayf al-Din Abu Hadi Maymun bin Mohammad al-Makhuli. Maymun bin Mohammad bin Sayid bin Mohammad bin Makhul bin al-Muin al-Nasafi, better known as

al-Makhuli, was a prominent Central Asian scholar and the author of several works in Kalam, who died in 508 Hijra, i.e. in the year 1115 AD aged 70. In Central Asia the works of Al-Nasafi were spread as Maturidi Kalam.

7. «Kitab al-muhtasar». Information about the existence of this work, which incorporates in brief the issues of Arabic morphology, we find in the preface to the abovementioned work as-Sighnaqi 'Al-Najah'. Other information about it is lost.

The works mentioned above are reflected in sources and studies as assuredly belonging to the authorship of al-Sighnaqi. Thus, of the seven works, that we can reliably assign to al-Sighnaqi, six survived to this day. Five of them are interpretations, and two of them have a special meaning. Classifying these works, we see that one book is on Fiqh, two are on Usul al-Fiqh, one is on Kalam and three are on grammar. Three of the works of al-Sighnaqi are the subjects of doctoral dissertations. At the same time, there some other books attributed to al-Sighnaqi.

Thus, a cursory examination of the works of al-Sighnaqi gives us to understand that Islamic studies in medieval Kazakhstan were at a high level. Being born on Kazakh lands, al-Sighnaqi is one of the greatest medieval educators, whose legacy is inexhaustible. He is rightly considered a unique personality almost ranked with Abu Nasr al-Farabi. The works of al-Sighnaqi reflect his ability to use a large number of sources, to transcend profoundly the materials used and to refer to his predecessors, which indicates his open-mindedness and a high level of scientific culture. Mastering his voluminous works, analyzed by experts in Arabic language, will require a long time and laborious work to embrace them fully. We believe that in the future every work of this scholar will be examined thoroughly and described at scientific level. At the same time, no less important is the study of al-Sighnaqi's work not only individually, but within a comparative analysis, considering scientific and religious processes, Hanafi scientific tradition and the works of other outstanding scholars. Translation of al-Sighnaqi's works from Arabic is among the priority tasks on the agenda, it can further be used in the teaching of Fiqh, the fundamentals of Fiqh, aqidah, Arabic grammar and other disciplines.

Currently observed rapid development of religious consciousness in Kazakhstan requires a competent approach in issuing Sharia-based

fatwas on controversial topics. Borders' opening since independence entailed the development of non-traditional religious processes that, in their turn, have led to all sorts of misunderstanding in the matters of Islamic faith. Of course, in order to give a full and reasoned answer to the questions ripe in the spiritual space by today, the specialists are required to take the question of the tradition of Islamic studies in Kazakhstan seriously. This can be acquired through a thorough and comprehensive study of the heritage of local scholars, as al-Sighnaqi. It is important to note that his works have both practical and theoretical value and are included in the list of scientific literature as an important source in the study of the Hanafi school of Fiqh and Maturidism study in Kazakhstan.

It should be noted that al-Sighnaqi's work 'At-Tasdid fi sharh at-tamhid fi qau'id at-tawhid' has not been specifically studied, except for some brief examinations in other studies and researches. It has not been published and is stored in manuscripts. Reviewing the manuscript of this book, in particular its introduction, we find the author's indication that he embarked on its writing upon the completion of his book 'Al-Kafi sharh al-bazdawi', which is known to be completed on Thursday 18 Jumada Al-ula in 704/1304.

Abu al-Muin al-Nasafi (437/1047–508/1115), for whose work was written al-Sighnaqi's 'Al-Tasdid' interpretation, was a prominent representative of Maturidi doctrine. He largely dealt with the study of Kalam and was a known Mutakallim, i.e. the scholar of Kalam /5/. Along with his famous works on Kalam, al-Nasafi is renowned for his works on Tafsir and Fiqh.

Al-Sighnaki's works are characterized by a high validity of arguments and reveal an utter inconsistency of his opponents. Each chapter pursues a specific aim, separate chapters are allotted to each question, where it is considered comprehensively and followed by a passage to the next question. There is a coherent logical connection between each chapters, from the first to the last. Each chapter begins with an abstract on the aim and problematic of the issue concerned. Thus, the author indicates in the beginning of the chapter "The evidence of the impermissibility of assimilation (at-tashbih)" that this chapter follows the previous one, where he convincingly argued for the impermissibility of Allah's visual categorization and against the views of some heretical wayward

teachings. That chapter, in its turn, he begins with an undeniable proof in favor of the disapproval of the likening of the Creator to its creatures. Let us quote some of al-Sighnaqi's statements:

'As we have shown earlier, Allah Almighty is eternal, and all except him emerged out of nothing, i.e. was created. Therefore, there can be no likeness between the creator and the created. The creator does not experience what the creation experiences, he needs no body and he is not similar to anything, he cannot be assimilated with anyone or anything. If you liken him to anyone or anything, you would designate his form and liken it to its creation. But Allah Almighty is not like anyone of his creations and exempt from the flaws of the creation.'

Then the author points to two groups of people whose views are contrary to this position:

'The first of them runs to extremes describing the Almighty Allah, ascribing to him a body and organs of a man. These are Rafidites as Hisham al-Hakam, Hisham bin Salim al-Jauakli and Dawoud al-Jazzazi, but Allah will curse them! Allah is exempt from what they attribute to him! The second group runs to another extreme, namely, they deny any attributes of Allah out of the fear of likening; for example deny that the Almighty Allah is alive, aware, powerful, hearing and seeing.

As for the companions of the prophet and his followers, they adhere to the middle path, denying the positions of the two groups and treating their words like 'the greatest evil and the lowest degree of debauchery'.

Above we have given some information about the teaching of Rafidites, Hisham ibn Salim al-Jauakli and his follower Abu Walid Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Hakam. In this chapter we would take a closer look at Jahm ibn Safwan. The author of 'Milal and nihal' Abu Ja'far al-Sujzi (may Allah be pleased with him) would complement the information about him. He said that 'Mushabbihah' is a group who joined their predecessors 'Murji'ites', as for Jahm aka Jahm bin Safwan he is one of real 'Jabarite'. This group originates in Termez, while he was born in Balkh and died in Umayyad era in the city of Merv being murdered by Salim bin Ajuaza al-Mazi'.

To sum up, we can say with confidence that al-Sighnaqi's work entitled 'al-Tasdid' is a valuable source in the study of the teachings of the Maturidi school of Kalam.



Mufti Romas (Ramazan) Jakubauskas

*Mufti Romas (Ramazan) Jakubauskas,
Chairman of the Religious Board of Muslims
of Lithuania*

Peace be upon you, mercy of Allah and His blessings!

At the outset, I would like to thank the Organizing Committee of the Forum for inviting me. I am glad that from year to year the Muslim International Forum becomes more representative at the international level. It discusses the problems of the Muslim Ummah not only in Russia and the CIS, but throughout the world. I hope that the participants will not only discuss problems but will also solve them, will put Muslims to the right path.

Today many of my teachers have spoken here. The history of our land has been touched upon. I would like to talk about the problems that exist in the Muslim community of Lithuania. Our headships are a bit different from yours in Russia, but they have much in common and therefore it is very important for us to learn from you. It is also important for you to know about our situation. We are Tatars, we are connected with the Tatar world, linked by a common culture and language.

We have freedom of religion in Lithuania. Islam is recognized as one of the nine official confessions. The number of Muslims is rather small: officially we are three thousand, while in fact we number about ten thousand people. We are given all the opportunities for development, but due to our small number, we can not make use of them, we

can not embrace them. I wish large nations, countries with a larger Muslim population, paid more attention at us. If a particular community is small in numbers and all is safe and sound, it does not mean that one should forget about it. Our main problem is that we are scattered, we are assimilated and 'dissolved'. Over the fifty years that we had spent in the Soviet Union, when all the nationalities were attempted to be turned into a 'single nation', we lost pretty much.

I appeal to you and ask you not to forget us. Global conferences dedicated to Muslim minorities do not even remember us. I do not wish Muslim minorities to be remembered by their brothers in faith only when the formers are hurt. We have our own history of Islam, which must be preserved, we have our own mosques, which must be restored. Is not this history universal? I wish this assistance to exist and grow. We are not saying that this should be a multi-million dollar assistance, but we would like not to be forgotten and the ties to be stronger.

I would also like to mention education. I have an opinion on this issue. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that the acquiring of knowledge is the duty of every Muslim. I myself once went abroad to study. I noticed that there is basically no practical training in many Islamic universities. They give a lot of theoretical knowledge, a lot of theory, even those things that no longer exist in everyday life. This is a problem. There are situations when an imam goes to study in Arab countries, learns and comes back, and here a man dies, and the imam does not know what to do with it. Or, when it is necessary to hold a Nikah ceremony, he does not know what prayer to shall be said. That is, he has not been given any practical skills. There should be practice. We need to 'lead by hand' each shakird (madrassah student) and show how it is done, so that he upon his return could be able to reproduce what he has been taught. Unfortunately, there is such a problem now.

There is also an issue of an insufficient training of foreign languages in Islamic universities. I want to say from my country's position. Our country is small, there is a small number of people, the language is 'small' (used only in our country), and since childhood we have to study different languages. I myself grew up with three languages. This is very good, because it makes the study of other languages easier. I do not want to brag,

but those five languages that I speak open up many doors. This is very important, and especially it is important for the cause of Dawa.

We lack imams and imams from Turkey come to us, and even with them I have a difficulty of communication, because they do not speak any language except Turkish. There are imams coming from other countries, and it is impossible to deal with them. This is a big problem. Imams hold prayers, everything is good, but communication with them is complicated without language skills.

