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Authors	Team of Scholars and Intellectuals
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Letter To The West

A Saudi View



غَيناء للنشر
Ghainaa Publications

Second Edition, 2008
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In the Name of Allah
Most Gracious, Most Merciful

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 9

The Contributors 11

Part I

An Invitation to Communicate for the Purpose of Reaching Mutual Understanding 20

The Western Circles 27

The Duality of Love and Hatred for American Policy 31

The Strategy of Hate and Enmity 33

The Clash of Civilizations, or a Clash of Whims? 35

The Common Bases for the Dialogue Between Civilizations 41

Restoration of Respect for Principles and Values is Inevitable 45

Terrorism: Concept, History and Causes 50

The Capricious Concept 50

Why 9/11 Only? 51

The Rise of Terrorist Organizations 55

Part II

The Wahhabi Movement: Reference, History and Practice 62

The Wahhabi Movement: Chronology and Reference 62

The Wahhabi Movement and the Establishment of the Saudi State 63

The Motive Behind the Reformist Movement and its Major Goals 64

Dissemination Through Persuasion, not Through Subjugation 66

The Effects of the Spread of *Da'wah* in the Islamic World 68

The Variety of Islamic Trends 70

Wahhabism: The Unfair Assessment 72

Religious Education 75

Introduction 75

The Content of Religious Education Curricula and the Allegation of Terrorism 80

Accusations Against Religious Education 92

Saudi Education not Responsible for Deviation 94

Saudi Schools Enjoy Safe Environment 96

Women's Education and Work in Saudi Arabia 98

The Historical Evolution of Girls' Education 103

Official (Government) Education 105

The Philosophy of Segregated Education 108

Advantages of Segregated Education 112

Human Rights in Saudi Arabia 117

The Kingdom's View of Human Rights 119

Particularity in the Domain of Human Rights 120

The Judiciary Structure and Human Rights in the Kingdom 125

New Regulations Issued by the Kingdom for Safeguarding Human Rights 128

Jihad is for Establishing Peace 176

Islam Abhors Killing 176

Islam Calls for Peace 178

Peace in Muslims' Relations with Other People 180

Islam Establishes the Principles of Peace 180

Jihad was Primarily Ordained to Repel Injustice and Aggression 185

Kindness Toward non-Muslims 188

The Principle of Straightforwardness and the Prohibition of Treachery 190

The Numerous Types and Different Fields of Jihad 190

Charities in Saudi Arabia 196

Introduction 196

The Basis of Muslims Charitable Work 207

The Nature of Saudi Charities 209

Non-Islamic Places of Worship in Arabia 211

Introduction 211

Why non-Islamic Places of Worship does not Exist in Arabia 212

Introduction

The terrorist events of September 11 have marked a new turning point in international and human relations, particularly between the United States and the Islamic World. Political, cultural and religious institutions in the West have contributed to the delineation of the main features of such relations. The American media in particular has established and played a major role in promoting a great many negative notions, spreading incorrect and disingenuous terminology, and creating recurrent suspicion towards Islamic culture, which is adhered to by many Muslim peoples, governments, leaders and legal systems. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was particularly targeted in this respect for well-known reasons. Thus, these institutions have put Islam in general and the kingdom, its people, its leaders and its legal system in particular, within the framework of the relations that need to be scrutinized, reviewed and amended.

We strongly and unreservedly condemn the attacks on New York and Washington, just as we do those that targeted facilities in Riyadh, Nairobi, Dar es Salam and Bali. While we consider such deeds among those prohibited by Islam and appreciate that they constitute a threat to the security and peace of humanity, we are nevertheless firmly convinced, and such conviction is shared by all rational people in the United States and elsewhere, that such events need to be addressed objectively and impartially.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been in the forefront

of states that have suffered as a result of what happened in New York and Washington. Its afflictions extended so far as to involve attacks on the religion of the state and its political, social and educational institutions, this being the result of an erroneous and unfair interpretation of the events. It is this that has prompted us to compile this book in order to address the open Western mind, which bases its views, ideas and attitudes on objective dialogue and persuasion. We are well aware in this address to Western peoples in general, and to the American people in particular, that they are eager to discover the truth. This is because their lives are based on true knowledge and dialogue that aims at reaching the truth, which is what all rational and fair people aspire to. In this book, we address the most important issues raised by the political, intellectual and media institutions in the United States with respect to way of life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the immutable principles on which it is based. This is exemplified by its moderate and judicious way of life, which the just reader will find a great disparity between and the allegations attributed to it, which are quite remote from reality.

The Contributors

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PART I

- **An Invitation to Communicate for the Purpose of Reaching Mutual Understanding.**
- **Terrorism: Concept, History and Causes.**

An Invitation to Communicate for the Purpose of Reaching Mutual Understanding

This letter is addressed to the West and particularly to the Americans. It aims at removing misunderstanding, while, at the same time, replying to questions that have lately been raised in the Western media. While the West is closest to us Muslims, it is nonetheless far more prone to misunderstanding us and our religion than others. It just so happens that most of the misunderstanding prevails among those who have something in common, for proximity engenders friction; the stronger the common ties and the closer the proximity, the stronger the friction is bound to be. This is observed within one and the same civilization or among close civilizations. Now just as clashes rage within one and the same faith or one and the same civilization, this being not on account of differences in values but because each approach, creed or party claims to best represent the common values, or because the other party has seriously deviated therefrom, similarly the common denominators among close civilizations may lead to discordance and clashes instead of being conducive to co-operation and peace. This state of affairs, then, is not to be attributed to radical differences in values and notions, but because each of the civilizations which have common values claims to embody the values and concepts and to be the most correct and the most perfect.

Therefore, the duty to be fair, which stems from religious and moral motivation – in an age of scientific research and

verification – requires the abandoning of the position of an incorrect conflict between Muslims and the West, which should give way to mutual understanding based on openness in the views that are held, objectivity in the subjects that are investigated and dedication to the truth that is sought. When intentions are righteous and once artificial barriers are removed, mutual understanding will easily prevail. We Muslims have in common with Christians and Jews the belief in God, His books, prophets and the Day of Judgment. We believe in the Day of Reckoning, in Paradise and Hell. We believe in the dignity of man, his ability to shoulder responsibility and his right to be free and to choose. We also believe in equality, justice, virtues and morality. We share a great many values. Had it not been for the whims of politicians, Muslims, Christians and Jews would have been the closest and most harmonious of nations.

Muslims believe in Abraham, Moses and Jesus, as well as in all other prophets. They also believe in the Torah and the Gospel and other divine scriptures. They revere all prophets and invoke God's blessings on them, follow their example and love them without exception. However, some Christians, due to continuous repulsion, do not believe in the last of the prophets and do not recognize the Qur'an. They do not confine themselves to such denial, but also level a great many accusations and cast various suspicions that are not based on objective grounds. Such artificial aversion is due to the instigation of certain groups that thrive on such misunderstanding and push things to all negative conclusions. However, despite all the accumulating prejudices resulting from the continuous repulsion and deliberate distortion, it is

still possible to eliminate the causes of the contrived alienation and to meet on the common grounds of belief in God, love of all that is good, hate of all evil and the striving for the universal welfare of humanity. No matter how concealed the facts may be, it is possible to bring them into the open provided that people's endeavors are sincere and their intentions are righteous.

However, despite the accumulation of misunderstanding, with Western cultural openness, such misunderstanding should have been dissipated. But it seems that the multiplicity of the names of divine religions has contributed to the consolidation of misunderstanding and has led to estrangement and the creation of illusions. This should prompt us to emphasize the affinity of the divine messages. In their pure essence, all Divine religions which have been revealed by God bear the name of "Islam." Originally this term was not confined to the last Divine Message, it applied to all the divine messages preached by God's prophets. This is not a mere inference and is in fact expressed in many verses of the Qur'an. But because this piece of basic information was not widely propagated and because it remained concealed from the minds of ordinary people, and probably many of the elite, serious confusion has occurred giving rise to misunderstanding. The following is a quotation of some verses of the Qur'an that clearly indicate all this:

"And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying]: 'Our Lord! Accept [this] from us. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing!'" (2: 127)

"O Lord! Make us surrender ourselves unto You, and

make out of our offspring a community that shall surrender itself unto You. And show us our ways of worship, and accept our repentance. Indeed, You alone are the Accepter of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace!" (2: 128)

"And who, unless he be weak of mind, would want to abandon Abraham's creed, seeing that We have raised him high in this world, and that, indeed, in the life to come he shall be among the righteous?" (2: 130)

"When his Sustainer said to him: 'Surrender yourself unto Me!' – he answered, 'I have surrendered myself [unto you], the Sustainer of all the Worlds.'" (2: 131)

"And this very thing did Abraham bequeath unto his children, and [so did] Jacob: 'O my children! Indeed, God has granted you the purest faith, so do not allow death to overtake you before you have surrendered yourselves unto Him.'" (2: 132)

In others verses, God says:

"So is it other than the religion of God they desire, while to Him have submitted [all] those within the heavens and the earth, willingly or by compulsion, and to Him they will be returned?" (3: 83)

"Say, 'We believe in God, and in that has been bestowed from on high on us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed by their Sustainer unto Moses and Jesus and all the [other] prophets: We make no distinction between any of them. And unto Him do we surrender ourselves.'" (3: 84)

"For, if one goes in search for a religion other than

self-surrender unto God, it will never be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the lost." (3: 85)

God also says:

"Indeed, it is We who bestowed from on high the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light. On its strength did the prophets who had surrendered themselves unto God, deliver judgment." (5:44)

"And when Jesus became aware of their refusal to acknowledge the truth, he asked: 'Who will be my helpers in God's cause?' The white-garbed ones replied: 'We shall be [your] helpers [in the cause] of God! We believe in God and testify that we have surrendered ourselves unto Him!'" (3:52)

In another verse:

"**And behold! I inspired the disciples to have faith in Me and My apostle (Jesus). They said, 'We have faith, so bear witness that we bow to God as Muslims.'" (5:111)**

God also says:

"Those to whom We sent the Book before this, they do believe in this (revelation). And when it is recited to them, they say: 'We believe therein, for it is the Truth from our Lord. Indeed we have been Muslims (bowing to God's Will) from before this.'**"** (28: 52-53)

Thus, the Qur'an is emphatically explicit that Islam, in terms of surrender to God, is the name of all divine revelations. But because Muhammad's Message was the last of the divine messages, it, therefore, comprises all previous messages, while none of the previous messages comprises the last message. Islam, for the other religions (all of which

have preceded it, while it is the last and complements them) is akin to a reformulation of previous divine messages, while maintaining their essence - having added to them what was necessitated by cultural development. It is, therefore, the final version of God's revelation until the Day of Judgment.

To clarify the notion regarding the unity of divine messages, which culminated with Islam, we say: God has gradually revealed to humanity what was consistent with its cultural consciousness and development – and the Qur'an came as the last message. Thus it is the divine revelation in its final form because the message of Islam comprises the previous messages as revealed by God, having added to them many teachings, various types of worship and detailed rules (Shari'ah) that are appropriate for human evolution. It is not merely a set of commandments and stories that vary from one transmitter to another, and reflect human opinions and statements. The final message is rather based on the Qur'an, which is revealed by God and is written and documented from the first day of its revelation with utmost rigor and accuracy. There is no human opinion in it. It is a virtual universal constitution, absolutely trustworthy and genuine as to the source of its revelation - God. It is unlike human languages, whether in form or content. It is a discourse that makes people feel humble, softens their hearts and flutters their souls, so that their souls are uplifted and their hearts tremor. If adhered thereto, it will ensure for mankind happiness in this life and in the eternal life to come. It is a great text in its meaning and miraculous in its structure. But he who does not read it in Arabic will not be able to fully appreciate its miraculous text or its extraordinary effect. Therefore,

those who did not try to expose themselves to its recitation or reading cannot imagine its great effect and overwhelming beauty.

There are certain events which are clearly indicative of the closeness between Muslims and Christians and the common values they share. Thus, during the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, the pagan Persians defeated the Romans (the Byzantines). Thereafter, God revealed verses that are still to this day being recited by Muslims day and night, giving glad tidings to Muslims and reassuring them that the pagan victory was a temporary one and that the Christian Romans would defeat the Byzantines in a few years:

"Defeated have been the Byzantines. In the lands close-by. Yet it is they who, not withstanding their defeat, shall be victorious. Within a few years. With God rests all power of decision, first and last. And on that day will the believers [too, have cause to] rejoice in God's victory. [for] He gives victory to whomever He wills, since He alone is Almighty, a Dispenser of Grace." (30: 2-5)

The prophecy was indeed realized a few years later. This event emphasizes the closeness of Muslims and Christians and their common orientation.

In the twentieth century, when confrontation erupted against the atheism which had been propagated by the Soviet Union and the Marxist camp, both Muslims and Christians stood united against the tide of this atheism. Thus Muslims have sided with the Christian West in that lengthy confrontation despite the injustices perpetrated against them by Britain, which had implanted Israel in the heart of the Islamic countries, and by the United States, which is strategically

linked with Israel and has given it absolute support, defending it as it would defend itself. However, despite all that, the factor of faith in God has unified Muslims and Christians in their stand against the march of atheism which was in the apogee of its activity.

All this indicates that the enmity shown by opportunistic, leaders and influential Christians towards Islam throughout the centuries, which culminated with the Crusades and which has emerged again in this era, has no objective grounds. It is rather a reflection of whims and ephemeral mundane interests. Now, because we firmly believe that the American people and the Western nations are keen to know the truth, and because they hate hiding or distorting facts and misinforming and misleading public opinion, having previously been given false reports regarding Islam and the Muslims, we believe that these peoples will accept the facts when they are presented to them truthfully and objectively. We are, therefore, presenting this address which we hope would be the beginning of a constructive dialogue and extensive meetings aimed at achieving cooperation in all that is good, adherence to what is right, agreement to co-existence and striving to realize more convergence and brotherhood.

The Western Circles

This age, in which judgments and views are supposed to be based on scientific research and impartial investigation and where communication methods are available in amazing abundance, was meant to be an age of tolerance, brotherhood, the disappearance of ignorance and the abandonment of a priori judgments. However, some influential people seem

not to be in favor of the convergence of peoples. Therefore, such formidable scientific and technical developments were exploited – with respect to Islam and Muslims – in order to hide and not to reveal the facts, to conceal injustices and to not expose them. The result was an increase in the distortion instead of a reduction. In consequence, the inverse picture of Islam and of Muslims remained as it was despite the tremendous change that had occurred in the Western mind. However, we Muslims, must confess that we bear part of the responsibility for the misunderstanding because we were under the illusion that the facts were clear in themselves and that such clarity in itself makes further clarification unnecessary. We have discovered this strategic mistake which has cost us the loss of a great many rights and brought us many tragedies. This is because rights do not present themselves; they need someone to present them. Witness the arguments of faith, which are so clear and yet God has sent prophets to propagate them.

Europe has revolted against the stifling restrictions of the Middle Ages and extricated itself from the guardianship of authority and released itself from closed programming. With this complete liberation, it succeeded in creating sciences, originated new ideas, developed institutions, regulations and laws, invented work techniques and mechanisms and discovered man's potential. Moreover, it proceeded to liberate him from chains and prejudices, prompted him to think independently and exploited creative potentials to the utmost, and produced something that is great and magnificent. **However, there is one area which has remained dim and dark in the Western mind – its relation with Islam**

and the Muslims. This area has not been liberated from the accumulations of misunderstanding & prejudice from the past; it was not exposed to the light of reason or to any objective analysis; it rather remained as it was – closed and buried in the accumulation of continuous distortion.

In the Middle Ages, the European mind was programmed to hate Islam and to harbor enmity towards Muslims. The correction performed by the modern critical mind should have included Islam and Muslims, but no sooner had Europe awakened from the nightmare of the Middle Ages did it turn towards expansion and the imposing of its influence and dominance. Therefore, the colonialists needed to continue to fuel the distortion of Islam and the hatred of Muslims in order to serve their ambitious greed in Islamic countries.

After the end of colonialism, it was hoped that the European critical mind would revert to this area which is buried so that scientific investigation would deal with it and correct the wrong and erroneous conception. However, before it departed, European colonialism implanted the state of Israel in the heart of the Islamic World, creating in doing so a bleeding wound that fuels enmity and aggravates hatred.