I believe that each Islamic university should teach one or another Western foreign language, and, along with Arabic, additional languages of the Muslim world, Turkish, Bosnian — any Islamic university, be that in Makhachkala or in Ufa, for example. This should not be a very superficial knowledge, but such a knowledge that would enable a person to talk about Islam, to give explanations.

Many universities are established that are designated as ‘state universities’, where theologians exist as if they were a special ‘race’, they are only engaged in theology. As a result, even conversing with them can be hard, people do not find a common language with them. An imam should be with people, but people sometimes are afraid even to approach them. And this is also a problem. There should be more specializations in Islamic universities: engineering, medicine, etc. combining with the Islamic studies. Because well-known scholars in the old days used to specialize not only in religious subjects, they had other knowledge. For example, if one comes complaining about an ailment, it would be very good if he addresses a doctor who knows the medicine of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and religious knowledge. Thus, he could solve the medical issue and give spiritual guidance.

Why is there a big gap between theologians or between older (elderly) people and children? Time flies. Everything is quickly renewed. Even children are playing with phones, while our imams do not have any understanding of it. Therefore, it is crucial to develop different areas of education so that the scholars have not only spiritual, but also a secular education. Let us not confuse the terms ‘secular’ and ‘atheistic’ — these are not the same. There also should be Islamic engineering, medical education, and so on. It would be a great support.



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INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS A FACTOR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY

Kazakhstan has become an example of interfaith harmony for the whole world. The centuries-old experience of peaceful coexistence of Islam and Christianity, Orthodox Christianity primarily, is an evidence of the brotherhood of the Kazakhs, Russians and other peoples of our republic. Every religion in its own language offers people universal values, strengthens norms of behavior in society and acts as a custodian of the centuries-old spiritual values of nations.

Today, Kazakhstan undoubtedly is a leader in the promotion of the ideas of religious tolerance. Kazakhstan's experience of inter-religious dialogue receives recognition and support of religious leaders across the world.

The republic shows in practice that peoples' and religions' accord is achievable. Owing to the policy of the president Nursultan Nazarbayev, the state has succeeded in building its own model of a peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups and religions.

Muslims and Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Protestants, Buddhists and Jews,—all treat each other with respect, for every person has the right to choose his religious stance without infringing upon the rights of other citizens.

Islam does not compel anyone to be converted or to accept its teaching. The Qur'an just exhorts that non-acceptance of Islam leads to torment not in this world, but in the world to be, where a person would be held accountable before God.

And the Day those who disbelieved are exposed to the Fire [it will be said], 'Is this not the truth?' They will say, 'Yes, by our Lord'. He will say, 'Then taste the punishment because you used to disbelieve'. So be patient, [O Muhammad], as were those of determination among the messengers and do not be impatient for them. It will be—on the Day they see that which they are promised—as though they had not remained [in the world] except an hour of a day. [This is] notification. And will [any] be destroyed except the defiantly disobedient people? (Qur'an 46:34–35).

Let us cite some verses about the inadmissibility of a forced conversion into Islam.

No compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong (Qur'an 2:256).

The interpreters of Qur'an say regarding this verse that the children of some Christians who converted to Islam refused to adopt the religion of their fathers. The latter, being desperate of the attempts of conversion by peace, complained to Muhammad asking him to force the children into Islam through his own mechanisms of power. Then the abovementioned verse was revealed as a prohibition of coercion.

And say, 'The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills—let him believe; and whoever wills—let him disbelieve' (Qur'an 18:29).

Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful (Qur'an 76:3).

In these two verses the Almighty firstly points to the main purpose of the Creation, i.e. this is a guidance for mankind to the straight path. Secondly, He reminds that this instruction is non-obligatory; everyone is free to choose one of the two paths in this world: belief or disbelief.

But if they turn away, [O Muhammad]—then only upon you is [responsibility for] clear notification (Qur'an 16:82).

... and you are not over them a tyrant (Qur'an 50:45).

These verses indicate that the duty of the Prophet (PBUH) is conveying the message of God to people and stress that faith should be based on freedom and consciousness, and that the use of force would not help. Such is the teaching of all God's messengers. For example, Prophet Nuh (Noah, may Allah be pleased with him) said the following referring to his people:

O my people have you considered: if I should be upon clear evidence from my Lord while He has given me mercy from Himself but it has been made unapparent to you, should we force it upon you while you are averse to it? (Qur'an 11:28).

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted (Qur'an 49:13).

This verse of the Qur'an deals with a very important issue. One aspect of it is, of course, that God created us 'different'—the idea is emphasized in the following verse:

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge (Qur'an 30:22).

Another aspect of the divine wisdom is the meaning of this unlikeness, which is revealed in the message to humankind 'to know each other'. The path leading to it is a dialogue. That is why Islam positively encourages dialogue and lays its foundation, considering it a part of the Islamic faith.

The appeal 'to know each other' addressed to all the people in the world is crucial, for it is a call for dialogue at the collective level; though

unfortunately today's world lacks the understanding of this concept, and individualism prevails over human relations. Dialogue—or 'communication' in other words—is highly valued in Islam. If you find a wise and a proper approach to it, it can become a cornerstone of such a fair world order that is desired by all the people of good will today.

Islam recognizes the differences between people on the ground of their ethnicity, skin color, it also recognizes cultural differences and traditions; yet it reminds us that all of us are the members of one large human family. As the Holy Qur'an says:

And mankind was not but one community [united in religion], but [then] they differed (Qur'an 10:19).

Islam pays great attention to the essentiality of humankind's unity. The Qur'an does not permit ambiguous interpretations: the existing differences—whatever they are—do not deny our belonging to a common human family, whose creator is the only Creator. Our unity is based on our differences, reflecting the greatness of Almighty Allah, and not on our similarities. To accept the differences between people means to accept the diversity created by God, and it is one of the attributes of faith.

There were established rules in Medina's community of the Prophet's (PBUH) time, which were governing the relationship between Muslims and the People of the Book. The Charter of Medina allowed people to keep their religious beliefs and guaranteed their protection, irrespective of those beliefs. The community of Medina was based on the principle of conveying the Message of God through the acknowledgement of differences, rather than through their elimination.

Moreover, when the Prophet (PBUH) was negotiating with the Christians of a Yemeni village Najran, he extended hospitality and received them at his home in Medina. This was an example of the first Muslim-Christian dialogue in the history of mankind. The Prophet (PBUH) did not debate about religious topics, but, according to a reliable source, when it was the time of the Christians' prayer, he did not consider it wrong to invite them to perform their religious rituals. In Islam, faith settles in the heart of a man by his free choice. In the verse 'There is no compulsion in religion' the word 'no' means 'impossible'.

People can not be forced into a faith, since it is impossible to make them believe under coercion.

One of the ways to achieve mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence between the people of different faiths and doctrines in society is through the maintenance of a reasonable dialogue. Islam since its inception have been drawing attention to this aspect, it required from the Prophet (PBUH) to disseminate the knowledge about Islam on the principle of rational dialogue. The Qur'an attaches a great importance to this aspect, mentioning the word 'dialogue' immediately after the word 'Allah'. The Holy Qur'an obliges the Prophet (PBUH) to present Islam to non-Muslims and Muslims proceeding from the principle of rational dialogue, wisdom and noble discussion.

Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. (Qur'an 16:125).

This verse is a strategy of proselytizing in Islam (Da'wah), based on wisdom, exhortation and an optimal debate; it reminds the Prophet (PBUH) not to deviate from this path while conducting a dispute with other religions' representatives. The interpreters of the Qur'an define the concept of 'best argument' as a dialogue based on tolerance and respect. Of course, opening the gates of dialogue with other religions, Islam seeks to prove its truth to make the followers of other religions enter consciously the righteous path. However, Islam does not adhere to the principle of 'all or nothing' and does not support the closure of the gates if the result is not achieved.

This verse also requires from the Prophet (PBUH) to pay attention of the followers of the divine religions during their conversation at such common features of Muslims and the people of the Book as the principle of monotheism and the faith in the holy scriptures to lay the foundation of mutual understanding between the adherents of these religions.

Let us have a look at the dialogue of the Prophet (PBUH) with Christians. As we know, when the first verses were revealed to Prophet (PBUH), a large number of Christians were living in Mecca, among whom was an outstanding Christian scholar Waraka Nawfal. Remember that when the first Qur'anic verses were revealed, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) firstly addressed the Christian scholar. And the scholar

told that Muhammad (PBUH) bore the seal of the prophethood, he said, 'you are to be a prophet'.

Thus, the dialogue between Islam and Christianity was launched at the dawn of the first revelation of Qur'anic verses.

We can say that in Islam all people make up a single bouquet of mankind. They are the children of one father, Adam (PBUH), and therefore make a single family. Arabs have no advantage over non-Arabs and non-Arabs have no superiority over Arabs. The most righteous is the most honored.

The Prophet emphasized,

'O Mankind! Surely Allah has removed the pride and conceit that existed within you during the days of Ignorance in relation to your fore-fathers that God removed from people the shame of ignorance and pride of origin... Certainly mankind is of two types: the true believer who has piety and nobility to Allah; and the sinner, who is lost and despicable in the sight of Allah'.

Typical among his teachings was an advice he gave Abu Dhar, saying that he is not above or better than anyone, if only he do not surpass them in virtue.