Thus the motives of distortion succeeded one another. With the end of the colonialist era, Zionist activity was escalated in the operations of disguise and deception with a view to covering up the crimes they had perpetrated against the Palestinians when they drove them out of their homeland and occupied their homes. Thus Zionists and their sympathizers flooded Western culture with distortions of Islam and spread hatred of Muslims and falsified the facts. Hence,

the distorted image that was drawn by whims, interests and greedy ambitions has survived and remained where the Crusades and colonialists wars had left it and as the world of Zionism wished it to be. Those involved in distortion came to possess advanced, sophisticated, efficient and effective methods which are capable of revealing the facts or suppressing and obliterating them.

Extremist Zionists have managed to distort our religion and spread hatred against us more than at any time in history, having extensively exploited the mass media, while we, on our part, have neglected the media confrontation. Such neglect of communicating with the world has doubled our losses with the result that the distance separating us from the West has become so great that misunderstanding has assumed ever larger proportions, the causes of conflict have become aggravated, and historical hatred has been consolidated.

We are the innocent and provoked (victimised) ones who have lost our rights and have been portrayed by our fierce opponents as aggressors, while in fact we are the ones who have suffered the aggression. A just cause is lost if handed over to a bad or neglectful lawyer. A clear fact is bound to be buried under the debris of ignorance, deception, ambiguity and mutilation if the clarification of this fact is neglected. Facts remain unknown if they are not brought to the attention of researchers. Facts do not reveal themselves; they remain hidden until they are presented clearly, gently, skillfully, respectfully and wisely. Our cause is a just one, the injustice perpetrated against us is intense and the wrong inflicted on us is flagrant.

We are aware that the American people hate injustice and do not approve of aggression. They are interested in knowing the truth. However, the media have swamped them with deception and lies, picturing the wrongdoer as a victim of injustice and the victim of injustice as a wrongdoer, all this in the absence of a party that would clarify the facts and refute the lies.

The Duality of Love and Hatred for American Policy

The duality of love and hate for the American people and American foreign policy is not inseparable.

Thus Americans and American foreign policy are not viewed in the same way. The world hates the unjust American policy, but does not hate Americans. Indeed, it respects this great nation and appreciates the lofty American values. These matters must be clarified for Americans in order to obviate any possible confusion of things. Thus, American President George Bush asked "Why do they hate us?" This question, posed in this manner, suggests that hatred is directed towards all Americans.

But the American President did not try to review the American record in dealing with other peoples, particularly the Palestinian people and the Islamic peoples who suffered a great many American injustices, whether directly or indirectly.

Bush chose not to remember that Israel could not have inflicted such hardships and harm against Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims in such an ugly and tragic manner had it not been for the absolute and unconditional American support. America has provided Israel with advanced deadly

weapons, generous funds, unjust political support and open assistance at all levels, while belittling the feelings of Muslims and showing satisfaction with any action that violates their rights. Even verbal condemnation of Israel for its repeated ugly crimes has been opposed by the American veto, although such a condemnation, had it taken place, would not have had any effect because America, which invariably supports Israel, has proceeded on the assumption that might is right.

For over half a century, Muslims all over the world have felt successive frustrations as a result of continuous American wrongs. Thus although most Islamic countries have sided with America in its conflict against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the United States has still responded to such an alignment by those countries by openly letting them down and by repeatedly standing against the causes of the Arabs and Muslims without even covering such hostile attitudes by resorting to diplomatic methods.

Although the question posed by Bush gives the illusion that Muslims hate all Americans, the truth is that Muslims do not hate the American people; they rather hate the foreign policy of the American administrations that have always sided against them. They realize that the interest of the American people is confined to internal matters and that they do not care about foreign policy unless the administration stirs their fear and hostility against others. Thus, the allegation that hate is directed against all Americans involves a confusion of attitudes and an aggression against the truth. It is necessary to separate the American people who are remote from the twisting of American foreign policy and those

who formulate and implement such a policy. This is because Americans do not care about what goes on outside America and this has made American foreign policy subject to the dictates of a limited number of individuals in the American administration.

The Strategy of Hate and Enmity

To make people believe that they are in danger in their very homeland and to keep frightening them and planting the hatred of others in their hearts for the purpose of winning their support is irresponsible on the part of their leaders to say the very least. Hence, it is not the American people who are to blame. They are under the influence of the illusion of fear that has been implanted in them. The culprits are those who practice such tactics. This is because fear predisposes people to comply with and yield to any course of action which they are made to believe would restore safety and dissipate anxiety. Thus fear confuses them and disrupts their ability to discriminate. It freezes people's consciences, plants hatred and destroys morality. Thus although this state of affairs is a setback to the civilization of any people, the American administration has resorted to frightening American citizens, assisted by the media which has excelled in highlighting and exaggerating the threats which they assure the people are probable and impending. All this has guaranteed for the course of hatred and enmity unprecedented support in America, and is bound to cause irreparable damage to American minds. It would also contaminate the whole world, undermine moral principles and ideals and lead to the degeneration of human civilization.

The American people are not overburdened with the tragedies of history. Therefore, they were free of hatred and *a priori* arbitrary attitudes. They are the most open-minded people on earth, bearing no hatred to religions, cultures or nations. However, certain elements in the present American administration as well as in the American media have filled the souls of Americans with fear of Muslims and attributed to Islam what it is innocent of. They have also propagated ideas that implant hatred and antagonism and serve to fuel enmity. In this manner, some circles in the American administration have managed to win the majority of the American people over to their side and to any decision it takes. This is but one step that paves the way to a stage full of hatred, antagonism, enmity and scorn for others, particularly for Islam and Muslims.

However, the establishment of one's existence on the basis of hatred of others is a horrible strategic mistake. Hatred and antagonism are fateful epidemics that spare no one, not even those who propagate them. They are akin to land mines that do not discriminate between friend or foe. Hatred contaminates and pollutes souls, smothers consciences, spoils minds and transforms people into mobile explosives that may explode at any moment, anywhere, burning those who implanted them before burning those who were targeted.

Such people wish to transform the friendly American people into a people full of grudge. In doing so, they make the biggest of mistakes and inflict great harm on America and indeed on the whole world. Their deeds undermine the faith of people in moral principles and drive them to despair of ever realizing peace and security on earth. They become

convinced that it is impossible to acquire wisdom and cultivate sincerity, objectivity and justice. This state of affairs applies even to those who were thought to represent the highest degree of civilization. It tells the sad and bewildered world that moral ideals are the pretext of the weak; as to those who possess might, and who fear no counter deterrence, it tells them to behave like invaders in old times.

The Clash of Civilizations, or a Clash of Whims?

The theory pertaining to the "Clash of Civilizations" states that the end of the Cold War will usher a new conflict – the conflict between civilizations. Thus peoples and states sharing the same cultures will converge, while the peoples and states of different cultures will diverge. The cultural identity is the main factor that constitutes the converging of states or their hostility. Thus, in terms of this theory, the Western liberal culture will clash with other cultures that have deep, historical roots, a strong presence and a high human density. In his book, *The Clash of Civilizations,* Samuel Huntington maintains that the present hegemony of Western civilization will clash with Islamic civilization in Asia and Africa, with the Confucian civilization in China, with the Orthodox civilization in Russia and Eastern Europe, with the Buddhist civilization in Japan, with the Hindu civilization in India, and with what he calls the Latin American civilization and the African civilization. However, he believes that the real and current challenge to Western civilization comes from Islam and from China, and that the first candidate with which the Western civilization will clash is the Islamic culture which is characterized by renewable vitality.

This theoretical framing of cultural conflict is a mistaken and dangerous endeavor. It is wrong because it ignores the historical and empirical fact which confirms with great clarity and with endless examples that the clash within one and the same civilization is no less violent and recurrent than the clash between two different civilizations. It is dangerous because it gives a kind of legitimacy to aggression in the name of defense of one's civilization, and thus creates hostile inclinations among various civilizations, implants mutual fear, prepares souls for hostile alertness and preparation for retaliation or pre-emption, all this being a result of the spreading of rumors and horror. It, moreover, prompts evil minds to resort to all sorts of instigation of passions to open the way for friction and to fuel conflict. It therefore plans to invoke arguments in its favor and to prepare people for accepting it.

The Theory pertaining to the "Clash of Civilizations" tells only half the truth and hides the other half. Conflict is a perennial phenomenon that keeps erupting among nations. But this is not necessarily attributable to cultural differences. The fact is that the political forces and factors in every culture exploit such differences and entice followers by deception, threats and temptation and by hiding the facts or misinterpreting them. Thus they push to death the deceived groups who are not aware that they are only serving the opportunist objectives of the leaders of hatred and aggression and not defending what is right, just and righteous.

The student of history who contemplates the conditions of humanity and who is interested in becoming acquainted with various cultures will inevitably come to the conclu-

sion that the clash of cultures is not internally motivated., because the great human values are shared by all cultures. Thus all people believe that they are the descendants of Adam and are alike in their innate constitution. There is no culture that does not call for justice and that does not condemn injustice. The majority of people from all cultures believe in the Creator and believe in resurrection and reckoning. They feel they are responsible for their deeds. Thus moral criteria exist in all cultures. No culture appreciates treachery, aggression, injustice, lying, deception, falsehood, slander, obscenity or lewdness. There is no culture that does not advocate good deeds, truthfulness, loyalty, justice and verification of allegations. It is the leaders, those who have vested interest, those who influence people and steer them – it is such people who implant hatred, fuel clashes, deepen malice, block the channels that bring people close together, destroy the bridges of communication and cut off the roots of human brotherhood.

Reason is a divine gift that is granted to all mankind. It is, as Descartes has said, fairly distributed among people of all cultures. If it is spared from being abused, it would be able to discern the many factors of brotherhood and would discover the folly of war and the stupidity of hatred. However, it is whims that prompt the deceived human communities to clash and to reap the harsh consequences of hostilities.

If reason were to be left alone to judge without bias, it would never be inclined to conflict. It would rather seek to establish peace and cooperation among all people. Reason implies the use of persuasion rather than subjugation. The higher the reason in the field of culture the better it will be

disposed to discover the follies of conflict. Therefore, humanity is originally predisposed to unity and to shun conflict among nations. As to the factors of conflict, these are contingent factors contrived by rulers, warmongers and those who have vested interests and greedy ambitions. Conflict is not in the nature of civilizations or religions. The fact is that the greedy ambitious may exploit great principles and benign teachings in order to prompt groups within one and the same culture to become involved in conflict or to push groups of different cultures to such enmity as leads to the breaking out of wars.

The facts of history and of reality confirm that conflict among civilizations does not emanate from their nature but rather from the misapplication of their nature. This can be seen in the fact that conflict occurs within every civilization and within every religion where it probably occurs more often and more violently than among different civilizations. History provides countless cases of intra-civilization conflict, whether in the name of combating terrorism, resisting deviation, combating heresies or opposing corruption; in the name of class or racial superiority, nationalism, the preservation of the purity of the faith, of putting an end to injustice and privileges and the achievement of equality; on the pretext of national interest, of defense of dignity, the safeguarding of sovereignty, the defense of national soil, or other pretexts. Thus the names and titles of pretexts may vary according to various whims and as cases and conditions dictate.

During the last centuries, Europe was a theater for the most violent and longest conflicts within one and the same

civilization. Thus religious wars erupted between the various Christian sects and were more violent and bloody than those with Muslims. The conflict between Catholics and Protestants is well known, and it still persists in Ireland today.

Although liberties prevail in democratic communities and despite the spreading of individualism in the West and although the relative neutralization of religion in everyday life has achieved closeness, understanding and harmony between Catholics and Protestants, the discord with the Orthodox Christians in Russia and Eastern Europe is still so strong that Western Catholics and Protestants consider that the Orthodox Christians belong to a different civilization and that they have nothing in common with them except the name of Christianity. Thus some Western scholars consider that Orthodox Christians belong to a civilization that is different from Western civilization despite the fact that all of them are Christians, although the Theory pertaining to the Clash of Civilizations considers that religion is the common cultural axis.

Despite the obvious fact that conflict has occurred and does occur within civilizations, including Western civilization, the theoreticians of the Clash of Civilizations may have facilitated the task of the leaders who wish to dominate on the pretext of preserving Western values or combating terrorism. Such theorizing has given them the illusion that their actions are sound, moral, and even great. Thus the acts of the American administration, together with the American media, prove that. after September 11, the American administration embarked, together with the media, on a campaign

that spreads fear, implants hatred and exaggerates the illusions relative to the clash of civilizations in order to obtain the support of the American people and world public opinion. This was because it realizes that when people are under the influence of fear and anger, their attention becomes confined to safety and the search for security, forgetting all about the facts of history and of realities. American history itself provides stark evidence that conflict is not confined to one and the same community. Thus the American Civil War was not a conflict between two civilizations, but was one within a Western civilization; indeed it took place within one and the same homeland. And yet, such living facts disappear and people become oblivious of them at the time of fear.

Now since conflict has been raging for centuries and is still raging within one and the same civilization and within one and the same religion, this confirms that it occurs not on account of cultural differences but because of differences in political interests, and that it proceeds according to the desires of the conflicting forces, whether within one and the same civilization or between two forces belonging to two different civilizations. Thus conflict will continue to erupt and people will have their differences as long as they have different whims, multiple desires and divergent interests.

The history of humanity and of civilization is a very complex one; its movement cannot be reduced to one single factor or to the attempt to attribute it to cultural differences. In principle, civilizations should benefit from one another. They should complement rather than clash with one another. They all constitute tributaries flowing into the common river

of humanity. If they are left to move in accordance with their own internal nature, they will converge and merge, but will diverge and clash if the political leaderships or influential forces have different interests so desire.

The Common Bases for the Dialogue Between Civilizations

Civilizations basically involve dialogue, communication, mutual fertilization and cooperation in respect of all that is good. Such sagacity for cooperation is based on a number of common grounds. Thus civilizations do not in themselves clash. The conflict, contradiction and confrontation that befall the people of civilizations are an abuse of civilization and are contrary to the principles, ideals and moral criteria which civilizations are built upon. Conflict between civilizations ignores the common denominators that exist among all civilizations and attempts to desiccate the springs of cooperation and to undermine the bases for convergence. Therefore, it is important to remind ourselves of such bases and to present samples of them, as follows:

1. The first pillar of communication between civilizations is **"the brotherhood of humanity"**. This brotherhood of humanity is a factual matter in view of the common origin. For all human beings are descendants of Adam. In describing the relation between prophets with their people, the Holy Qur'an has appealed to this common origin in as much as it is a means of communication and mutual recognition. Thus this appeal is repeated in the Holy Qur'an: **"O men! We have created you all out of**

a male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another." (49: 13) The Qur'an has also used the term "brotherhood" and stressed the relationship of each prophet with his people, despite their denying his message, **"And to 'Aad (We have sent) their brother Hud", "And to Thamud (We have sent) their brother Saleh"**, etc.

This is a confirmation of the essence of human bonds which, regardless of different religions, may be mobilized in the communication and exchange between civilizations and human beings, through which may pass the exchange of civic interests, the calls of religion and the messages of prophets. Hence the Holy Qur'an stresses the tactful approach to non-Muslims because convincing them requires proper and civil communication with them.

2. The second basis for communication between civilizations is the "c**ommon human natural disposition"** which comprises the totality of moral values that are deeply rooted in human beings and whose manifestations are seen in the agreement of all men on common human values, such as the appreciation of justice and the frowning on injustice and the respect of all virtues.

   The common area that is naturally and mutually agreed upon varies with the effect and overlap of good and evil in many spheres. Thus lying is ugly, but the hatred of its ugliness recedes before the virtue of achieving reconciliation among men, for in

such case, the ugly lying is transformed into a welcome tactic if it aims at achieving reconciliation among people. Thus the area of overlap between the ugliness of lying and the beauty of conciliation is subject to variation in people's attitudes. In this connection the area of overlap between good and evil becomes remote till it reaches the exploitation of the least doubt of overlap between good and evil for the justification of ugly matters.

The political form of *The Prince* is perhaps a form of arbitrariness in the extension of such area of overlap. But despite this type of deviation, the common human moral values remain a universal fact that transcends the differences that exist among civilizations. It builds a bridge that is immune to distortion and exploitation and connects people together. This amount of natural disposition provides a great common heritage on which the great moral edifice of human co-existence can be built.

3. **The religious instinct** is the third basis of communication, integration and co-existence. In its essence, this instinct supports the moral stance of man. It creates therewith moral values that man respects. As a matter of fact, no religion is devoid of moral values that respect human co-existence. Indeed, they lend support to it, and exceptions confirm the rule. Thus eagerness to preach to others paves the way for respecting them, and faith in reward and retribution in the hereafter is a moral basis for the respect of human rights. Thus it is possible to discover the fac-

tors that protect human co-existence in all religions for the consolidation of the moral foundations of co-existence between civilizations.

4. The fourth basis for the harmony between civilizations is **reason,** which is the greatest common denominator among people. Thus despite the various tribal postulates and legends, and despite the hindrances standing in the way of scientific thinking, reason remains the first means of human communication. Civilizations have in fact been in contact with one another and borrowed from one another knowledge, skills and many other things. The cultural contact has led to the improvement of the chances of peaceful co-existence in many cases, through the common denominators and common interests it creates.
5. **Common interests** constitute the fifth basis for integration between cultures. This is because every man / woman needs others for managing his or her affairs. Each community is in need of other communities. No people can completely do without other peoples. Indeed, the richest and most advanced people need to market their products and obtain raw materials from beyond their territory. Therefore, mutual interests constitute one of the springs of human brotherhood and one aspect of the dialogue between civilizations that is beneficial to all parties. On the other hand, conflict leads to the squandering of potentials and the weakening of all that is directly or indirectly connected therewith. God Almighty has created hu-

man beings to serve one another, which means they need one another. Such a state of affairs gives rise to a relationship of mutual interest whereby people need one another and thus a wide area of cultural interaction occurs among nations.

The foregoing are types of the common peaceful linking civilizations to one another. They nurture co-existence among nations and confirm the importance of cooperation between the members of different cultures. Through them the means of communication are provided for each nation with other nations pursuant to their interests and objectives. Conflict exhausts resources more than it fosters them. Even in the case of the disputes, conflicts and wars that are waged in the name of nationalistic and national interests, the costs outweigh the benefits. Hence conflict is contrary to reason and interests and negates virtues and morality. Conflict arises as a result of muscles outweighing reason. But when reason functions properly and controls whims and emotions, it achieves concord and harmony and excludes the logic of muscles, which is the basis of force, crudeness and primitiveness.

Restoration of Respect for Principles and Values is inevitable

It is necessary for the American people to realize, and this is the purpose of our address to them, that those that admire America were stunned and greatly perplexed when they saw that the American people had accepted the excep-

tional procedures adopted by the American administration. This is because the alteration of laws, the acceptance of what is akin to a state of emergency, the constraining of liberties, the lengthening of procedures that restrict the movement of people, the exaggeration of the security obsession, the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (which is extraordinary for America), the acceptance of procedures that are similar to the way of dealing with people in the Third World, the storming into houses, the detaining of people without concrete charges, the savage treatment of prisoners, the abusing of human dignity at Guantanamo and the deliberate flexing of muscles – all these things may, in time, lead to changing the American cultural set up, from an open to a closed culture, from a tolerant to a fanatic culture, from a cheerful, bright-faced culture to a gloomy culture, from a growing to an eroded culture, from a culture based on persuasion to one that relies on subjugation, from the culture of wisdom to that of force, from the culture of reason to that of muscle!

Those who are familiar with American culture find it difficult to imagine that American society could possibly accept such a serious and sudden deterioration. In this type of turmoil, the American administration may seriously impair American minds. It may make American people forget the great principles that have raised America to this lofty position. Thus there is nothing worse than cultural seclusion after absolute openness. There is nothing more harmful to the mind, to man, to justice and to civilization than to resort to force as an arbiter and to abandon the logic of thought.

However, as we write this address, we are full of hope

that America will revert to the roots of its greatness and to rise above the base yielding to unbridled emotions. The psychological condition of the American administration at present is not consistent with the great principles on which American life is based, nor with the fertility and richness of its cultural experiment.

A great country does not base its decisions on emotions and fits of anger. A great country is far from yielding to the dictates of emotions, bigotry and seclusion. It does not scorn others. Its greatness springs from its composure and serenity, its ability to control its anger and its endeavor to understand all views and attitudes no matter how different they may be from what it desires or from what it believes to be right. The true criterion of lofty morality is the refraining from vengeance when it is within one's means to inflict it and the exercise of self control when under the influence of anger.

America is not a tower that is destroyed or a building that collapses. It is, rather, one of the most colossal human experiments, the most fertile and the richest. It was based on the principles of liberty, openness, tolerance, trust, the respect of man's individuality and showing concern for man's views and needs. Individuals are the frame of reference, while the political authority is no more than an executive agency. We therefore believe that the American people will not trifle with the pillars of their greatness. Their leaders, their intellectuals and their rational activists will activate their rational thought so that the American administration will recover from the shock of anger and return to serenity and reason. The nature of the American culture confirms the

inevitable growth of the currents of wisdom and the retreat of the current of force.

We follow with respect and admiration the alertness of the American people and their tendency towards wisdom and rationality. We also follow the objective discussions, by some American rulers, intellectuals and activists, of the current problems. We appreciate such free voices and feel certain that America will not abandon its way of life which has secured for it its comprehensive prosperity.

We are certain of the proper response. This is because Western culture in general, and American culture in particular, is a totally open one. It considers the truth a basic value. We are absolutely certain that it would not abandon this great characteristic because, through it, it has been able to develop itself in a continuous and amazing way. It has been able to develop sciences and to continue to diversify them. With such openness and interaction it has achieved and is achieving great success in all fields. It adopts objective and systematic research for reaching the various facts and building ideas and opinions, determining tendencies and adopting understanding and dialogue as a method of communication. It does not close the door of dialogue on account of mere prejudice. It has rather predisposed people to listen to all ideas and views and to give the chance to all trends to express themselves and attitudes and to explain the justification of such attitudes. We have therefore decided to address, through this letter, the open Western mind that builds its views and ideas, beliefs and attitudes on persuasion and not on subjugation.

We make this address to the Western nations in general,

and to the American people in particular, particularly because we know that they are eager to know the true and correct facts. Their life is built on information, ideas, discussion, persuasion, transparency, and not on ambiguity, the concealing of facts, intimidation and subjugation.

We are quite optimistic that American culture cannot possibly tolerate the continued silencing of rational critical voices under any pretext. Not only that, but it is a fact that American culture has been established and has prospered by giving equal opportunities to all views. It has enabled critics and those in the opposition to use all peaceful means to make their voices heard and to proclaim their points of view.

Terrorism: Concept, History and Causes

The Capricious Concept

The concept of terrorism is a typical example of the manipulation of concepts and the abuse of mottos. Those who are powerful describe those who oppose them as terrorists, whether on the internal level, as in the cases of occupation or dictatorship, or on the international level, as in the case of the United States after it has assumed unique power. Thus in the name of combating terrorism, it has invaded Afghanistan, followed by Iraq, and threatens to continue such invasions of other countries. In other words, it has come to treat the world as dictators treat their oppressed peoples!

It is assumed that all that frightens people, collectively, and spreads fear and intimidation in their souls is included under the term "terrorism". Thus whenever a type of terrorism is characterized by continuity and universality, such as tyranny, dictatorship persistent oppression, and crimes of violence, it would have priority of concern and should be eradicated in order to liberate people from continuous fear and perpetual intimidation. For example, crimes of violence are not just fleeting events. They rather persist in the life of certain communities like the American community. And yet they do not get serious attention for combating them or for confining them to the narrowest possible limit.

Wars also fill human life with fear, terror and misery. They break out for the most trivial of reasons, such as for a dispute over a piece of land, and may sometimes go on for

decades. Yet, although wars are the ugliest occurrences in the life of humanity and the most frequent and recurrent, they are not called terrorism because the killing that is done within them is done openly and in an organized and codified manner!

When considering the concept of terrorism we find that America has never accepted any definition available, despite the many attempts made by the international community. This is because it wishes to confine it to the practices of its enemies or those who oppose Israel. Nor does it wish to consider any action as a terrorist one, no matter how cruel it is, unless practiced by a non-governmental party. It wishes to confine it to individual actions of a political character in order to exclude itself and the terrorist actions perpetrated by Israel. Yet it wishes at the same time to brand some countries with terrorism. So it circumscribed this dilemma and divided terrorists into practitioners, supporters and sympathizers. Thus it brands one organization as terrorist and another as financing or sympathizing with terrorism; one state as a sponsor and another as one which harbors terrorists. Thus the characterizations are expanded to include all whom America is unhappy with, which means the exclusion of any criterion that may be invoked. So in the absence of criteria and laws, whims and desires become the arbiters in the international order.

Why 9/11 Only?

We do not underestimate the feeling of horror that spread in the United States following the September 11 events, which claimed the lives of so many civilians. The killing

of innocent people, or even a single individual, cannot ever be justified. The Holy Qur'an says: **"If anyone slays a human being unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth – it shall be as though he had slain all mankind"** (5: 132)

Thus, killing an innocent person is killing the principle of the right to live, which is guaranteed by all religions. However, this presupposes that the world should stand against every unjust killing and confront any aggression. But it has, before and after these events, witnessed acts of injustice and tragedies, and yet it did not act, as it should have, to save the victims of injustice, the miserable and the displaced, or at least to show that it is aware of their existence and to care for their suffering.

However, no sooner had the September 11 events occurred than humanity was terribly shaken. Now we may ask whether this commotion and boiling, conflagrations, threats, invasions, the destruction of cities and the terrifying of people is any way to avenge those who died in the events of September 11?

Terrorism is not unusual in the life of humanity. Nations and peoples have suffered from it throughout the ages, just as individuals and groups did in all countries, and people are still suffering from the variety of its manifestations. However, there is just one type which is the least common, namely individual, political terrorism which started after the events of New York and Washington, and which seems to be a disaster of unprecedented in magnitude.

Now because the events took place in America, they were magnified and highlighted as though humanity had never witnessed aggression, as though it had never seen wars,

crimes and horrible massacres. Thus, individual, political terrorism, to the exclusion of other types of domination, terrorism, crime and aggression, came to occupy the central attention of the world, as though it were the only issue that preoccupies it.

Erick Morris and Alan Hugh have indicated in their book on terrorism the serious consequences of the deliberate exaggeration of the phenomenon of political terrorism and of underestimating and ignoring the serious issues from which humanity is suffering. They pointed out that twelve thousand people are killed every year in the United States alone in crimes of violence, that a quarter of a million violent assaults take place every year, and that a larger number are killed in individual disputes or in car accidents. In other words, their number exceeds the number of those who are killed in acts of terrorism throughout the world!

This being the case, why has the issue of political terrorism suddenly jumped to the forefront of world attention after the events in New York and Washington? The world did not turn of its own free will to this concentration on the terrorist activities of certain non-official political groups. It is the United States that has pushed it to this although the world is suffering from many other serious problems which are by far more urgent, more dangerous and more damaging.

The United States has not declared war on the wide meaning of the term terrorism which has disrupted human life. It has rather confined its war to the so-called non-governmental "political terrorism". This manipulation of the concept of terrorism is not new. It has always been subject to the capriciousness of those who use the term. The other is always

hell. Thus after the split between the leaders of the French Revolution at the end of the Eighteenth Century, each group used to brand the other with terrorism. For example, when the Nazis occupied France in the Second World War, they labeled the men who made up the French resistance as terrorists. All governments of occupation describe people of national resistance as terrorists. Dictatorial, military and oppressive governments describe political opponents as terrorists, although the latter are only confronting official terrorism, which is armed to the teeth and enjoys unlimited resources, leaving desperate individual terrorism as the only means available to them.

But the United States now applies this description to all who oppose it or who resist Israel, or who try not to yield to the trends of the one pole: "Those who are not with us are with terrorism". Thus, according to American characterization, all those who oppose America are designated as terrorists. Therefore this organization is designated terrorist and that state harbors terrorists or sponsors terrorism, and that institution finances terrorists and another has relations and sympathizes with them or is a place for hatching them! The brands are variegated with the various groups who are subject to the wrath of America.

What has precluded international agreement on a specific definition of terrorism is the fact that successive American administrations, as well as other parties, insist on confining terrorism to individuals or non-governmental organizations in order to exclude the terrorism carried out by states, such as Israeli terrorism, and they stipulate that individual violence should have political objectives in order to exclude the

non-political criminal violence, such as the Mafia.

Moreover, America does not wish to consider an act of terrorism as terrorism unless it is performed on an international scale. But as for Israel's shelling of civilian quarters, demolishing of houses over the heads of their inhabitants, and spreading terror among innocent civilians, then all this is not considered terrorism but is in America's opinion and those that support America justified self-defense. Even the invasion of this or that country, the violation of international laws, the use of the most savage means of destruction, all this, in its opinion, is not terrorism, but is a declared and codified war.

Thus the use of force is not terrorism, even if it fills the hearts of millions of people with fear, terror and devastating shock, and even if such a shock causes irreparable psychological and irreversible damage to innocent women and children. As long as this is a declared and open violence that does not strike and disappear, that does not operate underground but openly proclaims itself and continues to perpetrate killing and destruction openly and is transmitted live by the media, it is not considered as terrorism in the eyes of those who possess power, because it happens to frighten people openly and does not strike them all of a sudden. Thus, its being overt in the eyes of its perpetrators renders it legitimate destruction and permissible terrorism!

The Rise of Terrorist Organizations

It is easy for the teeming media and for those who control public opinion to conceal the stark facts and to hide the cruel injustices when these emanate from the powerful, and to

highlight and exaggerate small events if they emanate from the weak. In this dual process of concealment and highlighting the wrong conceptions, unfair judgments are formed, with the result that the truth is lost and the unjust become just and the oppressed become terrorists.

This is what happened and what is happening in the Western media in respect to political terrorism, which was doubly detrimental to Palestinians in particular and to Muslims in general. Thus instead of their being portrayed as wronged and terrified victims – as in fact they are – the biased Western media have portrayed them as unjust and frightening. Under the influence of the Zionist forces that interpenetrate the Western media, they highlighted and intensified the coverage of the Palestinian sacrificial operations and portrayed them as terrorist operations that are frightening to the whole world, although they target none but Israel because it has occupied their homeland, demolished their houses and shelled civilians in their homes and markets and perpetrated horrible massacres against them. However, the biased media ignored all this and reviled the defensive sacrificial acts and distorted them as though they had no precedents in history. This media deluge was keen to conceal the fact that political terrorism is a European invention and tried to make the world believe that political terrorism is a Palestinian invention. Later on, after the events in New York and Washington in 2001, the media expanded the scope of the description to make political terrorism an Islamic feature, although Islam is the religion of peace, mercy and brotherhood.

Although Western historians and scholars have cautioned in their documented writings against this wrong conception

and repeatedly reminded people that political terrorism has a very old history, and that those who are protesting in Europe and the West in general were in fact the first to establish terrorist organizations, whether in ancient or in modern times, and that the Western revolutionaries in the Twentieth Century have antedated the organization and practices of political terrorism, people are nonetheless affected by the overwhelming daily media. On the other hand, the effect of the objective writings that reveal the concealed facts is confined to intellectuals, scholars and researchers. But the common people do not read such writings, which consequently have no effect on them. The truth is always the first victim of the conflicts that are mobilized by whims, because theirs are the loudest voices that are heard.

It is, therefore, important to point out that Western historians and researchers who are concerned with the phenomenon of political terrorism confirm emphatically and repeatedly that it is historically established that terrorist organizations arose first in the West and that the contagion spread to other nations through imitation, whether in the form of terrorist organizations of purely criminal character, such as the Mafia, or political terrorist organizations, such as the Red Brigades in Italy, the Action Direct Movement in France, the Red Army in Japan, the Irish Republican Army in Ireland, the Basque Separatist Movement in Spain, the German Bader Mainhof and the violent protest movements which erupted in Europe and the United States in 1968.

Reporting on these, Erick Morris and Alan Hugh say in their book, *Terrorism***:**

"The idea of the political terrorism organization appeared

for the first time in underground organizations in Italy and Spain. Subsequently, the idea of such organizations moved to Germany before they became known to the Russians. Anarchists and revolutionists used letter bombs and explosive devices in their attacks which spared no European capital. It is futile to think that the Japanese Red Army, the Black September Group or the Islamic Jihad Group have devised something unknown to their predecessors."

They also say:

"While the security forces were seeking to confront this terrorism, the first signs of terrorism in the Middle East began to arrive in Europe."

In other words, the resort to armed resistance by the Palestinians came very late, whether in response to the occupation and displacement which took place in 1948, or in respect to the practicing of this type of struggle which had been organized and practiced by Europeans before them.