Typical is also a statement that the Prophet (PBUH) repeated daily in the face of the Creator during the late night prayers, *'I bear witness that all men are brothers'.*

He severely condemned all that leads to the division of humanity into groups and movements. He said:

He is not of us if he calls to asabiyyah [tribalism], and he is not one of us if he fights for the sake of asabiyyah, and not one of us if he dies on asabiyyah.

Once on the battlefield a Muhajir hit an Ansar, and the Ansar cried, 'O Ansars!', and the Muhajir cried, 'O Muhajirs!' The Prophet (PBUH) immediately stopped them, saying 'Stop these petty appeals, they are disgusting'.

It should also be noted that the Holy Qur'an calls upon the following:

And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided (Qur'an 3:103).

It does not say 'do not be different', since differences do not prevent us from 'holding firmly to the rope of Allah'.

A continuous, open and enlightened dialogue in the multiethnic and multireligious world is increasingly becoming a cardinal principle of human understanding, mutual respect and cooperation between nations and peoples. Dialogue requires at least two sides, otherwise it would merely mean a conversation with one's own self and would lose its value. Thus, the first prerequisite of the dialogue is the recognition of differences and pluralism. This recognition is among the basic principles of Islamic jurisprudence.

That is why Kazakhstan holds the congresses of the world's religions leaders. There religious establishment of different countries and peoples' representatives confirm their aspiration to form a single civilization, based on the common values of tolerance and freedom, to the dialogue between different cultures and religions.

The model of cooperation between the government and religious organizations in our country is based on the democratic principles of respect for human rights, the balance of public and religious interests, partnership and aspiration towards mutual understanding. We can name three basic principles of the state policy concerning religious freedoms. These are neutrality, tolerance and parity. The dominant role is given to the principle of the state's neutrality, including its non-interference in the internal affairs of religious associations.

The principle of tolerance means respect for religious beliefs. The principle of parity stipulates equality before the law for all religious groups and representatives of different faiths. Therefore, any religious group calling for violence, an overthrow of the constitutional system, the change of power or some other kind of transgression should not operate freely.

Kazakhstan is a good example of how representatives of different faiths live in peace and harmony. This diversity indicates that the state treats the freedom of religion with respects, maintaining the atmosphere of tolerance in society. Being a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic state, the republic will continue to use humanitarian and moral potential of world and traditional religions and support interfaith harmony and the dialogue of religious leaders. It should be noted in this regard that in May 2012 Astana hosted the 4th Congress of Leaders

of World and Traditional Religions, and its main topic was ‘Peace and harmony as the choice of mankind’.

Purposeful government policy is the determinant of stability and the tolerance of the spiritual aspects of life in Kazakh society, as well as the revival of religious consciousness and religious identity of the population, which have become evident after the republic gained independence. Citizens’ increased interest in religion is increasingly perceived as a part of a comprehensive process of ethno-cultural self-identification, manifested in the return to the religious origins of ethnicity, the revival of ethnic identity, culture and traditions. The population of Kazakhstan has never been prone to religious fanaticism, rather, it is characterized by religious and interfaith tolerance.

True religion encourages believers to do good, prohibits infliction of harm, forms an active and uncompromising stance towards religious extremism, which is confirmed by the Holy Qur’an and the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). For example, there is a verse of the Qur’an:

Thus We have made you a Wasat (just) nation [i.e. adhering to the middle way] (Qur’an 2:143).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in turn, said: ‘Truly, religion is relief. Do not argue about religion, otherwise, you will be tired and you will grow cold to it. So direct people to the right path, bring them closer and gladden them’.

Islam is a religion of peace. This is reflected in the root of the word of this great concept ‘Salam’, i.e. peace and tranquility. To an even greater degree, the aspiration of Islam towards peace is reflected in its innermost essence of a religion belonging not of a single kin, tribe or nation, but a religion sent down by the Creator to all people for the sake of their unity and brotherhood, to make them know and love each other.

Since the inception of Islam, the sacred duty of its followers was the maintaining of high humanitarian ideals determined by the Creator: to be the heralds of true enlightenment, real freedom and universal mercy.

Today we can say without exaggeration that the model of relations between the state and religious communities established in Kazakhstan,

which is built on the democratic principles of respect for human rights and freedoms, the balance of public and religious interests, partnership and strive for mutual understanding, is the result of a purposeful policy of our head of the state Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The evidence of this is a successful organization on the initiative of the President in Astana of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. Kazakhstan was chosen as an arena for such an important event because of the world community's trust to our country. That is an indication of a qualitatively new stage in the spiritual life of our society. By and large, inter-religious harmony, coupled with political and ethnic stability, allows Kazakhstan to assume a responsible role of peacemaker, as it happened many times in the recent history of the country.



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**THE PROMOTION OF ISLAM-
IC DISCIPLINES IN THE ED-
UCATIONAL PROCESS OF
LOBACHEVSKY STATE UNI-
VERSITY OF NIZHNY NOVGO-
ROD: INTEGRATED COMMU-
NICATION IN THE LIGHT OF
REFORMIST IDEAS OF HUSAYN
FAIZHANOV AND ISMAIL
GASPRINSKY**

At the turn of the century, it is urgent to address the issues of religion, its mission and the responsibility of its followers in the face of modernity, including the system of education. The educational system gives us a unique opportunity to influence more or less accurately the process of the formation of essential moral guidelines for the youth. Besides, educational environment itself is a multicultural space, for every educational space is a blend of diverse cultures. The trends of the development of multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Russian society necessitate the optimization of the methods and technologies of training at all levels, which pursues the enhancement of the results of educational process. But innovations do not emerge out of nowhere: they are the fruit of a cumulated experience, a set of traditions, past and present practices, which, being connected, shape a new stratum: innovative approaches, methods and technologies.

Thus, speaking of the modern system of Islamic education and Islam-oriented studies, it can be argued that they involve on the one hand the educational traditions of the Islamic world and, in particular, of the Russian Islamic education, and on the other — new approaches.

By the same token, the current situation in our country reveals similar to some extent and sometimes even ‘mirror’ process of the shifting of the attitudes dominating the sphere of education. Today, at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries we, same as at the dawn of the 20th century, are talking about a process of integration in education system.

Referring to the traditions of Islamic education in Russia, we are talking in the first place about a Tatar phenomenon — the teaching of a scholar Husain Faizkhanov and his followers, who laid the foundation of the principles of Islamic reformism, i.e. Jadidism (‘Usul Jaddida’ in Arabic, i.e. ‘new methods’). Ismail Gasprinsky is considered the father of this new method, a highly educated and broad-minded man. He found the supporters, who were not only developing and spreading the ideas of the new educational methods, but also were translating them into practice. However, the groundwork for a new education system had been carried out much earlier. A man, who was a forerunner of Jadidism (a movement originated as the struggle for the renewal of the education system and then further engulfed other aspects of the

life of the Tatars) was our compatriot, Husain Faizkhanov. Being an educator, Faizkhanov believed that Muslims would be able to achieve the recovery of sciences only through establishing a madrasah (secondary school) of a new type. In order to achieve in practice the goal of enlightenment, in 1862–1863 Faizkhanov developed his concept of a ‘school reform’, *Islah al-Madaris*, which remained unpublished, but in fact became in the late nineteenth century a prototype of the Tatar madrasahs, which adopted these new methods. The ideas of Faizkhanov reverberated in Kazan and Saint Petersburg, although there was a number of opponents of the new madrasahs.

Not only Faizkhanov, but also his teacher Shigabutdin Marjani were harshly criticized by conservative clerics. As for Marjani, he supported the initiative of Faizkhanov implemented the new methods it while teaching in his madrasah. He attached to this concept the same importance as his pupil, which implied the use of the new methods, borrowing of modern European science and the development of a broad secular education. Enlighteners Faizkhanov, Marjani and Qayum Nasiri were the forerunners of Jadidism.

Jadidist reformers who took over the business of Tatar enlightenment at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, Ismail Gasprinsky (1851–1914) Rizaiddin Fakhretdinov (1858–1936), Musa Bigiyev (1875–1949), Galimzyan Baroudi (1857–1921), Rashid Ibrahimov (1857–1944), Ziauddin Kamali (1873–1942), Zakir Kadiri (1877–1955) and others, played the historical role in promoting the reformists’ ideas in education and religious life. All of them had a religious education and, in accordance with their basic occupation, they were mullahs — spiritual guides of Muslims. Despite the originality of their work, these educators and reformers did not encroach on the essential aspects of Islam and dealt with the problems of education through the categories adopted by Islam.

Thus, promoting the reformist ideas in education, Husain Faizkhanov, Shigabutdin Marjani, Ismail Gasprinsky and their followers among Jadidists integrated the new method with the Qadimist education, they introduced the teaching of European sciences into religious education pursuing the development of a broad secular education.

We believe that now we are witnessing a ‘mirror’ process of integration if compared to the educational process of the 19th-20th centuries. Now, to the contrary, secular society and secular education pursuing the strengthening of morality among the younger generation is ready to integrate and provide spiritual reinforcement of secular education, linking it with the basics of religious ethics and education. Thus, we can say that the needs and demands of today’s society also require new approaches in education, socially oriented communication technologies and innovative methods in order to meet the challenges of the time. The competency-based approach is increasingly used as such a methodology supported by the theory of cognitive dissonance (Leon Festinger proposed in 1957). Its key concept is ‘core competencies’, which are the integral characteristics of the quality of learning and education and, therefore, they can be introduced and used in the programs and curricula of universities as rigidly defined objectives of the education system.