However, because political violence such as the hijacking of aircraft, the holding of hostages, the blowing up of facilities and the harassment of elderly persons involves a great deal of excitement, the visual and audible media have exploited such events repeatedly, alarmingly and dramatically. Subsequently, they intensified and escalated the dramatization when Palestinian resistance began to use a tiny part of that type of resistance in order to draw the attention of the world to the tragedy of a people dispelled from its land and displaced from its homeland, who lead in diaspora a miserable life hardly experienced by any other people, with few caring about its condition. Thus prompted by the desire to dramatize events and being biased, the Western media has

resorted to over-exaggeration, over-intensification and over dramatization. As Morris and his colleague have said:

"The events provided the press and the media with material that abounds in excitement. The first result of this was that public opinion began to look at terrorism as a total novelty." Thus the biased media deluge, intoxicated by such exciting material, has given people the impression that political terrorism is a new Islamic phenomenon that has overwhelmed humanity, that it represents the major dilemma facing the world and that the whole world must be mobilized to combat it. However, while terrorism should not be underestimated and should be combated, it must be pointed out that terrorist organizations emerged in the West in the first place, as unmistakably and clearly indicated by Western historians and researchers. It should also be pointed out that any objective assessment of human problems will reveal that political terrorism is in the first place the problem of occupiers, dictators and the powerful who scorn and disdain anything that they consider prejudicial to their power and pride.

As to the hundreds of millions of miserable people everywhere, these are plunged in more horrible, more permanent and more extensive problems, such as poverty, the failures of development, widespread disease, the lack of money that is necessary for protection and treatment, as well as social injustice, political tyranny, the depletion of public funds on armament, illiteracy, ignorance, the failure of teaching capabilities, unemployment, lack of training, sheer racial and class discrimination, civil wars, racial disputes, interdenominational fighting, border clashes, destructive floods, recurring droughts, lack of funds for constructing dams and

the erection of barriers, the regulation of irrigation and other major chronic dilemmas that many peoples are greatly and continuously, but not casually, suffering from.

For America, problems are only those that disturb it. Such restriction involves a great deal of misleading and of sheer injustice. To prove this, suffice it to consider the statistics of those who are killed in wars and conflicts, in car accidents, in criminal violence, the millions of children who die of malnutrition or of lack of medical treatment, as well as those who die of endemic diseases in poor countries, the poor victims of floods who have no means to protect themselves and the victims of drugs.

If all the above causes of death are compared with all who have died as a result of political violence during the past half century, it will become manifest that this boiling over individual political violence is not objectively warranted. As to the damage that befalls hundreds of millions of people everywhere and fills the globe with unhappiness and misery, this does not find the care and attention it deserves. Therefore, it is incumbent on humanity to repair this defect and to arrange dilemmas in a manner that is commensurate with the number of people affected. This will bring the combating of political violence into the general context of human problems, and will not confine attention to this overwhelming and sweeping concentration or give it such absolute priority that has perplexed human life and created a great deal of tension, fear, disruption and paralysis all over the world.

PART II

- **The Wahhabi Movement**
- **Religious Education in Saudi Arabia**
- **Women's Education and Work in Saudi Arabia**
- **Human Rights in Saudi Arabia**
- **The Goal of Jihad is the Establishment of Peace**
- **Charities in Saudi Arabia**
- **Non-Islamic Places of Worship in Saudi Arabia**

The Wahhabi Movement
Reference, History and Practice

The Wahhabi Movement: Chronology and Reference

People in the vast desert of the Arabian Peninsula were in constant strife. The strong would devour the weak. The inter-fighting between tribes and clans was a permanent feature of their life. They plundered and raided one another. People were under constant fear, coercion, poverty and overwhelmed by superstition. In the arid valleys, people were almost completely isolated from the centers of civilization. They were not, practically speaking, subordinate to any civilized authority. Thus there was a dire need for a reformation movement that would guide this incongruous dispersion and transform it into a congruous community wherein order, brotherhood and harmony prevail.

Such a challenging task was taken up by Sheikh Muhammad Abdul Wahhab – may God bless his soul - whose movement was a reformist Islamic one that aimed at restoring the true creed of Muslims and ridding them of all heresies and superstitions. It also aimed at establishing harmony, combating discord, stopping the inter-fighting and creating a civilized community wherein order and discipline would prevail.

The healthy and reformist intellectual effect of the Movement was not confined to a narrow sphere wherein it had a political authority, but was rather extended to many locations in the world and has produced great results and benefits in our modern Islamic world.

The Wahhabi Movement and the Establishment of the Saudi State

The Wahhabi Movement was committed to a peaceful style that is quite remote from violence and that is based on persuasion and rational reasoning. Thus its motto was that ordained by God: "**Call [all mankind] to your Sustainer's path with wisdom and goodly exhortation"** (16: 125) However, local and regional leaders saw in reformation a threat to their influence. So they confronted this peaceful approach with one of pursuit, violence and killing. Now since the country was not, at the time, subject to a central authority, with each tribe having its own sheikh, and each village its own emir, and because the movement was fought by most of the leaders, Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab concluded a covenant with the Chief of Al-Dir'iyah, Prince Muhammad bin Saud, for the propagation of the principles of the movement and the protection of its missionaries. This covenant between the two men came to be known as the 1744 Dir'iyah Agreement, which historians consider to be the true beginning of the first Saudi State. The Sheikh continued, with the support of Prince Muhammad bin Saud, to call unto people with wisdom and goodly exhortation.

The objective of the movement was to regulate the relationship between the Creator and the created and the establishment of justice and order among people. **Thus its objective was to restore Islam to what it was during the time of the Prophet, may God's blessings be upon him, and to apply it in terms of worship, Shari'ah and manners, and to set up a co-operative Islamic community regulated by an Islamic state.** This was embodied by the first, second and third Saudi States (the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia).

The Motive Behind the Reformist Movement and its Major Goals

This reformist movement took place in Najd at a time when it was in dire need of reform in all religious and mundane aspects. The spread of superstition and *shirk* (association of deities with God), the deviation from the guidance of Islam, the spread of heresies, the predominance of false traditions and customs, the frequent resorting by people to quacks, sorcerers and magicians, which led to the deterioration of social, economic, political and religious conditions – all these things constituted urgent reasons for the reformist movement in order to restore people to the purity of monotheism and the sincere devotion to God, the Sustainer of the worlds. This is the major issue in Islam and in all monotheist religions; it is the basic task shouldered by reformists in Islam throughout successive generations.

Thus, once monotheism is firmly and squarely established, there would follow the duty of calling for all that is good, enjoining the doing of what is right, and forbidding the doing of what is wrong in order to ensure the continuity of a healthy community and an orderly life, to realize cooperation, solidarity and love among people, pursuant to God's order: "**You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind: you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and you believe in God. Now if the followers of earlier revelation had attained to [this kind of] faith, it would have been for their own good."** (3: 110)

Before the advent of the *da'wah* (call), people in Najd lived in a state of utter chaos in respect of religion and mun-

dane life. They had no unifying authority, no judges, and no courts to decide on disputes and establish what is right. As a result of the rise of the Wahhabi reformist *da'wah,* with the assistance of the Saudi State, great results were achieved, including the following:

1. **The establishment of security and order:** Chaos was prevailing in the regions now known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, particularly in Najd and in the desert regions. There was a dire need for a reformist *da'wah* and a legitimate authority that would provide security for people and guard their lives, families and property, that would establish justice, adjudicate between people, apply the punishments prescribed by the Shari'ah, disseminate knowledge, learning and all that is good, combat evil and injustice, enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, pursuant to God's commands.
2. **The Dissemination of learning and the combating of ignorance, and pulling people out from the condition of superstition and the domination of obscurities.** The reformist *da'wah* emerged and was instrumental in the establishment of the Saudi State in an age of backwardness and ignorance, blind imitation and predominance of illiteracy in most aspects of the life of the individual and the community. All this has made the emergence of the *da'wah* an indispensable necessity.
3. **The establishment of community life and the elimination of disunity:** it is a fact that Muslims

were afflicted by divisions, dispersion and dispute as a result of the proliferation of whims, heresies, ignorance, the abandoning of religion, and following the paths of temptation, passions and suspicions. This had given rise to the kind of humiliation and failure which God has warned against in the Qur'an **"Do not [allow yourselves to] be at variance with one another, lest you lose heart and your moral strength desert you."** (8: 46) Therefore, it was absolutely necessary to reform the conditions of the nation in respect of creed, worship, knowledge, authority, economy and community life.

All these motives and reasons for the emergence of the reformist *da'wah* are justified from the reasonable and equitable point of view of Shari'ah, and on objective and historical grounds. Indeed they were urgent causes for its emergence. So when the *da'wah* did emerge it addressed itself to reforming all those aspects and succeeded in achieving valuable, positive and praiseworthy results.

Dissemination through Persuasion, not through Subjugation

In their endeavor to propagate the *da'wah*, Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab and the *da'wah* scholars, even after the establishment of the Saudi State, adopted various peaceful ways and means, including: the method of "exhortation, teaching and oration" for expounding the *da'wah* principles as well as the method of written "messages" which

were exchanged by the scholars of this *da'wah* and the people of the various regions inside and outside the Arabian Peninsula, together with the method of "debates" with the scholars of those regions, and of "writing books" that deal with the essence of the *da'wah*.

Despite the obstacles, the *da'wah* had the benefit of positive factors that contributed to its success not only in the Arabian Peninsula but also beyond, in Asia and Africa. The establishment of the Saudi State was the greatest success of the *da'wah,* as it contributed to a great extent to its dissemination throughout and beyond the Arabian Peninsula till it reached Indonesia in the east and Nigeria in the west.

The nature of the *da'wah* principles was the most important factor for its dissemination; for they were clear-cut, easy to understand and consistent with sound common sense. They are quite remote from complexities and philosophical matters. Indeed, they are principles derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. They are an invitation to pure Islam that is devoid of *shirk,* heresies and superstitions.

Moreover, the Wahhabi Movement was a natural response to the deterioration of the conditions of the Muslims as a result of the spread of *shirk*, heresies and superstitions among them, together with the associated political weakness, economic malaise and social backwardness. All this has paved the way for its acceptance in many Islamic regions. The reformists and missionaries that had adopted it found people

who were ready to accept it, and ears that were open and receptive, and people who supported and stood by them.

It is well known that the peaceful method was the preponderant feature of the majority of *da'wahs* which were influenced by the Wahhabi Movement, which is committed to the method of educating people and communicating the message of God through wisdom and goodly exhortation, as the Holy Qur'an has enjoined. All the *da'wahs* affected by it in Asia and Africa have followed the same method. Hence they found acceptance in the regions where they appeared, even when they were deprived of political authority.

Thus when the colonialist armies overcame the force of the *da'wah* adherents in many of the Islamic countries that were influenced by the Wahhabi Movement, the *da'wah* continued to spread in those countries by peaceful means, and succeeded to a large extent. This was seen in its adherents in Indonesia, India, China and Western Turkistan, as well as in Libya, Algeria, West Africa and many other places.

The Effects of the Spread of the *Da'wah* in the Islamic World

A fair researcher will appreciate the purity and sincerity of the Wahhabi *da'wah* and its adoption of the method of persuasion, when he realizes that it emanated from a small village in the depth of the Arabian Peninsula desert, namely the village of Dir'iyah. It

was from this inactive village which was known only to its inhabitants and those around them, that the dazzling ray has darted and led to the establishment of a state of vast expanse. Thus the Wahhabi *da'wah* was like a bright light that illuminated an obscure night, while people were asleep, and awakened the sleeping people throughout the whole Islamic community, and opened their eyes to this blessed *da'wah* in which they found what they mostly needed for restoring them to the purity of Islam, the activation of reason and the glowing awakening of conscience.

It may be said that the spread of the Wahhabi *da'wah* throughout the Islamic World during the last two centuries has produced many religious, political and cultural results. A fairly-minded researcher cannot ignore the role of this *da'wah* after considering the condition of the Islamic community before and after it, whereupon its effect on the religious, political and cultural spheres would become clear.

Religion-wise, this *da'wah* has played a major role in spreading true Islamic consciousness and true creed among Muslims in the regions it entered. Thus ever since its inception, it sought by all possible means to effect the return of Muslims to the fundamentals of true Islam because this is an important pillar for a decent life. It is to be noticed that the conditions during which this *da'wah* emerged in any Islamic country were similar to a great extent, having been preceded by the spread of superstitions, heresies and

shirk and their confusion with matters relating to the true Islamic creed.

Moreover, the effect of the spread of the Wahhabi *da'wah* on the cultural and intellectual awakening in the Islamic World is abundantly clear. This is reflected in scholarly activities whose effects have emerged through what is taking place between its adherents and opponents in terms of the debates, discussions and contentions between them, whereby each group tried to support their positions by adducing all sorts of evidence and proofs. This has given rise to a colossal scholarly and intellectual resurgence after the intellectual and scholarly stagnation that had befallen the Islamic World for a long period.

The Variety of Islamic Trends

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is committed to Islam and follows the Hanbali School of jurisprudence, which is one of the four major schools of jurisprudence in Islam. **Thus Imam Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab was not the author of an independent school but was rather an adherent to Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal.** Saudi Arabia follows the Hanbali School, just as Turkey follows the Hanafi School and the Maghrib follows the Maliki School and Yemen, the Shafi'i School. These are branches in respect of matters of jurisprudence and *ijtihad* (jurisprudential opinions). However, the basics of the creed are one and the same.

Islam allows a wide area of pluralism within its general framework. This wide area has allowed the establishment of many schools of jurisprudence within Islam, each recognizing the legitimacy of, and deriving views from, the other schools in an intimate fellowship that exchanges respect and knowledge. None of these schools claim to have the final say; each of them, rather, state that it endeavors to give a correct opinion, although they admit that they may be wrong in certain respects and none of them attributes infallibility to the originator of its school, since the possibility of being wrong is in the very nature of man.

Thus they all believe in the teaching of the Noble Prophet which asserts that all men are liable to make mistakes and that the best of those who make mistakes are those who repent. It also asserts that man is rewarded twice if he tries hard to give a right opinion, and once, if he tries hard and produces a wrong opinion, that God forgives mistakes, forgetfulness and what man is coerced to do.

Moreover, Muslims move within a wide space of values that makes available to them many choices. This has led to a variety of interests and differences of priorities among the Islamic trends. Thus the differences among Muslims relate to questions of priority. What is given top priority by one group may be given a different priority by another group. Thus although they do agree on the importance of all these values, they may differ over their order in the scale of priorities depending on their different views and

evaluation of conditions and potentials.
This difference in the ordering of priorities permits a certain group of Muslims to focus their attention on certain priorities while other groups may have other interests and focus their efforts on spheres that another group does not give much attention to. Moreover, this wide space makes possible another sphere of pluralism in understanding religious texts (the Qur'an and the Sunnah) within strict and precise principles and criteria. Hence the emergence of groups of various interests and different priorities.

Wahhabism: The Unfair Assessment

It is unfair to give a description of something that is the opposite of its true nature and to give an evaluation that is contrary to its reality. This is what happened and what is happening to the reformist *da'wah* of Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab which spread in the Arabian Peninsula and whose benefit reached several Islamic countries, and whose effects have been reflected in the security and peace of the region, and beyond.

The Wahhabi *da'wah* was established on the principles of religious and moral reformation, and in light of the path ordained by the Creator Who knows what is best for His creatures. Its fruits were reflected in the undermining of individual and tribal terrorism. With the help of the Saudi political authority, it established a regime that has instituted peace in lieu of inter-fighting. It spread harmony after discord, and constituted, thanks to its principles and procedures, a tremendous cultural change that transformed the

militant tribes into a civilized community characterized by brotherhood and order.

However, what is reflected in the Western cultural legacy and the image offered by the media in the West did not reflect this fact about this reformist *da'wah*. It rather underwent a distortion that was based on false information. Such information was derived from the legacy of orientalists who have distorted the modern history of Islam in the Arabian peninsula, or from the media that do not bother to look for the truth. In fact in the eyes of the West, particularly in the United States, Wahhabism has been unjustly associated with extremism and radicalism. Thus Al-Qaidah was considered by some as emanating from Wahhabism. When Abu Bakr Basyir was tried in Indonesia, the West claimed that he was Wahhabi, without producing any shred of evidence. And when the "Zanniyyah" group were tried, near Tripoli, Lebanon, the West described them as Wahhabis and each armed organization is considered Wahhabi, and each organized trend is said to be affected by Wahhabism, etc.

We would like to say to the West that the Muslims that belong to organized trends are very few. The majority of Muslims are committed to Islam without adherence to any party or organization. Moreover, a great many of the organizations are interested merely in the propagation of Islam and the provision of assistance to the needy. On the other hand, the purely political organizations are very few among Muslims. The activity of the majority of Islamic trends is confined to instilling individual piety and the spreading of brotherhood and love. They are not at all concerned with political matters. There are also trends of an institutional

character and sometimes of an organizational type in the Islamic world, which were not new in the life of Muslims and were not denounced in the world. A great many of such groups have had, for decades, declared activities in many European countries and in the United States and have an honorable record in connection with their respect for order and morality.

Religious Education in Saudi Arabia

Introduction

A whole century has elapsed since the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and two centuries since the establishment of the first Saudi State. The Kingdom has spent two centuries in complete harmony with the world. It has had strong ties of friendship and mutual interest with the United States. Relations between the two countries have been characterized by mutual trust and confidence. There was nothing to suggest that such a strong relationship could weaken or could be so easily shaken. However, the September 11 events have suddenly shaken this deeply rooted confidence and the American media started an unfair campaign against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and indeed against the whole Islamic World. This radical and sudden change has negative and embarrassing implications in the field of international relations. It has serious consequences in that it undermines the principle of mutual trust among states.

It was a single event which could have targeted Saudi Arabia just as it targeted America. Its perpetrators were angry at everybody. Yet, it has affected a deeply rooted relationship between the Kingdom and America which had lasted for three quarters of the twentieth century.

From the point of view of Saudi Arabia, this deterioration had no acceptable justification because the perpetrators were just as angry with Saudi Arabia as they were with

America. The Kingdom had no connection whatsoever with this event. Indeed, it is absolutely opposed to it and to all other forms of violence.

If the United States considers that Saudi individuals have participated in this horrible action, it is unfair, and unprecedented, to punish a state or a people merely because some of its members have committed a crime against another state or people. In fact, if it is justifiable to incriminate a whole people on account of actions of some of its individuals, or if it is justifiable to hold a state responsible for the same reason, then this should apply to the United States itself, in view of the fact that the horrible explosion that look place in Oklahoma was a purely American action. And yet, this does not justify describing the whole American society as being a terrorist one, or claiming that the American government practices the production of terrorists or that American culture is an incubator of terrorism, for the responsibility is rather confined to the perpetrators of the crime, to those who are connected with the planning of the crime or to those who instigated the perpetrators to commit the crime. This is exactly the case with the perpetrators of the September 11 events regardless of the communities they belong to.

We are all targeted by and victims of the spreading of terrorist ideas. But the solution does not lie in making indiscriminate incriminations. It is better to join efforts for studying the situation and determining the causes that have led to it and to work honestly and sincerely for treating it with all possible peaceful and fair means.

Unfortunately, instead of identifying and treating the causes and of tracing and besieging the terrorist sources,

the American media and some political and religious circles began throwing arbitrary accusations against the whole Islamic World, and singled out Saudi Arabia for the largest share of the unfair campaign of accusations.

The serious transformations in the American and international stance following the September 11 events have confirmed the fragility of international relations and produced a stark evidence that the closest friendships between states could be undermined extremely easily and speedily. Thus Saudi Arabia was considered responsible for an event with which it had nothing to do, but is, on the contrary, absolutely and categorically opposed to it and to its perpetrators

Those events have triggered a flood of doubts and accusations against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, against the Islamic World, against the Islamic religious and teaching institutions in the Arab World and in the whole Islamic World.

These calumnies and accusations were not confined to persons that may be right and may make mistakes, but were rather outrageously leveled at Islam itself, which is a serious course of action that is contrary to the reasonableness and logic which the West proclaims to be the basis of dialogue and discussion, and is contrary to the principle of respecting cultural variation and the principle of commitment to non-interference in the religions and beliefs of other nations.

This media assault has portrayed Islam as an enemy of the West, and of America in particular. This is a huge error that does not affect just the Muslim communities but rather the whole American people. Islam is the religion of peace, and there are large numbers of American Muslims in

America who are peaceful citizens in their dealing with their fellow citizens and with the state.

Recently, there was talk, in the various media outlets relating to the discussion of the call for changing or canceling religious teaching as a system or program of teaching in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Participating in the discussions were some Western writers, journalists, intellectuals, education specialists and political and religious leaders, **as though education in the Kingdom had become a world affair and not a national one. This is an unprecedented case in international relations. It is a serious precedent because foreign interference was not confined to the discussion of the common denominators of the values that all peoples share but rather exceeded the limits in giving legal opinions and theorizing in respect of what is the core of the Islamic cultural existence.**

It was expected that such unjustified discussions would come to an end after the emotions following the September 11 events had calmed down, and that such people would reconsider their attitude and realize that education in any country is a purely internal matter which other people have no right to interfere in. Thus there are as many education systems in the world as there are cultures. It is the right of each nation to choose what is appropriate for it and which is not contrary to its religion and firmly established convictions.

However, more than two years have elapsed sine the September 11 events without any cessation of the flow of the charged emotion and the resulting unwise theorizing. Emotions rather than reason are still governing the views of those

thinkers. We thought that the elapse of this period of time would be enough for them to reconsider such attitudes and to look objectively on events. **However, we see and hear, everyday, new analyses and biased interpretations that link the terrorist acts that took place in America, and other countries in the world, with Islam and the Saudi culture, customs and traditions.**

While we strongly condemn this terrible event and while we are aware of its horror and that of other terrorist acts, and while we repeat our deepest condolences to the American nation with respect to this tragedy, nevertheless the horror of the event does not justify any interference in our internal affairs. We are more affected in the event than those who have experienced it, because the Islamic communities are the first to have suffered from such reckless behavior. We are also concerned to maintain the pure image of Islam just as it was when first revealed by God and that the idiotic acts of certain men be not attributed to it.

But interfering in the teaching curricula in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia constitutes an interference in the innermost privacy of Saudi society. Seeking to change the teaching curricula of Saudi society and planning for the substitutions of its values, customs and traditions is a serious precedent in that respect, and linking terrorism to such values is unfair, because Saudi society is innocent of what it is accused of.

It is true that there are among us - just as it is the case with those that belong to the various cultures - a rare minority that cannot accept the spirit of dialogue and cannot coexist with others, and cannot bear the climates of liberties and disagree with the slightest breezes of openness. How-

ever, this should not make us forget, or ignore, the fact that the Islamic nation has, in its past and present, applied in words and deeds the spirit of tolerance and coexistence with others, whether they were of the same faith or otherwise. Muslims feel pain and are outraged as regards any foolish behavior that emanate from those who belong to Islam here and there. They realize, however, that such are discordant elements that do not represent Islam and that their religion would not be affected by the misbehavior of some of its adherents because of ignorance, seduction or whim.

Our Islamic civilization and culture abounds in concepts of openness towards others and the practicing of dialogue and the language of tolerance with those who disagree with us, as well as the guarantee of religious and other types of freedom This, however, does not preclude the tiny number of Muslims, past and present, who deviate from such practices, which is quite natural and is a fact of life. Thus there are in all religions and creeds, in all nations and communities, those who deviate from customs and order. Were it not so punishments and laws would not have been enacted. In fact, Islam has given more attention than others to the provisions governing dealing with outlaws, apostates and dissenters, considering them a greater threat than distant enemies because their harm goes beyond individuals and distorts Islam itself.

The Content of Religious Education Curricula and the Allegation of Terrorism

From the theoretical point of view, there is obviously an organic link between school curricula and the culture and

religion of a nation. This is a fact that is stressed by syllabus specialists and pedagogues. Under the modern education philosophy, attention is given to both the individual and society. Curricula aim at helping students to acquire functional expertise that realizes maximum growth for the individual and maximum progress for society. A syllabus must necessarily be based on an explicit or implicit educational philosophy that helps draw its parameters, determines its goals, draws up its plans, and builds, executes, assesses and develops them. Educationists stress that in the absence of a doctrinal framework (intellectual and philosophical) of society, there may be a conflict of goals, a contradiction between trends, and differences in ways and means and, as a result, education would go astray.

The philosophies under which curricula have been established have differed, and, consequently, their contents, methods and techniques have also differed. Thus while Greek philosophy was deeply involved in sanctifying reason, materialist philosophies emphasized the material and physical education and gave them great importance. But the Islamic view of man, life and the universe is based on the view that man was created in the first place for worshipping God Almighty and that the mundane actions he performs should be subject to what God ordains as permissible and what he ordains as proscribed as indicated in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Hence, and in view of this stand point, the academic syllabi in Islamic societies, and particularly in Saudi Arabia, must necessarily be based, in its structure, conception and content on the Islamic Shari'ah. This is not only because

this Shari'ah is a monotheistic religion to which the whole nation adheres, but because this Shar'iah is the most appropriate and the most beneficial system and method for society in its political, social and economic activities, as well as others. This, in fact, is what distinguishes the Islamic nation in adopting the Islamic religion as a basis for its organization, relations, methods and future plans, and also because this is what the aforesaid principles of pedagogy dictate.

The teaching policies in the Kingdom are clear and contain clear texts that stress the need to base the curricula and academic courses on Islamic, moral and humane foundations that reform and do not corrupt, that build and do not destroy, and which pay attention to all that would prepare the individual to participate in the construction of a sound and balanced community.

In order for the discussion to be scientific and objective, let us examine the document that contains what was endorsed more than 33 years ago, in light of which all patterns and stages of teachings in the Kingdom have proceeded. Under the title: **The general foundations on which teaching is based are as follows:**

1. The perfect Islamic conception of man, life and the universe, which requires a close knowledge of Islam, which is the religion of peace, tolerance, justice and equality.
2. Life on this earth is a stage of production, work and investment of time and potentials.
3. The sublime ideals brought by Islam for the establishment of a human and rational civilization.

4. Belief in human dignity which was ordained by the Holy Qur'an and to which the discharge of God's trust on earth was entrusted. God says: "**Now, indeed, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favored them far above most of Our creation."** (17: 70)
5. Contribution to the development of society and the realization of the goals of development.
6. Establishment of girls' right to education, which is ordained by the Islamic Shari'ah.
7. Seeking knowledge in its various stages is a duty and should be upheld by the state.
8. Benefiting from all types of useful human disciplines in the light of Islam for uplifting the nation and raising its standard of living. Wisdom is sought by a believer, who has a preferential right to it.
9. Harmonious congruity with science and application techniques which are among the most important means to cultural, social, economic and health development for raising the standard of the country and contribution to world cultural progress.
10. Intelligent interaction with world cultural developments in the fields of science, culture, and literature through keeping abreast of same, participation therein and orienting them in a manner that would benefit society and humanity in the field of all that is good

and in the field of progress.

11. Respect of public rights with a view to preserving security and realizing social stability in respect of religion, life, progeny, family, reason and property.

12. Mutual advice between the leadership and the citizens in a manner that secures rights, duties and enhances loyalty and sincerity.

Thus education curricula are established on the basis of the education policy that stresses the sublime tenets of Islam, which include: **justice and fairness, even towards those that are at variance with Muslims in their creed.** Thus difference in creed does not justify variation in treatment. God says: "**As for such as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity, for, verily, God loves those who act equitably."** (60: 8) He also says in another verse, "**And never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being God-conscious."** (5: 8). Hence, curricula in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are based on principles that do not deviate from the aforesaid principles on which education policy is built. **Thus accusing religious education of implanting hatred against the people of the Book, and the attempt to abridge and lop off texts from their context, is not consistent with the empirical spirit and is a product of whims or ignorance.** The abridgement and lopping off and deliberate distortion and failure to verify and rushing to hasty and conclusive judgments in respect of fundamental issues confirm that those

writers who practice this are not fair and are not interested in seeking the truth. They were rather prompted by the emotions engendered by the events.

As shown above, books of Islamic education contain many provisions that stress tolerance and the duty of kind treatment of the people of the Book (Christians and Jews). So, why did such writers ignore such provisions and why did they concentrate on what may suggest the opposite of what has been lopped off from its context?

Anyone who examines all stages of our school curricula will find that they were built on sound guidance and proper procedure that is far from extremism or radicalism, which seeks to protect both individual and community and which refrains from accusing others of *kufr* (infidelity) without legitimate evidence. Indeed, such curricula include specific provisions cautioning against hostile acts of all forms, which include the hijacking of aircraft, the planting of explosives, the blowing up of buildings, etc.

In order to see the picture more clearly and accurately, and in order to dispel any doubt and suspicion, it is necessary to look deeply into the principles of the curricula of religious education, which were based on the exclusive worship of God and ridding creed of all forms of *shirk* (association of deities with God). Ever since the Saudi government had the honor to adopt and uphold the *da'wah* of Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, it adopted his catechisms as an education syllabus to be studied by successive generations in view of their concentration on the exclusivity of worship of God and the abandonment of *shirk* and the exposure of false worship. Such curricula included the fostering of righ-

teous conduct, sincerity in work and sacrifice for the sake of the Islamic community. Thus doing harm is forbidden in all its forms, types and locations. Social solidarity which is represented by *waqf* (endowments), charities, zakat, dutiful devotion to and obedience of parents, shunning bigotry and fanaticism among compatriots for any reason whatsoever – such is the salient guiding principle involved in those curricula.

It is well known that Islam stresses Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions relating to tolerance, forgiveness, dialogue, discussion and abstaining from discord, the like of which is not found in any other message or in any human conduct witnessed by the world throughout history. The curricula have embodied all this very clearly.

Thus, in stressing the proper relation between the ruler and the ruled in society, the following occurs in respect of dealing with monotheism which is taught in the Sixth Elementary Form, Chapter 2, p.24: **"Obedience to Muslim imams, whether pious or dissolute, unless they order the perpetration of God's disobedience, and abstaining from dissension against them, as this would result in divisions and the stirring of discord among Muslims."**

In the subject of Monotheism for the Third Secondary Form, p 88, the following occurs with respect to the attitude of Muslims towards cases of discord:

- **Sticking to the community of Muslims and their imam in case of the occurrence of seditions. If they have no community or imam, then Muslims should isolate themselves from all such groups."**

- **"Bearing patiently with the injustice of the governors and abstaining from dissenting against them, unless they perform acts of unbelief."**
- **Abstaining from collusion in every way. The more distant one is from this, the safer he is from falling therein."**

In the context of cautioning against extremism, the book on Monotheism for the Second Intermediate Form, p20, the following occurs therein: "**God Almighty has cautioned us against extremism in religion and the exceeding of moderation lest we be hard on ourselves and suffer as those who came before us."**

In enjoining against attributing unbelief to others arbitrarily, the following occurs in the book of Monotheism for the Second Secondary Form, p 19: A person who commits a major sin is not considered an unbeliever if he belongs to the people of Monotheism and devotion. He is rather a believer on account of his belief, a libertine on account of his serious sin and is subject to the will of God, Who may forgive him if He so wishes, or may torture him in hell for his deed and then take him out therefrom. As such, he will not dwell therein for ever. This is unlike what those who have gone astray say in that respect.

In the book on Monotheism for the Third Secondary Form, p27, the following occurs: Attributing unbelief to all people, to both those who are knowledgeable and those who are ignorant, those who have been persuaded by argumentation and those who have not been so persuaded, is the method of heretics. God has exonerated the people of the Sunnah from such attitudes. As to the description of unbelief on the

basis of unlawful acts, this is dealt with in the same place. It means that an action is considered unbelief in the sense that it is contrary to Islam, but it not attributed to the perpetrator until all the conditions apply and the impediments are satisfied. The fact that an act is considered unbelief does not necessarily render the perpetrator an unbeliever."

In mentioning the conditions of the attribution of unbelief, the following occurs in the same book, p 28: "For the attribution of unbelief to a person, two conditions are stipulated: the first is that there should be evidence that the act is one that entails the attribution of unbelief to the perpetrator. The second is the applicability of the provision to the perpetrator who commits the act knowingly and deliberately. But if he is ignorant, or if he has misinterpreted the provision, or if he did that mistakenly or if he is forced to do that, then there would arise a factor precluding the attribution of unbelief, in which case he shall not be considered an unbeliever.

With respect to non-aggression against others, the following occurs, in the context of addressing the question of *hirabah*, in the book of Jurisprudence for the First Secondary Form, p 104: **"*Hirabah* is armed or similar assault against people in the desert or in urban areas for the purpose of openly robbing them of their property. Attacking people and shedding their blood and raping their women fall within the purview of *hirabah,* which also includes what takes place in an aircraft, a ship or a car, whether this is accompanied by the threat of arms or the planting of explosives or the blowing up of buildings."**

The provision governing *hirabah: "**hirabah* is forbidden and is a serious sin. It is forbidden in the Qur'an,**

the Sunnah and according to the unanimous opinion of religious scholars."