In today’s secular society, we can use integrated communications in education in order to promote the values of Islamic civilization, while sticking to Russian legislation. Educational capabilities of Islam in Russia have a broad range of opportunities while promoted among the youth, both Muslim and non-Muslim, on the basis of Russian laws, primarily the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Federation Law ‘On Education’ (1992) with the amendments, the Federal Law № 125-FZ ‘On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations’ dated 26 September 1997 (amended on 26 March, 2000, 21 March, 25 July, 2002, 8 December, 2003, 29 June, 2004, 6 July 2006), etc.

At present, unfortunately, we observe in the field of Islamic education, firstly, an acute shortage of qualified personnel and, secondly, a lack of public municipal employees, professionally engaged in ethnic and confessional issues and capable of analyzing this type of problems in the different parts of the country in order to prevent and resolve the conflicts emerging across the geographic spectrum and to promote the dialogue of cultures and religions.

This is one of the main reasons behind the close attention of the authorities to the development of a higher education involving ethnic

and religious specifics. Thus, addressing the issue of an integrated study of Islam, including the problems of education and the prospects of the research in Islamic studies, is rather urgent today.

In this context, we would like to consider the different levels of the Islam-oriented integrated communications in the educational process of the Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod (UNN), in particular the training courses in the Institute of International Relations and World History (IMOMI UNN).

Firstly, let us specifically mention among the university educational programs a 'Comprehensive program on the development of the sphere of religious education' (2005–2015) approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Russian Federation on 15 November 2005 for the training of the advanced specialists in the history and culture of Islam. Secondly, these are the training courses provided by the Federal state educational standards. Thirdly, these are the training courses for schoolteachers 'The fundamentals of religious culture and secular ethics' and extension courses for religious leaders. The fourth level is an optional 'Program of Islamic Studies' in the IMOMI UNN, which marked its 15th anniversary in 2014.

Next we will provide a detailed analysis of the UNN's experience in using the potential of Islam on the basis of integrated communications in the educational process of the university aimed at the advancement of Islamic problematics in the multicultural space of the Nizhny Novgorod region.

A large-scale project pursuing the creation of a system of Muslim religious education and the training of Islam-oriented specialists was launched across the country in 2007. An action plan developed by the Ministry of Education to provide the training of advanced Islamicists has been practically applied in a number of top universities of Russia, including the UNN.

It should be noted that owing to the 'Comprehensive program on the development of the sphere of religious education' (2005–2015, referred to as the 'Presidential program'), the UNN has accumulated an innovative experience in the creation of the conditions to form a continuous multi-level system of the training of highly skilled personnel.

In our particular case of the IMOMI UNN, this is the training of ethnic- and religion-oriented secular experts in political science with an in-depth knowledge of the history and culture of Islam. Both Muslim and non-Muslims students participate in the program.

This experience, in turn, has contributed to the further promotion of innovative methods in the education system of the religion-oriented training, including Islam-oriented programs.

Russia required new professionals not only among university graduates, but also among those who have many years of the experience in religious activities behind them, the experience of dealing with people, the experience of public performances before a large audience. Imams of congregations are aware about their spiritual and social responsibility to their congregations and understand the need to follow the dictates of the time regarding innovative education. Working knowledge of information technologies expands communicational opportunities from tens to millions of communicants. Rapidity, wideness and great quantity of the audience, boundless geographical coverage and relative cheapness are particularly noticeable in the information space, as well as in public and educational spheres. As examples, we can cite remote learning in educational process, the electronic media, availability feedback from the audience on the Internet, etc.

The success of religious leaders is not just about preaching to the followers of Islam and the work within the Spiritual Administrations of Muslims, it is also about their ability to interact with both the federal and regional executive and legislative authorities. They should be capable of representing themselves in educational institutions of different levels and types, in non-state Islamic universities and research institutes, as well as in secular organizations. They should be able to interact with representatives of other traditional religions of Russia, including in the sphere of education, they should motivate the citizens of Russia to be tolerant proceeding from the ideas of the equality of national cultures and religions, they should be able encourage the prevention of discrimination, extremism and xenophobia.

The Faculty of International Relations of the UNN, known today as the Institute of International Relations and World History

(IMOMI UNN), is one of the main designers of the teaching materials for the training courses for the heads of Muslim religious and youth organizations.

Thus, in November 2012, the institute organized in the framework of Faizkhanov readings the 9th annual international educational conference entitled ‘Burning issues of the development of ethnic and religious diversity in the Muslim community. Husain Faizkhanov and the Russian tradition of imams’ education’. This is a prime example of an innovative approach to the issue of religious education in general and of Islamic education in particular.

It was unimaginable in the Soviet period that a secular educational organization and one of the top state’s universities — Lobachevski Nizhny Novgorod State University — could hold a conference on Islamic problematics, could systematically organize training courses for the leaders of Muslim congregations and that the government can give a task to the teaching staff of the university to organize and provide Islam-oriented educational process. Among the training courses, for example, are ‘The methods of training of the personnel with in-depth knowledge of the history and culture of Islam to work with religious organizations’, ‘The methods of training of the personnel with in-depth knowledge of the history and culture of Islam to work with youth organizations’, ‘The methods and technics of organizational governance in a multicultural environment’.

In 2012, forty five heads of Muslim congregations representing religious organization of the Republic of Karelia, Stavropol Territory; Arkhangelsk region, Volgograd region, Ivanovo region, Moscow region, Orenburg region, Samara region, Sverdlovsk region, Nizhny Novgorod region, Tver region, Chelyabinsk region, Yaroslavl region and the cities of Vologda, Voronezh, Lipetsk, Moscow, Orel, Penza, Ryazan, Sochi, Tula, and others successfully completed the training courses and were awarded the certificates.

The imams were provided with innovative educational materials during the training courses, a presentation hall and classrooms equipped with modern multimedia equipment, computers, Internet. The teachers of the IMOMI UNN prepared CDs for the attendants

containing the presentations of the programs of the secular partner-university.

We believe that other training courses of the Federal state educational standards organized by the IMOMI UNN also contribute to the shaping of the values, which direct interfaith dialogue, and to the enlightenment of the youth in the issues of Islam. These are such courses as 'Ethnic and confessional communication in the political process of modern Russia' or 'NGOs in modern communications', which analyze the activity of national and religious organizations, including the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Nizhny Novgorod Region, the World Tatar Congress. These are the real examples of positive interaction in the framework of ethno-religious communications.

The courses 'The tools of verbal communication' and 'Social communication' consider the question of Islam-oriented integrated communications in the analysis of intercultural communication, the relationship between the people of different nationalities and religions of the Nizhny Novgorod region, the role of social institutions and social groups in the ethno-confessional community of Russia, the Volga Federal District and Nizhny Novgorod region.

The teaching of 'Culture and religion' within the cluster of Cultural Studies uses interactive methods. The student of International relations, Politics, Advertising and Public Relations and International tourism get acquainted with Islamic concepts and the ideas of Islamic civilization and analyze intercultural communication through the work in small groups.

The student show a great professional interest in the visiting classes in the Nizhny Novgorod Cathedral Mosque, the Annunciation Monastery, the Nizhny Novgorod Theological Seminary and the synagogue. There are also programs dedicated to the study of Islam within the core subjects in the IMOMI UNN: 'The fundamentals of Islamic art' for art historians and 'The current trends of Islam in Russia' for political students. Besides, the student are encouraged to conduct researches on Islamic studies, national politics and ethnic and religious relations to prepare their term papers and diplomas.

The practical implementation of the abovementioned courses in the educational process creates a powerful precondition to ensure that future professionals, communicating with people of different faiths, cultures and civilizations, would avoid conflicts and uphold the principles of tolerance and respect of the spiritual values of any civilization, including Muslim.

In particular, we want to dwell on the 'Program of Islamic Studies' implemented in the faculty of International Relations in the UNN. For fifteen years the program has been headed by the associate professor of the Faculty of political theory and communications Firdaus Vagapova.

An Islamic program in the secular university was launched in 1999 with the blessing of three muftis: the mufti of the Russian Federation and the chairman of the Russian Council of Muftis Ravil Hazrat Gaynutdin, the mufti of the Republic of Tatarstan, the first chairman of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Nizhny Novgorod region Umar Hazrat Idrisov. It was also approved by three rectors, the heads of the Moscow Islamic University, the Russian Islamic University (Kazan) and Husain Fayzkhanov Islamic Institute of Nizhny Novgorod Damir Hazrat Mukhetdinov.

The program is interdisciplinary. It adheres to the norms of the Constitution of the Russian Federation with regard to the equality of all religions and religious associations before the law. The two-year 'Program of Islamic Studies' includes 1500 study hours of extracurricular activities.

The program includes:

I. Theological cluster, i.e. the exposition of the fundamentals of Islamic faith, is taught by the teachers of 'Makhinur' Islamic madrasah and the Husain Faizkhanov Islamic Institute of Nizhny Novgorod.

Theological courses: Islam is the world religion of Muslims. Islamic civilization. Muslim countries. The history of states, their development and current socio-political situation (part of the course 'The history of civilizations'). The course 'The shrine of Islam' (Kaaba as the ancient temple on Earth).

Islam in Russia and the CIS. The activities of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Nizhny Novgorod region. The dialogue of cultures: origins, evolution and current state in Islamic regions. The dialogue of cultures between the traditional religions of Russia.

Islamic education and Islamic Enlightenment in Russia (late 19th—early 20th century): Shigabutdin Marjani, Husain Faizkhanov, Riza Fakhretdinov, Gabdulla Bubi, Ismail Gasprinsky and others. Modern prominent Islamic leaders of Russia.

Preservation and development of Islamic traditions in Nizhny Novgorod region (ethno-religious aspect). The history of the Nizhny Novgorod Muslim communities in 19th century. The history of the Nizhny Novgorod cathedral mosque and the mosques of the region (visits and activities in the Nizhny Novgorod cathedral mosque and the mosque of Medina village). The activity of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Nizhny Novgorod (DUMNO) and meetings with its chairman. Examination of the materials of scientific conferences, round tables and seminars organized by the DUMNO.

The holy book of Muslims—Qur'an. Cultural and historical phenomenon. The dogma (Aqida). The pillars of faith (introduction to the topic). The belief in the holy books. The concept of Qur'anic science. The structure and language of the holy scripture. Qur'anic stories about messengers.

Prophet Muhammad as an outstanding historical figure. Sira (the biography of the Prophet).

The system of Islamic law, Sharia. Three components of Sharia: 1. Dogma (Aqida) in the Qur'an and Sunnah; 2. Rituals (Ibadat) in the Qur'an and Sunnah; 3. Muamalat, the relationship of man and society (social and legal norms).

Sunnah. Hadith. A brief program on the highlights of the Sunnah (the life of the Prophet). Commentary on Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, and a brief overview of the terms related to the Sunnah.

Islamic morals and customs. The course 'The guide on Islamic Adab (ethics)'. Adab al-Islam, good manners (religious, legal, family, household, community) that exist in Islam and rooted in its teachings

and instructions. Two major sources of Adab al-Islam: the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Religious and political movements and sects in Islam. The causes and conditions of their emergence. The problems of power transfer in the Muslim community. Denominations of Shiism. Shiites: Ismailis, Carmathians, Fatimids. Sunnis: the people of the Sunnah and accord. Kharijites and murjites. Sufism: a mystical religious trend in Islam (religious and philosophical characteristics). The cult of saints in Sufism. The problem of Islamic fundamentalism and extremism. Theology in Islam today.

Culture in Islamic countries. Islamic architecture and art in the Middle Ages (brief overview). Arab Caliphate. The culture of the Umayyad period. The culture of the Abbasid period. The culture of Arab countries after the collapse of the Caliphate. The art of the Middle East. Muslim art in India. The culture of the Golden Horde and the Tatar Khanate. Arts, crafts and calligraphy. Monuments of 18th–19th centuries. History and present culture in Islamic states. The culture of Volga Bulgaria. The culture of the Kazan Khanate. The culture of the Republic of Tatarstan. Traditional culture of the Mishar Tatars in the Nizhny Novgorod region.

Islam in the media. Radio. Television. Print. Internet. Modern Muslim media: ethical and legal aspects.

II. The cluster of Religious Studies includes general study classes of the university course. Theological cluster should not be contrasted to a secular philosophical discipline of religious studies as. An objective overview of the history of religions, and Islam in particular, the role and place of Islam in the modern world, the globalization process, the current state of the Muslim community, Islam in Russia.

III. Language culture (the study of Arabic, Turkish, Tatar spoken languages). 1. Arabic literary and spoken language. 2. Comparative analysis of Turkic and Russian languages: a) Tatar spoken language and the grammar of Turkic languages; b) Turkish spoken language.

IV. Students' Research Work involves their independent research on regional studies of the activities of religious associations

and organizations, the problems of ethnic tolerance, intra-ethnic and religious contacts and migration processes in the regions. It also considers the problems and prospects of the development of intra-cultural and interfaith dialogue in the Nizhny Novgorod region, the activities of Islamic organizations in the Nizhny Novgorod region (values, traditions, the structure of public education), the influence of Islam on national relations, the relations between the clergy and the government, the study of the problems of interfaith dialogue at the national, regional and international levels.

Talking about the potential of Islam in educational process, we should consider the potential of Islam in a non-Muslim environment too. Value guidelines with regard to the Muslim youth imply the concept of *Islamic education*, whereas with respect to a non-Muslim audience, in our view, the concept of *Enlightenment in the field of Islam* is more appropriate.

The principle 'do no harm' is particularly important when psychological specifics are implied, when the values of Islam should be conveyed to a target non-Islamic audience.

Since the launching of the program, more than 500 students have been trained, 55 received certificates, 15 received the certificates of successful completion. It is the only program of this kind in Russia and an excellent example of Islam's capabilities in the modern education process, for the format of the program does not pursue religious education, but rather aimed at enlightenment and the promotion of tolerant relations in multi-confessional and environment of the region. According to the first dean of the Faculty of International Relations professor Kolobov, The Program of Islamic Studies is unique in Russia and it represents such a professional launching pad that implies careful attention to Islam and the culture of Muslim countries, the Muslims of Russia, which work for the benefit of the world and its stability.

The Program of Islamic Studies is a result of scientific collaboration and the analysis of the interfaith situation in the Nizhny Novgorod region. It pays attention at the research of Islamic rich spiritual heritage, the history and practice of Islam in a changing world and

the political life in the leading Islamic countries of the world, including the analysis of the problems of Russian Muslim organizations and the role of Islamic and secular education process.

On 4 December 2014 the IMOMI UNN hold a youth conference entitled 'The world of Islam and the practice of ethnic and religious communication: past, present and future' dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the Program and organized in the framework of the Year of Culture in Russia and the 300th anniversary of the Nizhny Novgorod province.

Students, postgraduate students, young teachers (78 people) presented 38 scientific papers in the following sections: 1. 'Islam in Russian and world history: the tradition of interaction in an intra-faith environment'; 2. 'The processes of ethnic and religious communication in Nizhny Novgorod and the Volga region of Russia'; 3. 'Religious and political trends of modern Islam'.

Among the special guests who attended the conference were the representatives of the city and regional administration, the Legislative Assembly of Nizhny Novgorod region, the leaders of ethnic and religious organizations, as well as a number of specialists in ethnic and religious communications, whose sphere of professional interest is the role of the Islamic factor in Russia and the Volga Federal District.

We believe that the Program of Islamic Studies of the IMOMI represents a comprehensive approach to Islamic studies and a supplementary link in a continuous educational process, the study of languages in the university, the study of certain core courses of the IMOMI, it promotes the expansion of the boundaries of educational and training courses of the university and attracts students through interesting and useful courses.

Most importantly, the courses of the Program can be regarded as preventive measures against the spread of Islamic radicalism, extremism and xenophobia, they promote the art of dialoguing between the young people of different cultures on the territory of the Nizhny Novgorod region and the Russian Federation as a whole.

In addition to the training courses and elective Program of Islamic Studies, there are some other technologies of the promotion of

ethnic and religious diversity, intercultural dialogue and Islamic disciplines through the special courses in the IMOMI UNN within the scope of the federal and regional components of the curriculum. Thus, there is an optional course of 'Confessional journalism' in the Faculty of Philology introduced in 2003 for the students studying Public Relations, Journalism and Publishing business.

In general, we can say the following: a comprehensive program on the development of the sphere of religious education is implemented by the joint efforts of the government, religious and educational institutions. The involvement of various technologies and the potential of Islam (among both Muslims and non-Muslim) in Russian education process for the broad public in general and students and particular pursues the only result: morality-based competence and professionalism in ethnic and confessional issues.

The interdependent world that constantly changes and updates necessitates a paradigm shift in education and its ideals: from an educated individual to the individual of culture. 'The road to friendship is through courtesy' (Adab al Salihin). Islam, similarly to other traditional religions of Russia, serves moral upbringing, the enlightenment of the public and brings peacekeeping ideas to the world. Being an Abrahamic religions, Islam preaches tolerance to other monotheistic religions and exists in accordance with general spiritual commandments, based on the primacy of love for man, his neighbor and society. This framework is a value guideline of the Islamic worldview built on tolerance and acceptance of multicultural environment, which also extends to the sphere of education.

The potential of Islam, including its educational potential, lies in its essential perfection. The provisions of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah are mandatory for the devotees of the religion: a Muslim should be an educated person. In our Russian settings, we have to offer optimal forms of its influence on the educational process of the Russian youth, display the values of Islam in Russia's public relations, taking into account the diversity of the forms and the unity of the content of Islamic traditions in multicultural Russian environment. At the same time, it is crucial that we do not change the essentials of Islam.

Thus, let us once again state that the competency-based approach implies that the result of education at any level of pedagogical system is not only a set of knowledge and skills designated by formal norms, but also the whole scope of a graduate's personal qualities generated through the experience in a certain field. From the peaceful positions of Abrahamic religions, their [religions'] potential should be professionally used by government agencies in all social spheres, and particularly it should promote the strengthening of morality and tolerance among the younger generation in the multicultural educational space of Russia.

Russian Muslims for centuries have been living integrated to the non-Muslim community. And a comprehensive study of Islam is required under the modern settings of Russian society.



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THE EDUCATIONAL REFORMS OF THE JADIDIST MOVEMENT IN THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF ASTRAKHAN PROVINCE IN THE LATE 19th–EARLY 20th CENTURIES

A reformatory movement in the system of school education among the Muslim peoples of the Russian Empire sprang up in the 1880s, when a new phonetic method of teaching of the Arabic alphabet Usul-i Jadid (Arab. ‘new method’) was pioneered in Muslim primary schools (maktab) and secondary schools (madrassah). From this, the proponents of the method became known as Jadids or Jadidists, while the movement itself—Jadidism.

Gradually, the movement expanded to cover all sectors of Muslims’ life in the Empire and finally took a shape of a powerful social

and political movement. It gained a particular prominence in the Ural-Volga region (among the Muslims of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan), in the Crimea and in the Caucasus; to a lesser extent it was spread in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. Jadidists advocated the renewal of Russian Muslims' public life, demanded changes in the socio-economic, family, household and cultural fields, called for the development of Islamic education and science, for the expansion of cultural and educational institutions, the publishing of newspapers and books in their native language, the reorganization of Muslim religious institutions and the development of national literature and art (they were the first to promote the creation of professional [national Muslim] theaters).