On page 107 of the same book, the following occurs: **"Among the forms of *hirabah* with which the nation has been afflicted in the present age is the so-called "kidnapping" which occurs frequently in various forms devised by criminals. Hence, the crime of kidnapping for the violation of forbidden things openly is a kind of *hirabah* and the spreading of corruption on earth. The perpetrator is subject to the punishment ordained by God Almighty in Surat Al-Ma'idah. This applies whether the kidnapper has killed, committed a felony that is less than a crime, or has stolen money, committed rape, or whether he merely frightened and threatened people; and whether the kidnapping takes place in cities, villages, deserts, cars, aircraft, trains or others, and whether this was with the threat of arms or by laying explosives, taking or holding hostages in their respective places or threatening to kill them, and so on."**

The school curricula also included statements to the effect that Islam is based on Monotheism, the principles of religion, belief in the ways and provisions connected with the acts of worship, proper conduct and morality, including tolerance and forgiveness. For example:

- The statement relating to God's forgiveness of sinners and His acceptance of their repentance.
- Urging forgiveness in general and considering it as a means to piety and to winning God's pleasure.
- Encouraging forgiveness between husband and wife, good manners and the waiving of certain rights will-

ingly.

- The legitimacy of accepting the apology of those who make mistakes and forgiving them.
- The provisions of tolerance vis-à-vis non-Muslims.

The following are some examples of the contents of the school curricula which indicate the extent of the care given by Islam to values and morality in the various aspects of life:

- Encouraging forgiveness of those who are unjust towards one.
- Encouraging giving to those who have denied one his rights.
- Urging communication with those who have broken relations with one.
- Ordering the rewarding of a bad deed with a good one.
- Encouraging self-control and forgiveness of people and considering that among the qualities of the pious. God says, "**Who hold in check their anger and who forgive people** (3: 134)
- Forbidding mutual estrangement for more than three nights in the context of urging forgiveness.
- Encouraging acceptance of buyers' changing their mind about things they have bought.
- Enjoining kindness to one's neighbors and forbidding doing them any harm - even if their behavior is not commendable.
- Showing hospitality to guests and considering this a duty for Muslims.
- Forbidding envy and enjoining the love of good for

others as one loves good for himself.
- Encouraging the alleviation of the burden of debtors and canceling the debts of those who are insolvent.
- Forbidding backbiting, and showing respect for others and for their feelings.
- Encouraging cheerfulness and showing a smiling face when meeting others.
- Forbidding swearing, cursing and taunting, by way of respect for others.
- Ordering kindness to the ignorant and teaching them and refraining from being hard on them.
- The legitimacy of effecting conciliation between disputants and encouraging them to forgive each other.
- Keeping in touch with parents even if they are non-believers.
- The legitimacy of offering condolences to the family of a dead person and attending his funeral by way of sympathy.
- Forbidding the killing of women, children and messengers in wars.
- Permitting the partaking of the meat of the people of the Book and marrying their women.
- Offering to non-believers the adoption of Islam and informing them of its benefits prior to any subsequent hostility.
- Enjoining justice and the doing of good even to non-Muslims.
- Permitting the hiring of a *mushrik* (pagan) and dealing with him in buying and selling and so on.
- Stopping the fighting of one's enemy if he pronounc-

es the testimony (I testify that there is no deity but God and that Muhammad is His apostle) during the fighting.

- Accepting the repentance of those who killed Muslims unwarrantably.

The above examples, taken from the books of Islamic education in our curricula, show the false claim of those who allege that such books implant hatred and encourage extremism in the souls of the young generation. A deep study of these curricula will show that they do not contain anything from which one may conclude that they encourage hatred of the other monotheist religions and their believing adherents. Indeed, the perfect faith of a Muslim involves belief in all prophets and messengers, including Jesus and Moses, peace be upon them. This is stressed in detail in the school curricula which focus on restricting worship to God and sincere devotion to Him, together with the associated principles of belief in God, His scriptures and all His apostles and in the good and evil of predestination.

Accusations Against Religious Education

A careful consideration of the texts on which Western writers have based their description of religious education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as fostering terrorism and hatred of the West will show that they center round the Qur'anic verses and the Prophet's traditions which establish the creed of Muslims and consolidate their belief that God Almighty is the One Who should be worshipped exclusively, that the bond of faith should be the basis of the relations among Muslims and that he who denies God's Shari'ah

should be renounced in what is known in the discipline of creed as the concept of *"walaa' and baraa'"* (loyalty and renunciation).

In short, the assault on religious education has focused on quoting from the book of Monotheism concerning *walaa' and baraa.'* This was clearly manifest in several journalistic and television analyses which portrayed this as if it were a crime committed by the Kingdom in its education system and that as such it deserves to be internationally punished on that account, alleging that this system implants and enhances the trends of extremism in the souls of the young generation and urges them to carry out terrorist acts such as those that took place in America, and that therefore, it is incumbent on the international community to eradicate terrorism pursuant to what they term the "drying up of the springs of terrorism".

The problem with those who have written on the repercussions of September 11 is that they have failed to talk objectively about the real causes of what is termed extremism and terrorism and talked instead of the subjects contained in the school books which had been continuously taught in the schools of the Kingdom for tens of years, and from which scholars, thinkers and political leaders who have earned appreciation and respect not only in Saudi Arabia but throughout the whole world, have graduated.

It has become abundantly clear that the arbitrary linkage between the school curricula and terrorism is nothing but one in a series of reactions that have been confused in the manner to confront the events and have lost their power of discernment and have continued making accusations left,

right and center, deliberately ignoring the real causes of what happened, having chosen to forget the oppression and uprooting performed by Israel against the Arabs and Muslims. In fact, as Noam Chomsky, one of America's wise men and thinkers, has said that when the reply to terrorism proceeds in the wrong direction and ignores the study of its causes and the identification of its roots, this would lead to a spiral of violence which is what the adherents of extremism want and hope for. **The problem with the campaign against religious education in the schools of the Islamic World does not lie in the safety of the content of this education and the methods of teaching it. Thus the Arab-Israeli conflict did not arise because of the religious texts that are taught in the education curricula. It has rather been generated and consolidated as a result of the creation of the Zionist movement and the establishment of the Jewish state after a series of massacres and the usurping of Palestinian land.**

Saudi Education not Responsible for Deviation

The education curricula we are concerned with have been studied by millions of students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and had a great influence on the consolidation of their creed, the direction of their conduct, the soundness of their syllabus and thinking and their excelling in the various scientific fields. If a rare few who have studied such curricula have exhibited a systematic, mental, practical or behavioral deviation, it does not necessarily follow that such curricula are the cause of such deviation because the external effects

are numerous and deviation occurs everywhere and at all times and may involve individuals from every state and sect.

Moreover, deviation has many causes, and this is not the place to talk about them. It is neither fair nor reasonable to attribute to any sect or education system the responsibility of the acts of individuals who are associated with it, or to brand this sect or education system on account of their deviation, which is an exclusive expression of the identity, thought and approach of the persons involved.

If the perverted conduct of individuals is a justification for accusing education curricula as being responsible for such deviation, then we are entitled to ask some logical questions, namely: Was the blowing up of the Federal Building in Oklahoma a product of the education curricula in America because the perpetrator had studied at American schools? Are the Mafia gangs that exist in many European and American states the product of the education curricula in those states? Are the bloody murderers who assault the schools of children and kill them together with their teachers a product of the education curricula also? Are those armed criminals who hold hostages and spread terror in American cities, and whom we see on television, the product of American education curricula? Are the religious universities whose members commit collective suicide a product of the education curricula? Are the racist head-shaven rightist groups and their militias the product of the education curricula? If the answers are in the positive, and we do not believe they are, then

why is not the West required to change its education curricula before we are required to change ours or to close our religious schools?

Saudi Schools Enjoy Safe Environment

Any observer of Saudi society and its social and population structure will find that it is among the most closely linked societies at the level of the family, has the lowest rates of crime, is the most secure and stable, and the most devoted to moral principles. There is no doubt that this would not have been the case without the education and teaching that are based on the education curricula that derive their principles from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which draw for the young generation a moderate and balanced of conduct that is remote from delinquency and extremism, positive or negative. Indeed, these Shari'ah curricula have become something which the Kingdom prides itself on, whose people are envied by many citizens of other Islamic states who have been deprived of Islamic education, because they are in fact part of the structure of the Muslim personality and identity.

We are not in a defensive position regarding our Islamic education, which is part of our distinct culture and identity, but we can prove to the West in general, and to the United States in particular, that their education curricula and their material subjects were not able to achieve security and peace in their homelands. Indeed the language of figures proves that a number of their schools have been transformed into scenes of battles in which bloody massacres were perpetrated. Thus a student in the state of Colorado is reported to have killed twelve of his fellow students. Before that,

many similar events had taken place. This has prompted some American schools to provide teachers and supervisors with mobile phones for immediately contacting the police in the event of any case of assault by the students. Thus some American schools have become an insecure environment, let alone being an educational environment that implants in the souls of the young generation virtue and good manners.

Thus crime has been on the increase day by day in the West, in general, and in America in particular. In a book titled *The Day America Told the Truth,* written by James Patterson and Peter Kim, it is acknowledged that crime is increasing by 60% a year and that 40% of American society have committed various types of crime in their lives. Now where did these people graduate from and where did they learn? Did they study and were they educated pursuant to another education system?

If it is the education systems and the school curricula that produce criminals and terrorists, then let America mobilize its capabilities for changing its own education systems first. If it succeeds, then we shall listen to its proposals, and it would not then be contradicting itself.

Women's Education and Work in Saudi Arabia

The attack against Islam waged by some Western circles and the stirring of doubts concerning the position of women in Islam and citing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an example of such doubts is a sign of **lack of wisdom, departure from objectivity and remoteness from justice.**

Islam is not an incidental occurrence; it rather has a great and deeply-rooted history and has an important and far-reaching present. It is the faith adopted by one billion people belonging to fifty seven different states. These people have lived in peace with the world. Throughout their past and present, Muslims have advocated peace and are peace-making in this age and in every age, despite the great and stark injustices that have befallen them.

How then, can the forgetting of this long co-existence be justified? How can this bright image be distorted on account of a solitary event perpetrated by individuals who are discontent and exasperated with Muslims with whom they are at variance, just as they are with the leaders of Jewish society or the leaders of Christian communities? Stirring doubts about Islam inflames hostility, ignites hatred, strangles the truth and inflicts harm on all humanity. The igniting of hatred is the most stupid and dangerous behavior of man. This is because hatred turns facts upside down, prevents understanding and ends up inducing people to pass unfair judgments and to form unjust opinions.

What is raised in the Western media concerning Muslim women, their education and work, particularly in the King-

dom of Saudi Arabia, is of this arbitrary and unfair type. Thus although it is well known that Saudi women have access to education and that this is an established fact, the Western media have dealt with this matter in the aftermath of the events of September 11 as though such education was a new phenomenon in the life of Muslims. Thus they have disregarded the facts and plunged into illusions!

The spreading of doubts about Islam and the delving into illusions about the conditions of Muslim women which the Western media resorted to following the recent events confirm the ease with which man can slip as well as absence of objectivity, weak scientific honesty, the fragility of the crust of civilization and man's disposition to the speedy return to the historical mound of debris that is based on prejudice and calumny. All this confirms man's failure to overcome his shortcomings and to be fair when provoked or when tending to fight and ignite disputes.

Islam has been the first to raise the status of women, to confirm their aptitude to shoulder responsibility, to proclaim their rights and to consolidate their position, so much so that Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is reported to have said that paradise lies under the feet of mothers. Thus, the lack of dutifulness of a son to his mother is a major sin that calls for God's wrath, even if he were the greatest of leaders. The Prophet's wife, Khadijah, was the first person to respond to his call and to defend him. Muslims have always cherished her memory and renew their deference to her by calling their own daughters Khadijah.

The western media know very well that the education of Muslim women is an actual and undeniable fact in Saudi soci-

ety. Such media can see that Muslim women have reached high educational standards comparable to those of men in all Islamic countries. Thus they work in the fields of medicine, education, nursing, and in the media. They have earned high reputations in creative writing and often outdo men in many fields.

In Islam, the rule is that men and women are equal and there is no distinction between them in all fields. In case there are objective factors that necessitate making a distinction, whether in respect of men or of women, these are exceptional, apply in very few cases and must be based on Shari'ah criteria, because it is an exception from the rule of equality. It is usually accompanied by a clear statement of the wisdom that requires the distinction. But, in principle, we find that God addressed men and women on an equal footing. He ordains their duties and rights and makes the relationship between man and woman one that is based on love, mercy and complementarity, not one of opposition or discord. Islam has realized a big jump for women and conveyed to the Arabs a new attitude towards them and changed many concepts that were prevailing in respect to them. It has given women many rights and entrusted to them many duties towards their communities. Thus women are the sisters of men. They share the same rights and duties, except in connection with matters that are not consistent with their nature and are not appropriate to their capabilities and potentials.

Islam has fairly divided the roles between men and women. Men are responsible for supporting the family and are in charge of all matters outside the family, and women are in charge of house, husband and children, and of providing them with warmth and tenderness and of bringing up children

properly so that they become righteous generations capable of serving their society and achieving progress and prosperity.

In view of the important role of women in society, Islam has guaranteed their right to education to enable them to perform such a role competently. On the basis of this view of the nature of the women's role and the importance of their acquisition of learning, the decision-makers and responsible officials in the Saudi state are keen to provide women with the kind of education ordained by Islam.

Because Islam addresses both men and women, it makes it incumbent upon them to know the duties they have to perform and to know and expect to have the consequent rights that accrue to them. Thus the relationship with God and the relations with people are not left to caprice and whims, but are carefully regulated and should be made known to men and women without discrimination.

Islam establishes beliefs and rules on the basis of verification. This is possible only on the basis of scrutinized knowledge. This requires both men and women to be keen on acquiring knowledge. Hence, the first verse of the Qur'an that was revealed involved an order to read. Thus Islam considers that reading, research and verification constitute the path that leads to knowledge, which is the basis of proper behavior and acts.

Islam requires its adherents to always combine learning and action. No success that is relevant to this world and the hereafter can be achieved except through deeds. Deeds can be righteous only on the basis of learning. Islam considers learning the right path to true knowledge and to the adherence thereto, and the performance of actions and duties in the best possible manner. Islamic discourse in both its theo-

retical and practical aspects is addressed to both men and women. Hence, Islam provides many incentives for giving attention to learning. Thus it confirms that learning must precede action. It gives priority to the involvement in acquiring learning over the involvement in voluntary acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and so on.

Moreover, Islam praises actions whose benefit encompasses the community. Such actions rank above those whose benefit is confined to the individual. It even considers knowledge and learning among the greatest works for the cause of God. It also warns against ignorance and affirms that it is a prelude to destruction in this life, and is the cause of perdition in the hereafter.

The enjoining to learning and knowledge is not confined to religious disciplines. Islam encourages the acquisition of every discipline that is based on sound induction and that leads to the knowledge of facts and to commitment to the implications thereof.

Islam, encourages the formation of the scientific mind that depends on evidence and proof. It rejects mere conjecture in cases that require certainty. It warns against depending on conjecture and against allowing oneself to be swept away by emotions and whims and to be inclined to wishful thinking and personal considerations in issuing judgments and forming opinions.

Islam aims at liberating the mind from the chains of imitation and dependence. It strongly stresses thinking, meditation, induction and extrapolation. For this reason, it calls for verification and ascertaining, combats illiteracy and enjoins the spreading and encouraging of learning. It encourages the

acquisition of all useful disciplines, and urges the seeking of all that helps to reach the truth in terms of tools, instruments and methodology. It always seeks to combat superstitions, illusions, magic, sorcery and other things that undermine human reason and prevent it from knowing cosmic laws and the causes of things.

The Historical Evolution of Girls' Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

We should bear in mind when we talk of women's education and work in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that sixty years ago most inhabitants of the desert internal regions were nomads and that the cities of the Kingdom at the time were Makkah, Madinah and Al-Ihsaa only with some dispersed and remote small villages in a wide stretch of desert wherein there was almost no life or living beings. It is only natural that education should have been limited in this poor desert environment with low inhabitant density. At the time there was no means of providing education whether for males or females. People were occupied in seeking to secure the means of subsistence which were hard to obtain and in very meager quantities. Thus preoccupation with education was a remote ambition that was hardly attainable.

But as soon as ways and means became available after the discovery of oil, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia began to open schools for boys and kept expanding such schools until all needs had been satisfied. Indeed it persisted in pursuing the nomads to make them send their sons to schools.

As for girls' education, then that came later on because citizens disapproved of it in the fear of perceived ill social

effects which were caused by co-education or because of the indecency associated with it in many other countries. Hence, the state began introducing it gradually. It was not able to make it acceptable to people until it linked it to the religious establishment.

At first the Mufti was the supervisor of girls' education. This reassured people and encouraged them to send their girls to school. The Kingdom went on gradually extending girls' education until it became similar in terms of curricula, regulations and facilities to those of the boys. Finally boys' education and girls' education were merged and the Ministry of education became responsible for both.

Before girls' official education, there were two types of non-official education institutions:

1- **"Katateeb"**: which are primitive education institutions in which a certain woman would open up her house for girl students for teaching them the Holy Qur'an and some religious subjects as well as elementary reading and writing. This was either on a free voluntary basis or in return for a monthly fee. Such "schools" were multiplied throughout the Kingdom, particularly in the regions of Najd, Hijaz and the Eastern Province.

2- **Private schools:** These were originally "katateeb" and evolved as a result of their great popularity and the rush of the citizens on them, and subsequently became semi-official private schools. There were other private schools that functioned along the same system and the same curricula of the boys' schools. A number of them became prominent and played a great role in girls' education at that time.

Official (Government) Education

Official education of Saudi girls began in 1960 with the establishment of the first official elementary school for girls. This official education of girls was initiated by a Royal Decree that proclaimed the establishment of the general Presidency of Girls' Education in the year 1379 H. corresponding to 1959 CE This is an official education body that undertook the planning, supervision and administration of girls' education.

This was in addition to the centers of vocational training for teaching girls cutting and dressmaking, domestic affairs, computer studies and typing, as well as other skills that women need for performing their first duties as wives and mothers, and subsequently for equipping them with the skills needed for work and the positions that are appropriate to them and that are needed in their community.

The first opportunity that was available for Saudi girls to enroll in higher education within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was provided by Riyadh University (now King Saud University) which was established in 1957 A.D. and admitted girl students to the College of Arts and Administrative Sciences.

Moreover, King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, ever since its inception, admitted girl students to the College of Economics and Administration. In 1967 A.D. the College of Education in Makkah Al-Mukarramah admitted girl students, and in 1970-71, the General Presidency of Girls Education established the first College for girls, namely the College of Education in Riyadh.

In 1974 A.D. the College of Education was opened in Jed-

dah, followed by the College of Education in Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, Al-Qassim and Abha. There subsequently followed the opening of girls' colleges that are affiliated to the General Presidency of Girls Education. There also followed many girls departments in many universities for girls that are affiliated to the Ministry of Education. Moreover, many female students were given scholarships for higher education studies at various universities in the world, particularly in Europe and North America.

Most of the universities and colleges provide higher education programs for female students. Saudi officials give great attention to education, as indicated by the generous support provided by the government to education. Thus nearly 25% of the 2001-2002 state budget was allocated to education.

The education policy in the Kingdom is based on declared principles, whether with respect to boy's education or to girl's education. Such principles include the following:

1- Education in the Kingdom springs from Islam; the religion to which the nation adheres in terms of creed, worship, morality, Shari'ah, government, and an integral way of life.
2- The instilling of the complete Islamic concept of the universe and of life. The whole universe is subject to the laws ordained by God so that all creatures would perform their functions smoothly and diligently.
3- Life on earth is a stage of production and deeds wherein Muslims exploit their potentials prompted by belief in everlasting life in the hereafter.
4- Belief in human dignity that was enunciated by

the Holy Qur'an and delegated to it God's trust on earth.

5- Making use of all types of useful disciplines in light of Islam for uplifting the nation and raising its standard of living.
6- Appropriate harmony with science and applied methodology, which are the most important means of cultural, social and health development for raising the standard of our nation and country and performing our role in world cultural progress.
7- Enlightened interaction with the world's cultural developments in the fields of sciences, culture and the arts, through keeping abreast with, and participation in, such developments and orienting them towards the benefit and progress of society and humanity.

Such are some of the elements of the education policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a policy which is based on treasuring the basic components of the Muslim community together with enlightened receptiveness to human civilizations, benefiting therefrom and conferring benefits thereon on the basis of the living guidance of Islam which is throbbing with positive interaction. The above propositions only apply to both male and female education. Others were singled out for other types of guidance emanating from Islamic methodology in dealing with the facts of life realistically and fairly. These include:

1- Girls' education aims at preparing them to carry out their primary tasks in life as successful housewives and good mothers.
2- Preparing them to perform the tasks that are consis-

tent with their nature which comprise the services needed by the community, such as teaching, medical treatment and other professions that enable them to participate in the process of development and self-dependence.

3- Co-education is prohibited in all stages of education except in nurseries and kindergartens.
4- Girls' education is to be carried out in a climate of decency, dignity and modesty, in a manner and type that are consistent with the provisions of Islam.

The Philosophy of Segregated Education

We have indicated earlier that education in the Kingdom did not start early, which in fact has made it possible for the Kingdom to get acquainted with the experience of other nations in this field. Such experience has proved that the negative aspects of co-education have outweighed the positive ones, both in Islamic and other communities.

In order to avoid the negative aspects of co-education, and being committed to the tenets of Islam, the Kingdom had decided, from the very outset, that boy's education and girls' education be separated. We point out again that Saudi society had originally rejected the prospect of girls' education, even when separate from boys' education. People did not feel at ease sending their girls to school until they were reassured that education was under the direct supervision of the Grand Mufti and that there were strong measures in place to secure decency. We must also remember that acceptance by Saudi society of girls' education was achieved gradually and after a great deal of persuasion and encour-

agement. Convincing people of the need for girls' education was no easy task.

Both boys and girls share the same curricula and regulations. There are, however, some slight variations to match the intrinsic differences between them. Thus in boys' schools there is some focusing on physical education, while in girls' schools there is emphasis on female education that prepares girls to assume their responsibilities as future wives and mothers. The document that spells out education policy has indicated that: "The objective of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is to provide **a correct and integrated understanding of Islam, to equip students with Islamic values, tenets and sublime ideals, to impart to them various disciplines, to enhance constructive behavior orientations, to develop society economically, socially and culturally, and to prepare individuals to be useful members in the construction of their community.**"

In implementation of the foregoing and in order to benefit from world experience, girls' education was separated from boys' education. The Kingdom has found this better for knowledge acquisition, for personality development, for moral integrity and for decent education.

In the absence of co-education, we can provide girls with a proper education environment and a good academic climate that would make it possible for girls to learn and feel at ease while being kept immune to the ill effects that are associated with co-education. Moreover, in an environment of segregated education, girls' performance would be better, as many researchers and experienced educationists have asserted in many countries around the world.

An American study has shown that girls who are educated in segregated schools are distinguished by an excellent academic and social performance, which is by far better than performance in co-education schools. The American Women's University Organization has indicated in a report on co-education that in segregated girls' schools social problems are few and the rates of academic acquisition are high and a friendly climate prevails in such schools.

A distinguished British educationist, Beverly Shaw, has indicated in her research on co-education that girls learned better and felt happier at segregated schools and classrooms. Therefore, we should not sacrifice the interests of our female students for the sake of empty slogans that call for total equality between the two sexes in education without paying attention to the differences and variations between the two sexes.

Another recent American study has confirmed that girl students in segregated schools have achieved excellent results during the school years, unlike girls who have studied at co-education schools and universities. Moreover, the girl graduates of segregated schools were more qualified to pursue graduate studies.

A report compiled by the US Department of Education fifteen years ago warned against the deteriorating standards that began to sweep and prevail in American schools and the years that followed that period did not produce any significant progress, and that the quality of the education process was still low. This has prompted the Bush administration to look for a solution, which produced a declaration by the government of its desire to encourage segregated education

as one possible solution to the crisis of the deterioration of the standard of education in American schools. This report was recently carried by the media and news agencies.

The American Senator Kay Baily Hutchison, who drew up the law pertaining to segregated schools, has said in justification of that law that "boys' performance is good in an environment where the boys are alone because of their non-preoccupation with girls. The same applies to the performance of girls whose self-confidence increases as a result of their non-preoccupation with boys.

The British *Times* newspaper has reported that there is in Britain a tendency to segregate boys and girls in special classrooms by way of an attempt by the government to combat boys' contempt for education. The British former Education Secretary David Blunkett**,** was contemplating the appointment of more men teachers who can be a good example for boys, particularly in view of the fact that the percentage of women teachers in the elementary stage reaches 83% of the total teachers of both sexes.

The segregation of the two sexes which was carried out by Shenfield Secondary School in Essex, UK, shows the importance of segregation and its effect on the academic performance of both boys and girls. The school designated classrooms of students of the same sex in 1994. The result was a continuous improvement in the results of exams for both sexes. Thus in the English language subject the number of boy students who scored excellent, very good and good marks rose by 26% while the number of girl students who scored such marks rose by 22%.

In an article written by Susan Estrich for the *New York*

Times on Sunday titled "Segregation is Better", she indicated that girls consistently score higher academic results in segregated schools and exhibit greater readiness to enter public life. The same author stated in her statistics that one third of women who are members of the board of directors in the largest one thousand American companies, according to *Fortune* magazine, are graduates of women colleges although those colleges graduate only 4% of the total number of women graduates. She also said that the number of graduates of girl colleges outdo all the other women in the book of American famous personalities.

Advantages of Segregated Education

The segregated education system applicable in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has the advantage of enabling teachers, administrators and decision-makers to take into account the innate sexual differences between boys and girls, whether in respect of their respective future roles or their physical tendencies. Hence, in the girls' schools they stressed the subjects to which girls are inclined and which are acceptable to them.

Investigations have shown that girls differ in their preferences regarding academic subjects. Beverly Shaw stated that boys and girls have a different outlook vis-à-vis the subject of sciences. Boys are usually more inclined and interested in scientific subjects, while girls are less interested and not so keen on attending science classes. Similarly girls' outlook is different from that of boys in respect to mathematics. She states that such differences should be taken into account when school curricula are drawn up, and when such subjects

are taught to boys and girls, for what is appropriate to boys may not be necessarily appropriate to girls.

As to the observance of differences between boys and girls in their future respective roles, those responsible for education were keen on giving Saudi girls proper education through focusing on their role as mothers, wives and housewives. This role becomes clear when we consider the goals laid down by the Higher Committee on education policy. Thus it stated that such goals included: "**Providing them with proper Islamic education to enable them to perform their duties in life as successful wives, housewives and good mothers and to prepare them to perform what is consistent with their intrinsic nature, such as teaching, nursing and medical treatment."**

Hence, we find in the curricula for girls in the elementary, intermediate and secondary stages the subject of "female education" which teaches girls the principles of cooking, sewing and household affairs, which reflects the belief of those in charge of education and of society in general in the importance of the role that must be performed by girl students and in the role played by education in that regard.

In an article written by Sue Sharpe, member of the Committee on the Liberation of Women, we read: "The curricula of our schools are not closely linked with our practical life. If they are linked to the actual facts then we should make a point of teaching girls cooking, sewing and housekeeping because this is their future role, unless we do not believe in the importance of the family; in which case we must change society and stop calling for the establishment of the family as an important institution in our life.

Letter To The West
A Saudi View

The American magazine "Plain Truth" has called for the return of the women to their homes, even if partially and for fixed periods in the life of their families. Educationists and politicians have attributed the backwardness of the teaching process in the West in particular to the neglect by parents of this role and their being preoccupied with things other than the family and the bringing up of children.

Researchers have spoken bitterly about the deterioration of the education standard in American as well as in British schools. A recent study has shown that more than half the students aged between 14 and 19 cannot understand the simple instructions pertaining to the extinguishing of fire, and that 44% are unable to read the symbols of train schedules and other means of transport.

Another study undertaken by the National Institute for Assessment of Education Progress was conducted in America on seventeen-year-old students. It has shown that such students exhibited general ignorance of many scientific facts: one third did not know when the American Civil War took place, and 20% could not indicate the location of America on the map of the world. The magazine went on to say that high schools graduate ignorant students and pseudo-teachers who could hardly read a newspaper or write an intelligible letter.

The magazine attributed this ignorance and deterioration in the standard of education to the failure by parents to perform their role in the education and teaching process. Thus the magazine reported Terrel Bell, former U.S Secretary of Education, to comment: "The collapse of some aspects of the education standard in American schools reflects the nature

of fluctuations that affect the standard of the family. Thus there are many families in which both parents go to work, and many families that are run by one parent, a father or a mother." In the same article, the magazine reported that parents who cared about the education of their children always reap good results. The best example is Japan, particularly the Japanese mother. George de Fous, an anthropologist of California University and an expert on Japanese civilization, having studied it for 22 years, said that the Japanese mother is a very important and influential factor in the education of her children, because she alone assumes the responsibility of their education and strongly supports the role of the school. The education of children in Japan begins from the day they are born.

The interest and care shown by Japanese mothers with respect to their children are reflected in the fact that a Japanese mother goes and sits in the classroom of her son or daughter if they are unable to go to school on account of illness and can not continue to follow the lessons, to make sure they do not miss the information provided by the school.

Moreover, Japanese women stop going to work when they get married and devote their time and effort for years to help their children at school.

Islam was aware of the role of women vis-à-vis their children and was keen on realizing it in society. The Noble Prophet, peace be upon him, said in a tradition "You are all like shepherds and each of you is responsible for those of whom he is in charge." He said a woman is like a shepherdess in her husband's home and is responsible for her children.

Hence, the first goal of girl's education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is to prepare girls to assume their first responsibility in life, as mothers and wives and to qualify them to serve their community by assuming the kind of work that is appropriate to them, such as work in the field of education, nursing and medical treatment.

Human Rights in Saudi Arabia

When addressing the concept of human rights in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we must refer to Islamic Shari'ah, which is the source of regulation therein. The Saudi concept of human rights, which is based on Islam, is characterized by certain specific features that impart to it a particularity of its own in respect to the field of human rights that are set forth in international covenants. The following are the features of such particularity:

- As to their source, they emanate from God, the Creator of man. This is therefore the surest guarantee.
- As to their consequences, the proper application of Islamic Shari'ah is the best guarantee of human rights. Supporting the establishment of such rights and fighting for them is the duty of every Muslim.
- As to their extensiveness, they encompass all personal, intellectual, political, legal, social and economic rights.

They also apply to men, women and children; to Muslims and non-Muslims, within and outside the Islamic state.

As perceived by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and as things are in reality, Islam has laid down basic rules in terms of which human rights, duties, and the manner of practicing man's public liberties are organized. These rules include the following:

1- In principle, everything is permissible, which is the wide space within which a Muslim individual can act, stopping at nothing except at what is proved to

have been prohibited by a provision of religion.

2- The limits of an individual's freedom and rights stop before the limits and rights of another individual. No individual may encroach on the freedom and rights of another.
3- Adherence to public interest in case of conflict between the interest of an individual and that of the community.
4- Islam considers morality a guarantee of human rights. This is seen in the ideological, theoretical, and doctrinal background of man together with the culture and morality emanating therefrom. Absence of human morality in the case of an individual, and particularly in the case of rulers is bound to give rise to disregard of man and his rights. Hence, Islamic *da'wah* has always started from man's basic tasks in terms of education and the reminding of the dictates of morality and cultures.
5- Man should use his mind because it is the first frame of reference in understanding the reported traditions.
6- "*Shoura*" (Consultative) is considered in Islam a course of behavior and a philosophy of government.
7- A Muslim must struggle for securing his rights and should not humble himself within the framework of what was made lawful to him by Islam, which calls for the establishment of justice throughout the world. This can only be achieved through an arduous process whereby man can defend the cause of justice, confront injustice and seek to attain freedom and liberation from servitude and bondage.

The Kingdom's View of Human Rights

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is keen on safeguarding human rights by way of commitment to the injunctions of Islam, which assert man's dignity. The Holy Qur'an states: "**Now, indeed, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favored them far above most of Our creation**." (17:70) However, the Kingdom also believes in the importance of cultural particularities. Hence a few points must be stressed:

First: The government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is keen on protecting human rights. The statutes of government have set forth a great many of such rights, such as securing the rights of a citizen and his family (article 27), providing education and healthcare for every citizen (Article 30 and 36), respect for the sanctity of homes (Article 37), affirmation that punishment is personal and there is no crime or punishment except on the basis of an explicit provision of Shari'ah that considers an act a punishable crime without retroactive effect of the law (Article 38), as well as other provisions and legal articles pertaining to the rights of individuals and of the community. It also exerts efforts to educate and enlighten the community with respect to its rights in the domain of human rights by including this in the education curricula and the media, and focusing on the application of human principles and values.