Jadidism, which was a manifestation of a healthy cultural growth of Russian Muslims, encountered the resistance of Qadimists (Arab. Qadim — 'old'), the propagators of traditional Muslim education, who enjoyed the support of the authorities. The tsarist government saw a pursuit of political separatism in Jadidism and began repressions against some of their leaders. However, the process of a natural renewal of Muslim peoples' in the Empire was overpowering. At the beginning of the 20th century, Jadidism gradually prevailed over Qadimism with the phonetic teaching method consolidated in the leading Muslim educational institutions.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the Jadidist movement gradually became politicized. Although a trend of cultural and religious autonomy of Muslim peoples' within Russia prevailed among, a part of Jadidists were encouraging pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic ideas.

Since the end of the 19th century, the ideas of Jadidists began to penetrate into the Muslim environment of Astrakhan. In 1895, an Astrakhan mullah Abdurrahman Umerov (Abd-al-Rahman Ghumari, 1867–1933) established and became the leader of a Jadidist madrasah 'Nizamiyah' under a mosque no. 8, situated in the outskirts of Astrakhan in Tsarevsky village (Tatar. Tiyak on the Tsarev river, the village became a part of Astrakhan in the mid 19th century as the 6th police district). It was mainly populated by Yurt Nogay Tatars and later become one of the leading scientific and educational centers of

Muslims in Southern Russia, where Tatars, Kazakhs, Nogays, Turkmen, Vainakh, Lezgin, Avars and others were taught.

Among the graduates of the madrassah are Nogay philologist, folklorist and educator Abdulhamid Janibekov (1879–1955); Turkmen philologist and theologian Abdurrahman Niyazov (Niyazi, 1880–1932); the first Uzbek professor of history and the founder of the Uzbek school of medieval and modern history of Central Asia Pulat (Bekbulat) Saliyev (1882–1942); poets, among whom are Badreddin Mustafayev-Kilache, Abbas Dushenov etc. Nizamiyah was maintained by Astrakhan merchants and the principles of Jadidism were at the core of the training process. Textbooks compiled by Umerov were mainly used in teaching. In 1909, Umerov handed Nizamiyah to his brother Abdulwahab Umerov. The madrassah was functioning until 1919.

Among Astrakhan Jadidists there was a Turkmen writer, novelist, poet and publisher mullah Abdurrahman Nurmhammet-ogli Seitniyazov (known as Niyazi, 1857–1929), a disciple of Umerov. In particular, there is a poem among the lyrics of Niyazi ‘The banks of the Volga’, where we see the influence of a medieval Turkic Sufi poet Sulaiman Bakirghani (1104–1186). Abdurrahman Niyazi was known not only as a writer and poet, to a large extent he became renowned for his vigorous activity in book publishing. At the beginning of the 20th century, when the publishing industry was developing in Astrakhan, he conceived a plan to publish a series of the collections of classical Turkmen, Tatar, Nogay and Azerbaijani poets under the general title ‘Edebiyat kitaphanasidan’ (From a library of literature). The first book, which was published as a part of the mentioned series, was a 1000-copy edition of ‘Diwan’ by a Turkmen poet Magtymguly Pyragy in Turkmen Arabic script. It was published in 1912 in a private print shop of Abdurrahman Umerov.

Choosing this work of the great poet as the one to open the series, Niyazi showed himself as a very professional editor. The footnotes of the book give the translations of Arabic and Persian words and the explanations of Turkmen archaic words, which are found in the text. Besides, this work was preceded by a solid preface, an

extensive introduction and an explanatory dictionary was provided. According to some experts, Magtymguly's 'Diwan' published by Niyazi is the best collection of poems from among those published before 1917. After the publication, Niyazi intended to publish sequentially a series of works of other Turkic poets, but the lack of funding led to the interruption of this noble initiative.

Among the Jadidists, who dedicated their activities to the development of the publishing of books and periodicals for the Astrakhan Muslims, is a Yurt Tartar Najib Mawluberdiev (known as Ghasri), a talented writer, critic and journalist, one of the editors of a newspaper of Astrakhan Muslim 'Burghani Taraqqi'. A Book by Najib Ghasri 'Mazarstanda' (1916) is dedicated to the principles of symbolism in Turkic literature.

In 1907, Umerov founded a publishing association 'Umerov and Co', which lasted until 1913. In the six years from 1908 to 1914, the publishing house released 58 books with a total circulation of more than 123 thousand copies and a great many reference books, calendars and leaflets.

Since 1907 Umerov started publishing a Jadidist newspaper 'Idel' (Volga), which became the main press organ of Astrakhan's Jadidists. The paper primarily focused on the school education of the Muslims of the Lower Volga region and the events of the Russian Muslims' cultural life.

In general, there were a few Muslim newspapers and magazines in Turki language being published in early 20th century in Astrakhan (1906–1917), in particular, the newspaper 'Burghani Taraqqi' (The argument of progress), 'Islah' (Reform), 'Haq' (Truth), 'Mizan' (Scale, balance), 'Haliq' (People), and the magazines 'Tup' (Cannon), 'Magarif' ('Enlightenment'), etc.

Several Muslim public organizations emerged in Astrakhan at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1905 a Muslim public organization 'Majlis Shuray Islam' ('The Council of Islam' Assembly, aka 'Muslim House of Assembly' according to the archival documents) was established. There was a school 'Dar al-Adab' (House of morality) functioning under the organization, where local teachers and

Ottoman guest-teachers were working. Both girls and boy could study in the school, the classes were in Tatar language, while the textbooks—in Turkish. According to the officials of the Astrakhan gendarmerie, the invited teachers taught their students the sympathy for Turkey and promoted pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic ideas. Much time in the school was given to military gymnastics and the students wore Turkish uniform. Besides, the Majlis Shuray Islam was publishing the abovementioned newspaper ‘Burghani Taraqqi’. The founder of the organization, the principal of the school and the editor of the newspaper was Mustafa Ismailov. The organization was closed in 1911.

In 1907, another Muslim society ‘Jamaat Islamiyah’ (Arab. Islamic Society) was established in Astrakhan, it was mainly founded by the mullahs of Astrakhan’s mosques. This organization, according to the data of the Astrakhan gendarmerie, upheld the political views close to the Cadet Party, and took moderate pan-Islamist positions. A number of Jadidist schools were functioning within the society under the Black Mosque no. 10: a madrassah, a male maktab (since 1832) and a female maktab (since 1850). Male maktab under the Black Mosque, headed by mullah Salih Alimbekov, was the ‘most populous in Astrakhan in terms of students’ number’. Besides, the newspaper Idel was being published at the expense of this organization. Abdurrahman Umerov, the mullah of the City Cathedral Mosque no. 8, was the chairman of the society and the editor of the newspaper. The society ceased its activities in 1911.

The periodicals and Muslim public organizations in Astrakhan were always toughly blue-penciled by the gendarmerie and police. From 1911 crackdowns on the pan-Islamists and pan-Turkists began throughout the Empire. In 1914, Umerov was arrested for publishing a series of anti-government materials in the Idel newspaper. He was banished into exile in Kazan and placed under a strict police surveillance, while the newspaper itself was closed.

It is an established view among both pre-revolutionary and contemporary authors that Jadidism was not particularly popular among the Muslims of Astrakhan. In 1912, a researcher V. Dremkov wrote

that 'the system based on the new method is provoking almost hostile attitude among the Astrakhan Tatars. It is not about learning reading and writing, but about getting closely familiarized with the provisions of Islam'. A contemporary

Astrakhan researcher E. Tarabanovskaya also believes that at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries the Muslims of Astrakhan region were mostly the adherents of Qadimism. V. Dremkov points out that there was only two Jadidist maktab in 1912 in Astrakhan. However, according to archival materials, there were already thirteen maktab, which adopted the new method: eleven of them in Astrakhan (under the mosques no. 1, 3, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15) and two—in the Horde Bukeyev Kirghiz-Kaisak. So, we can see a clear increase in the popularity of the ideas of Jadidism among the Muslims of Astrakhan province in the pre-revolutionary years.



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FEATURES OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM OF THE TWO-LEVEL ISLAMIC EDUCATION: EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

The events of the recent years show that extremists make active and persistent attempts of interpretation of Islamic provisions in order to derive profit of it. Such interpretations have nothing to do with the teachings of Islam and they are harmful for Muslims, the representatives of other confessions and atheists. A terrorist act in Grozny on 4 December 2014, when the bandits under the pretext of defending the rights of Muslims were killing Muslims themselves, is a vivid example of this. We believe that in order to achieve a stable development, it is Russia needs the creation of such

a situation, when the representatives of all age groups of any social and material status would be able to satisfy their wants of education, including religious education. Over the past 3–5 years we have been witnessing that the term ‘shahid’s belt’ [i.e. Muslim suicide bomber’s belt] almost disappeared from the lexicon of journalists commenting on terrorist attacks. To a large extent that became possible due to the explanatory work carried out by the Spiritual Boards of Muslims. However today what Russia needs is not one-off actions throwing light on certain Islamic provisions, but rather the creation of a coherent, multi-level system of Islamic education. In our opinion, its main components should be built in Russia on the available footing. In 2013 in Ufa the president of Russia Vladimir Putin met with the chairmen of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims during the activities dedicated to the 225th anniversary of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia. During the meeting, the head of state stressed the importance of a new socialization of Islam to counterbalance the ideas promoted by the representatives of informal religious movements. The president also touched upon the issues of the training of Islamic clergy and emphasized the need to create a decent school of Islamic theology. The muftis, in their turn, expressed their views about the potential resolution of the problems designated by the president. In particular, the chairman of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia Talgat Tajuddin proposed the creation of an academy of Russian Muslims in Ufa.

The development of Islamic education in Russia is the most dynamic in two directions. On the one hand, for about ten years state universities of our country has been actively engaged in the training of specialists with in-depth knowledge of Islamic culture; on the other, Muslim universities themselves are actively developing. Various scientific forums, which promote the development of Islamic education, are vivid examples of the unity of the endeavors of the both. Among such successful events are, for example, international forums held in Moscow, Kazan and Ufa, which have been organized annually for the past ten years.

Talking about the modern Islamic education, we consider it necessary to note that it is developing in many regions of Russia: in Moscow, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan and in the North Caucasus. Nevertheless, it can be argued that Islamic education in Russia faces certain challenges. Some of them are rooted in the tradition of the Soviet Islamic education. That is exactly why the history of Islamic education in the USSR is relevant for the contemporary theological education in our country today.

Recently declassified materials stored in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (*ГАРФ*) represent a source of information on the curriculum in the Mir-Arab Madrasah, which for many years enjoyed the status of the only madrasah in the USSR.

During the years of the Second World War, the Party and state organs of the USSR were receiving numerous requests of believers to organize the study of religion in Soviet schools and, correspondingly, create specialized institutions. Realizing the need for harmony in society, the authorities made some concessions, which had been impossible before the war. Among them, a network of religious schools of different religious affiliation was established. The revival of madrasahs in the USSR began with the decree of the Council of People's Commissars no. 14808-p 'On the establishment of madrasahs in Bukhara and Tashkent' dated 10 October 1945. Proceeding from this document, the Council of People's Commissars of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution no. 1879-212s 'On the permission given to the Spiritual Administration of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) to open two religious schools'.

According to the archival documents, the Mir-Arab madrasah started its activity in 1946. Initially, it was decided that men of 23–35 years could attend the madrasah. They had to submit the following documents: the application form, autobiography, a certificate of education, the questionnaire, a reference about their residence, a photograph, a written reference given by a member of the Spiritual Administration. A candidate was supposed to have a primary religious education, including the knowledge of the Arabic alphabet. But in March 1946, the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults sent the

plenipotentiary in Uzbekistan the instructions, according to which men from 18 years could be admitted to the madrasahs, whereas the upper age limit was removed. In accordance with the instructions, only the residents of the region from among the indigenous population could be enrolled for the courses. A unified training program was designed for both madrasahs. It was undergoing changes over the years. A few years later, the enrollment of other regions' residents was allowed. However, the authorities were throwing obstacles in the way of those who was eager to receive a religious education.

In the 1940s, there were 11 disciplines in the curriculum, which, we believe, could be divided into three categories. 1. Religious: Tajwid, Tafsir, Hadith, the rules of studying Hadith, the questions of religion, the history of Islam. 2. Secular: History of the peoples of the USSR, the Constitution of the USSR. 3. Comprehensive disciplines: phonetics, morphology and syntax of the Arabic language, the grammar of the Persian language. For many years, the education was mainly based on the study of Tafsir, Tajwid, Hadith, Sharia, the memorizing of the Qur'an, as well as on some aspects of the Arabic language, the Persian and Russian languages, Arab and Uzbek literature, history and geography. The number of course units were changing. For the first twenty years of its existence, the Mir-Arab madrasah changed its educational program several times, and this trend only intensified in the 1960s.

There was a problem in the educational process common to all educational institutions of Uzbekistan: the students of Mir-Arab used to be commissioned to aid the collective farms during the season of cotton harvest. The program provided primary Islamic education during the first four years of training, and then the students moved to the second level. Thus, after 9 years of training, a student could receive secondary Islamic education.

On 1 November Barak-khan madrasah began its work. Thirty four student were primarily enrolled, of them, 16 enrolled in 1st Grade, 18 — in 2nd Grade. Six teachers were teaching 10 disciplines: reading of the Qur'an and its commentary, Tajwid, Morphology of the Arabic language, Syntax of the Arabic language,

Farsi, the History of Islam, Dogma, Calligraphy, the Russian language, geography. In May 1961, the authorities closed Barak-khan due to an emergency condition of the building, according to the official version.

The academic year of 1961/1962 began in Mir-Arab on 2 October, the curriculum was designed for 6 months. In the 1961/1962 academic year, the students of Mir-Arab could attend the classes of 3rd, 5th and 7th Grades. In each of them, 11 disciplines were taught, they differed from one another by the topics.

Discipline	Course units
Russian language	294
The history of the USSR	156
The Constitution of the USSR	52
Uzbek literature	156
Geography	156
Spoken Arabic	390
The syntax of the Arabic language	182
The morphology of Arabic language	182
Hadith	286
Interpretation of the Qur'an	182
Tajwid	78

It was recommended [by the authorities] to introduce in the educational process physical training and the lectures on contemporary issues.

In the 1962/1963 academic year, the classes in Mir-Arab began on 1 September, a month earlier than in the previous academic year. They were based on a new curriculum, according to which the duration of training was 8 months. Particular attention was paid to the teaching of Arabic and Russian languages, more course units were given to Arabic literature and the modern spoken language, as well

as to the following subjects: Political Economy, the History of the peoples of the USSR, the History of the peoples of the East, Political and economic geography of the countries of Asia and Africa. The training program was coordinated with the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults. However, in 1962 the shakirds (madrasah students) wrote a collective letter to the Mufti Ziyauddin Banakhan requesting the increasing of the course units dedicated to the study of religious disciplines. The chairman of the SADUM held a meeting with them, where he talked about the benefits of increasing the course units of Arabic and Russian languages and announced the measures to improve the financial conditions of the students: they were receiving 35 rubles per month as a grant. Once per week they could visit a cinema at the expense of the madrasah, a subscription to magazines and papers was organized for them. The students lived in the madrasah's dormitory.

The chairman of the SADUM Ziyauddin Banakhan was realizing that Islamic education in the country is on the brink of disaster. On 20 December 1963 he met with a member of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults of the USSR Rzhhanov. By this time, only SADUM and DUMES (i.e. the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European Part of the USSR and Siberia) were paying for the students' education. The latter was paying for the education of five students who came from that region of the USSR. By late December 1963, there were 40 students in Mir-Arab. The tuition fee per student per year was 500–600 rubles, including clothing. However, due to financial difficulties, the provision of clothing was suspended in December 1963. To understand the severity of the problem, let us ask a question about the seriousness of the abovementioned sums. A reference book says that the average salary in the USSR at that time amounted to 85.4 rubles.

According to the analysis of the report by a plenipotentiary Shirinbaev to the chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR Kuroyedov dated 3 August 1966, in the 1964/1965 academic year the curriculum provided 41 class periods per week, and there were 40 students receiving

education in 5th-8th Grades. In the 1966/1967 academic year, there were 50 students in Mir-Arab, among whom only twelve were the students of the 8th Grade. There were only five teachers teaching religious disciplines and three teachers of secular subjects. The curriculum was still designed for a 9-year course. A simple calculation shows that in the 1960s the two madrasahs graduated 10–20 people, and graduations were far from being annual. For a multimillion Muslim population of the USSR this situation inevitably foreboded a catastrophe with regard to the training of highly-skilled professionals and limited the Islamic education of Soviet Muslims to domestic education, which would subsequently entail its degradation and atomization. Changes were made in the training program of the 1966/1967 academic year: class periods decreased from 41 to 36 hours per week. The reduction was due to the decrease in the teaching of the Uzbek language and religious disciplines. There were 14 subjects in the curriculum.

Discipline	Grades		
	3	5	8
<i>Religious disciplines</i>			
Reading of the Qur'an	5	4	2
Interpretation of the Qur'an	–	2	5
The sayings of the Prophet	5	4	5
<i>Humanities</i>			
The morphology of the Arabic language	4	4	–
The syntax of the Arabic language	–	4	4
Arabic literature and spoken Arabic	4	5	5
Russian language and literature	4	4	4
Arabic calligraphy	4	2	2
Social science	2	2	2
Economic geography of foreign countries	2	2	2

Discipline	Grades		
	3	5	8
Political economy	2	–	–
Uzbek language and literature	2	–	2
The history of the USSR	2	2	2
Physical education	1	1	1
Total	37	36	36

As the table shows, religious subjects occupied about 30 per cent of the total course unit.

In 1971 Imam Al Bukhari Islamic Institute was established in Tashkent.

Legal Soviet system of Muslim education that was controlled by the authorities had a second level: training in foreign Islamic schools and in the theological faculties of universities. According to the analysis of archival documents, in 1940–1960s few student were involved in this program, who went to study at Al-Azhar University, The University of al-Qarawiyyin and the University of Damascus. These were M. Abdullayev, S. Shaislamov, Yu. Shakirov, R. Idrisov, G. Aabdullaev, A. Mawlankulov, T. Yunusov, W. Tursunov and S. Babahanov and M. Kattakhanov. The number of the Soviet Muslims traveling to study overseas did not change in the late 1960s. At the beginning of September 1967 a delegation of the SADUM visited the United Nations. During the conversation, A. Mavlankulov, the Executive Secretary of the SADUM, told that there were three students delegated by the SADUM studying in Al-Azhar.

According to the documentation, nearly all Soviet students enrolled in foreign Islamic universities experienced two kinds of difficulties: material (their grants were very small) and insufficient background in the majority of religious disciplines and the Arabic language, which was not allowing most of them to study well in the first year.

In the 1970s and most of the 1980s the situation hardly changed. Very few studies were going to study abroad. Here we talk about such

well-known in the Muslim world people as the chairman of the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia mufti Tajuddin. In 1973–1978 he was studying at Al-Azhar University. In 1981 the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Soviet Union were sending students to study at the Islamic universities of Jordan, Syria and Sudan. By the early 1980s some prominent Muslim scholars from the USSR graduated from foreign Islamic universities or were improving their knowledge there. For example, the representative of the SADUM in Kazakhstan R. Nysanbayev graduated from the Faculty of Sharia and Law of the University of Benghazi (Libya), Mufti Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf in 1980 graduated with honors from the University of Dawa Islamia in Tripoli (Libya). In 1988, the chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs Kharchev expressed a request to allow Muslim Soviet organizations to send upto six students to study abroad annually. In 1990 N. Ashirov, the chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Asian part of Russia, was sent to study at the Amir Abd al-Qadir Islamic University (Algeria).

In 1990–1991 at the invitation of the Sheikh of Al-Azhar the first group of young Soviet Muslims completed three-month training courses for imams at this university.

Thus, for the representatives of Spiritual Administrations studying abroad was another way of maintaining contacts with the ‘outside’ world, along with Hajj, the visits of foreign delegations to the USSR or foreign visits of Soviet representatives. But such a channel of communication and data accessing about Islam and the life of their foreign co-religionists was the lot of a rather small group of people among the numerous Soviet Muslims, who had the desire and the relevant knowledge to travel with educational purposes. Moreover, foreign study courses could not solve the main problem: they could not prevent staff shortages, despite the abundance of young and well-educated Muslims who were able to work for a long time in the system of Spiritual Administrations to contribute to the revival of Islam. As the analysis of documents and practices shows, almost until the collapse of the USSR, the Soviet party-state apparatus had been raising various difficulties before those Muslims, who were seeking Islamic knowledge both within the USSR and abroad.

Today the situation has changed dramatically. Almost every Muslim is free to leave Russia and acquire the knowledge on Islam in any country. But this possibility, we believe, places the Spiritual Administrations under a particular duty: they must clearly understand who and where teaches our compatriots, what and how they teach them. It is particularly important to have a clear understanding of how the knowledge, gained in these institutions, relate to our Russian local settings and what kind of knowledge about Islam acquire those former students who returned to their homeland. In this regard, we believe that the most promising way is the establishment of Islamic educational institutions of all levels in Russia itself. At the same time, the Spiritual Administrations should concentrate their efforts on the issue of staffing those educational institutions with both Muslim scholars and secular Islamicists, for whom Russia's integrity is a vital priority. The government has already assisted the Spiritual Administration in the establishment of the system of higher education: some of Islamic universities gained the right to issue state-standard diplomas. The next practical step of the state could be the lowering of taxes and utility payments in such schools for 10–20 years, if they redirect the released funds to the enhancement of the facilities and equipment of the schools and encourage the involvement of the most prominent religious and secular scholars from across the world. Once it is done, we can also consider the attracting of foreign students desiring to receive religious education in Russia. This would raise the credibility of Russian Muslims and the Russian state in the world, would undermine the propaganda of extremists, strengthen traditional Islam worldwide and promote the training of foreign experts who, upon the graduation from Russian schools, would be able to explain their compatriots that the Russian Federation is a country that respects traditional Islamic values.

Interestingly enough, the problem of the graduates from abroad has been seriously discussed since the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, in May 1911 during the celebration of the anniversary of the mufti M. Sultanov, the State Duma's deputy Mahmudov expressed his concern about the decrease in the intellectual level of Muslim leaders and about the

fact that ‘there were some shady characters who were educated in Egyptian slums and on the boulevards of Constantinople’.

According to the documents, the party-state apparatus of the USSR adopted a two-faced policy in the organization of Islamic education. Practically, we see the provoking of a gradual extinction due to a small number of graduates from the mentioned Islamic educational institutions of the USSR and foreign Islamic schools and, consequently, a natural loss. On the other hand, the situation was portrayed differently for foreign states: they were shown a picture of a total well-being. This was done through the organization of propagandistic shows for foreigners visiting madrasahs and performances of students and graduates of Mir-Arab, Barak-khan and Al-Bukhari Islamic Institute. The role of the leaders of the Soviet Muslims in this was no less. Dr. Shkarovsky, an expert in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, believes that after the party-state apparatus had failed to eliminate the religious education, it turned to the establishment of a total control over it: the publishing of textbooks and the teaching of liberal arts required in theology was banned, since the authorities feared highly-educated and all-rounded clergy.

This conclusion fully applies to the system of Islamic education in the USSR. From our point of view, the findings of a group of Uzbek scholars is absolutely revelant: the purpose of the education in Soviet madrasahs was nothing but the development of manpower loyal to the Soviet state. In fact, many students were spending their time within the walls of these institutions in order to ‘legalize’ (i.e. receive official diplomas) the religious education that they acquired privately (in hujras or family).

Summing up this article, it is possible to assert that the Soviet system of Islamic education was two-level. The first one was a domestic, secretive and concealed. The authorities were affecting it through the state bodies and public organizations. Due to this pressure, very few people could go to Islamic schools in the Soviet Union—which is the second level. They had to go through multiple stages of selection: Spiritual Boards, representatives of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults, the Party organs and the governments of the republics.

And very few of the graduates of the educational institutions, in the case of a successful re-examination, had a chance to leave for foreign Islamic universities, which we conventionally designate as the second stage of the second level.

In our opinion, the contemporary theological (Islamic) education has not yet become prestigious and Islamic schools do not have much competition for admission. One reason behind this state of affairs is the absence of significant prospects for further education and career opportunities, which is an important argument for the youth. Another reason is short-handedness of Islamic education. The schools are understaffed in terms of teaching staff with academic degrees, especially Ph.Ds and professors. Very few of Islamic schools has among their staff the scholars known throughout Russia and abroad. Today, Islamic schools could enhance the prestige of their education through the Internet tuition. It is required to organize such kind of activities in all Islamic schools in Russia that would involve the creative forces of the best teachers not only from Russian Islamic universities, but also from secular educational institutions, as well as from foreign secular and religious schools (in case their ideology goes along with the principles of peace and Islam). From our perspective, our Russian Islamic universities have to attract a world-famous Doctor of Historical Sciences Dmitry Arapov to lecture on the history of Islam. His classes should necessary be broadcasted to other universities on the Internet and recorded. It would also be sensible to involve in teaching on the same terms famous Muslims of our country in order to increase the prestige of Russian Islamic education. For example, the president of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov could give lectures on Islamic theology; Russian history and universal history, the history of wars and military art could be taught by the president of the Republic of Ingushetia Yunus-bek Yevkurov; economic subjects—by Russian Muslim businessmen assisting the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia in the construction of the new mosque.

Speaking of the establishment of continuous education, we believe that the system could be established: ‘nursery—kindergarten—school—college—university’; and ‘Bachelor—Master—Postgraduate—Doctorate’ within the last link of the chain. We

consider it necessary to recall the Soviet experience of the material support of Muslim students and cultural and leisure element of their education. Unfortunately, for many years Moscow Islamic Institute has not established a system of collective visits to museums, theaters, exhibitions, etc. Considering that many students of the university arrived from villages and small towns they could have a brilliant chance to expand their horizons and increase their cultural level. A great many people would benefit from the quality of such activities: the students, among whom future imams and officials of different levels, working with believers, as well as Muslim communities, who would communicate with the graduates possessing in-depth knowledge and broad outlook. And it is owing to the training, naturally combined with the mentioned leisure activities.

It seems that the problem of students' familiarization with the places of culture and leisure exists in other Islamic universities of Russia too. One of the leverages to enhance the prestige of Russian Islamic universities can be a constructive dialogue between Russian Muslim leaders and the government, which implies that the government could provide a variety of benefits, for instance as allowances in public utilities or assistance in the construction of students' dormitories. This could contribute to the influx of not only Russian but also the CIS citizens. Education of foreigners from neighboring countries would promote not only Russian Islamic education in the post-Soviet space, but Russia itself.

Summing up, it can be argued that the implementation of the ideas outlined in the article will help to create in the Russian territory not only one prestigious Islamic university, but the whole network of schools, where both Russians and foreigners would like their children to study in. This will benefit both Russia and Islam, because if such a system is introduced, we would get highly qualified Islamic personnel who would not only know Russia, but will love her. In this case, the idea of foreign Islamic education for the majority of Muslims in our country would only be an idea of optional and supplementary and not a principal education, which would benefit Ummah and the Russian state.

To enhance the effectiveness and prestige of modern Islamic education the following can be recommended: it is advisable to organize: sport competitions among the Islamic schools; a quiz-show for students on 'Kultura' [*culture*] federal TV channel, awarding a trip to Hajj as the first prize; trips to friendly Arab states for language training in secular high schools (for religious education must be EXCLUSIVELY in Russia).

In order to raise the prestige of education in Islamic universities, the Spiritual Boards should introduce some restrictions; for instance, only a Ph.D. or a professor can be at the head of a university; only scholars should be allowed to work in a chancellor's office. Teaching staff and top management should have a certain number of publications every year, including in Russian scientific journals, where the main scholarly findings of Ph.D. theses should be published, and foreign scientific journals. The only exception is possible, in our opinion, for those responsible for the safety and housekeeping. Thus, the teaching staff of universities would improve the quality and prestige of the contemporary Russian Islamic Education with real deeds.

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