Second: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is of the opinion that it is not possible to deal with the subject of human rights in isolation from the cultures and particularities of various

people, including religious teachings. This is because monotheist religions have performed a distinctive role in seeking to elevate human beings to heights of dignity and sought to make them righteous and efficient members in human communities. In this respect, Islam, to which more than one billion people adhere, is among the religions that have contributed and are still contributing to the enrichment of the concepts of human rights through decent moral principles, integrated foundations and a comprehensive way of human life wherein human rights and duties are reflected.

Third: The universality of human rights and the values and principles connected therewith derive their legitimacy at the international level from the cultural diversity that is prevalent in the world. They can be successfully applied to all communities only if the cultural, social and religious diversity of the various communities is taken into account. In this regard, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while it stresses the universality of human rights and the need to make allowance for social differences and the principles of cultural particularities of the peoples of the world, stresses, nevertheless, the need for not taking such particularity as a pretext for violating human rights. Such particularity should, rather, constitute an important tributary that enhances and protects human rights.

Particularity in the Domain of Human Rights

The idea of cultural and religious particularity is raised not only at the Arab or Islamic level, but also on the part of many other civilizations, such as the Chinese, Indian, Japanese civilizations, etc. This idea has received clear support

and was met by understanding even in the circles of some specialists in Western countries in recent years. This is reflected in a reference in the Vienna Declaration of Human Rights in 1993, under Article Five, to the cultural particularities of various communities, and the assertion of the former French President Jacques Chirac at the Paris Conference in 1998 on the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "The Declaration takes into account the different cultures and their richness from one area to another." There are also many resolutions and reports issued by the United Nations agencies that are concerned with human rights and which refer to the question of particularity in one way or another, which will not be mentioned here for lack of space.

Although international covenants pertaining to human rights have a universal character, they are highly "relative" and are confirmed by many things, including:

1- The applications of human rights are not alike among all countries or in all cases. Thus the legal conditions, the peculiarities and policies of political systems, the motives of cultural conditions and the particularities of historical contexts vary from one country to another, and from one region to another. Thus where there is general agreement over basic criteria and principles, the policies and programs for the implementation of such criteria and principles vary from one country to another, according to the variety of political, social, legal and cultural systems. In other words, the documents pertaining to human rights leave to states the freedom to follow the proper means and policies for

securing such rights. Hence, it is often the case that the phrase "in accordance with applicable laws and procedures" is used in connection with public rights and freedoms to which they refer; particularly those that are subject to different systems that are applicable in the various states. A case in point is reflected in laws pertaining to nationality, and matters related to marriage, divorce and inheritance, as well as other matters that are regulated by religious laws.

2- An important point that must be stressed is that the universality of human rights in both Western culture and Islamic culture is based on the same philosophical principles, particularly those that concern the basic rights such as justice, equality, consultation and respect of personal property.

3- Such world covenants did not preclude the issuance of similar covenants at regional levels. They were rather the motive behind their appearance. Thus in addition to the World Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments emanating from the United Nations, similar regional covenants and declarations were issued and are more particular than the World Covenants. The most distinguished is the African Covenant of Human Rights and the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam. Indeed, some states and groups have resorted to the codification of human rights in the local legal systems, as in the European Convention on Human Rights

4- The difference between the ideal and the actual facts,

between theory and application. Thus when we address the issues of human rights and basic liberties we must take into account this obvious difference between principles and norms as emphasized by international covenants and conventions and the application of these principles and norms in actual practice. One of the important reasons for the difference between the ideal principles embodied by the covenants and conventions on human rights and the practical application thereof lies in the difference of the concepts of "public order, public security, public morality and public interest" and other concepts that have different legal and cultural implications from one state to another.

Thus human rights conventions and instruments take into account the different circumstances of states and their different legal, cultural and social systems and even the problems which each state faces. Hence, it is well known that those international instruments provide that the exercise of rights and public liberties should not be subject to any restrictions (except those set forth under the law and those that are necessary for safeguarding national security or public order, public interest, public morality, the rights and liberties of other people).

This provision clearly applies to the legal procedures adopted by many states, including the United States of America after the September 11 events, in order to combat terrorism, and to limit some liberties which are set forth in international mechanisms pertaining to human

rights.

This also applies to the form of the practice by non-Muslims of their absolute freedom in practicing their religious rites in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this centering, for many reasons, around the religious position of the Kingdom with respect to Muslims all over the world and the location of the two Holy Mosques and the sacred Ka'bah therein.

5- Priority of certain rights over others. Thus economic and social rights have special priorities for developing nations as compared with political and civic rights, in view of the transitional circumstances and conditions of those countries, most important of which are the policies governing economic adjustment which require giving special care to social considerations, in the context of the deteriorating standard of living and the prevalence of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, which requires increasing attention to continuous development programs. Thus social conditions and poverty vary a great deal as between developing and advanced countries. For example, the percentage of women is high in the statistics of the poor and the destitute. Two thirds of the illiterate in the world are women. The death rate of mothers is high in most developing countries. Thus one in 20 women dies while giving birth in Africa and one in 54 in Asia and one in 73 in South America, while only one in more than 10 thousand dies during giving birth in North America.

In light of this, the compass of international conflict has moved from a political, strategic and military conflict to a class, social, economic and cultural conflict between the poor, who are in the vast majority, and the rich, who are a small minority in the world.

This is clearly revealed in the UN Human Development, annual report on which shows that the populations of advanced countries control 85% of world trade and economy. They are obviously concentrated in the rich and advanced countries of the North, while the share of the majority of the world population does not exceed 15% of world trade and a great many of them live below the poverty line.

The Judiciary Structure and Human Rights in the Kingdom

The judiciary system has also been the target of criticism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To clarify the facts, the Saudi government invited the UN special rapporteur concerned with the independence of judges and lawyers, Datuk Param Cumaraswamy, former U.N. spcial rapporteur on judicial independence visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 20-27 October 2002. At the end of his visit, he expressed his satisfaction with the results he had reached and with his close acquaintance with the independence of judges and lawyers in the Kingdom.

It is well-known that this rapporteur has not been permitted to visit many developing countries. The Kingdom is only the second state to invite him after Indonesia, which had invited him to have a close look at its judicial system. This is a reflection of its confidence in the soundness and

full independence of its judiciary system from the executive and legislative authorities.

In view of the importance of the judiciary system for securing human rights, whether those of citizens or expatriates in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the principle of independence of the judiciary system is considered a major principle of judicial organization in Saudi Arabia which affirms that its judicial system, which is derived from Islamic Shari'ah, comprises the most important criteria of fair trial. These include the following:

- Article (46) of the Law of the Judiciary states: "The judiciary is an independent authority. There is no control over judges in the dispensation of their judgments, except that of the Islamic shari'ah."
- Litigation is a common right for all. Article (47) states: "The right to litigation is guaranteed to citizens and residents of the Kingdom on an equal basis. The law defines the required procedures for this."

Litigation in Saudi Arabia passes through two parallel channels: The General Judiciary and the Administrative Judiciary.

The General Judiciary has the jurisdiction to settle all lawsuits that are not under the competence of the Administrative Judiciary. It consists of three kinds of courts, which, according to their degree of litigation from higher hierarchy, are as follows:

1 -The high court, which is similar to a constitutional court. The most important of its undertakings are:

a- To review sentences containing detrimental verdicts

issued by the appellate court.
b- To ratify the constitutional verdicts issued by the appellate courts.
2- The appellate courts, which review appealable verdicts issued by first degree courts after listening to litigants.

The general judiciary is supervised by a supreme council called The Supreme Judiciary Council. The most important competences of this Council are the following:
1- To review the employment affairs of judges.
2- To inspect the judiciary.
3- To approve the establishment of courts as outlined in the Law.
4- To supervise courts and judges.

The Administrative Judiciary is an independent authority which reports directly to the King. The following are the most important undertakings of the Administrative Judiciary:
a- Compensation claims made by the persons concerned against the Government or independent public corporate bodies.
b- Disciplinary claims filed by the concerned party.
c- Claims related to contractual disputes to which the government or any of its corporate bodies is a party.
d- Claims for the final cancellation of administrative decisions.
e- Petitions for the execution of foreign judgments.

The Saudi Law of Criminal Procedures, states:

- No person shall be arrested, searched, detained, or imprisoned except in cases specified by the law (Article 2).

- No penal punishment shall be imposed on any person except in connection with a forbidden and punishable act, whether under Shari'ah principles or under statutory laws, and after the person has been convicted pursuant to a final judgment rendered after a trial conducted in accordance with Shari'ah principles. Article 3)

Any accused person shall have the right to seek the assistance of a lawyer or a representative to defend him during the investigation and trial stages. Article 4)

Trial hearings, including the hearing set for the pronouncement of sentence, shall be attended by the required number of judges, failing which substitute judge(s) shall be assigned to complete the quorum. (Artilce 7)

- Sentences shall be appealable by either the convicted person or the Prosecutor. (Article 9)

New Regulations Issued by the Kingdom for Safeguarding Human Rights

During the last six years, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has witnessed tremendous and major developments in the field of the enhancement of the preservation of human rights. In this context three regulations have been developed and issued to assist in the application of justice and the safeguarding of the rights of citizens and of expatriates. They are: The Law of Procedures before the Shari'ah Courts, the Law of Criminal Procedures and the Code of Law Practice. As mentioned , these laws aim at facilitating the judiciary process and give fair trials and rights of pleading.

As to accession to international Conventions on human rights, the Kingdom has acceded to four out of the six major

Conventions pertaining to human rights, namely: The UN Convention on the Rights of Child (1996),The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of racial Discrimination (ICERD) (1998), UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1998), and The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2000). The Committee charged with studying two international covenants has concluded its tasks. These covenants are: The International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights.

Certain relevant measures have been taken recently. These include:

1- The setting up of a standing committee on June 9, 1999 to investigate claims connected with torture. The setting up of this committee was prompted by a serious desire to activate and apply the provisions of the international convention on the elimination of torture and other forms of cruel or inhuman or humiliating treatment or punishment to which the Kingdom had acceded in 1998. The committee has been given extensive powers to investigate any practices affecting any individual whether upon his arrest, detention or questioning. In fact, claims of torture were investigated and those proven guilty were punished.
2- The establishment of human rights sections at relevant government authorities such as the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs.

3- The Kingdom's first report pursuant to its accession to the International Convention on the elimination of torture and other forms of cruel or inhuman treatment or punishment was discussed during the session held by the UN committee concerned with the elimination of torture in Geneva between April 30 and May 2000. The results of the discussion were useful and positive to a great extent.

4- The Kingdom submitted its first report to the UN committee concerned with the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, pursuant to its accession to the convention. The report was discussed in March 2003 before this committee in Geneva.

5- The Kingdom participates with the member states of the Organization of Islamic Conference in drafting Islamic conventions on human rights. The Drafting Committee has finished the preparation of 'the Covenant of the Rights of the Child in Islam', which will be adopted at the end of this Gregorian year. This will be followed by initiating the drafting of other covenants on the elimination of racism and racial discrimination. The drafting of such covenants aims at stressing the universality of human rights in Islam, on the one hand, and enriching the international concepts on human rights, on the other, and to offer to the international community the guarantees of rights contained in the Islamic Shari'ah.

6- The setting up of a non-governmental body concerned with human rights. This project is in its final stages and will see the light soon.

7- Within the framework of the Kingdom's participation in the UN human rights organs, a Saudi specialist was admitted to the committee concerned with the rights of the child which discusses the reports of the states that have acceded to the convention.
8- In the context of the cooperation of the Kingdom with the international competent authorities, a delegation of the European Parliament was invited to the Kingdom in early June 2002. The delegation met with officials of the Ministry of Interior and other government sectors, including the speaker and some members of the Shoura (Consultative) Council.

To elaborate on the stance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with respect to human rights, we shall consider the following three levels:

The First Level: The general stance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia towards human rights

The Second Level: Human rights in respect of (workers, women, racial discrimination and children) in terms of the regulations pertaining thereto in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Third Level: The individual actual cases adduced by the authorities concerned with human rights in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The First Level: The General Stance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Towards Human Rights

To begin with, the Kingdom adopts Islam as the state program in education, the judicial system and the guidance of

politics in all aspects thereof. This adoption is not subject to outbidding or to the possible postulation of retraction therefrom. This is because Islam is the existential value of all the Saudi people who consider themselves worthless without it, and because the state, which goes back three centuries, was established in the first place in the name of religion and is steeped in it during its three phases: under Imam Muhammad bin Saud, followed by Imam Turki bin Abdullah, followed by King Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud. Through this adoption of Islam, the state has inaugurated in practical terms its care for human rights with the most important and greatest of these rights, namely the adoption of Islamic Shari'ah, which has preserved the true human rights, which led to "The ruling of the people in accordance with what they want, indeed with that with which they link their existence, namely, Islam". Moreover, by adopting Islamic Shari'ah, the Kingdom has automatically committed itself to human rights internally – constitutionally and legally- and to support them externally.

Hence the Basic Law of Governanca, which was promulgated in 1992, has emphasized the respect of human rights on the basis of the Islamic Shari'ah. This occurs under Article 26 thereof. Twenty articles of the Statute deal with human rights. Articles 7 and 8 provide that the Statute and other regulations are governed by the two sources of Shari'ah, namely "the Qur'an and the Sunnah", and that the system of government, which should be based on justice, Consultation and equality, derives its authority from those two sources. This means the state is committed to the respect of human rights and liberties which are guaranteed by

the Islamic Shari'ah.

This was followed by detailing the rights guaranteed by the Statute in various domains:

A- Social rights connected with the family, in terms of safeguarding it, the provision of social security and health care.

B- Economic rights constitute a guarantee of the sanctity of private property, commitment to fair taxation, facilitating the scope of work for those capable of working and worker's rights, which are detailed in the Labor and Workmen Regulation.

C- Cultural rights guarantee the right to free education, support for scientific innovation, encourage research and cultural activities and the setting up of the relevant institutions.

D- Civil rights safeguard the security of citizen, prohibit the imprisonment of anyone except pursuant to the law, provide for the humane and decent treatment of the accused and for observing the rule that no punishment may be imposed except pursuant to Shari'ah or legal provisions that consider the act a crime, and guarantee the independence of the judicial system which shall be governed solely by the Islamic Shari'ah, giving citizens and expatriates equal rights in litigation, and preserving the sanctity of man's privacy, residence and communications.

Externally, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has generally supported the premises of the declaration and covenants of human rights. However, in view of its premises which are based on Islamic Shari'ah, it has a distinct stance in its at-

titude to them in two respects:

The First: Being committed to the guidance of its religion, the Kingdom is of the opinion that these covenants which are concerned with human rights did not give proper attention to the distinctive and worthy essence of man in respect of which he was endowed with rights that transcend the rights of non-human creatures.

Thus the kingdom, inspired by the tenets of its religion, considers that it is the caring for the humanity of man, in the first place, that gives those rights their value when they are oriented in such a way as is consistent with this humanity and with the objective of elevating it, so that no rights are laid down that are not consistent with such paramount humanity.

The Second: Man's humanity (his distinctive existentialist value), as espoused by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is obvious and certain, because it emanates from the revelation of God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of man on this earth. In brief, it is represented by the following:

A- By the fact that God has made man His vicegerent on earth wherein he acts as worshipper, investor and builder, in the manner God has ordained.

B- By the fact that, in order to enable him to shoulder this task, God has endowed him with reason, civilized language and upright posture.

C- Man's greatest elements of humanity consist of the fact that he embodies a breath of God, which uplifts him beyond clay and animal life and gives him the potential of advancement and sublimation of his humanity.

Such are the elements of the sublime humanity that pulls man to his Creator, so that his bond with Him would be the measure of his humanity. The stronger this links, the greater is his humanity, and the more liberated is he from mechanical behavior and animal instincts, and vice-versa.

It is this kind of man that monotheist religions care for and for whom they have laid down the plan for his elevation and advancement.

It is true that the followers of some religions, prompted by the desire to resist the materialism that negates man's humanity, have gone too far in emphasizing the spiritual side at the expense of the material side. This, however, has created a reaction on the part of many modern philosophies that focused on the material side and neglected the spiritual side of man. It is these philosophies whose repercussions have led to the creation of the declarations and covenants of human rights, which addressed man's material and bodily rights in the economic, political and other fields. Such rights are no doubt important, but they are not everything, nor do they rank first. Islam, by which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is guided, explicitly cares for the essence, spirit, values and honor of man, and strikes a balance between such rights and the other material rights in life. Thus it has preserved man's intrinsic and noble origin, which emanates from God, and is immune against emotional considerations that lead to yielding to the pressure of its time or that contradict certain attitudes.

The Kingdom, by focusing primarily on man's humanity, his honor, mind, spirit, religion, values and morality, does in fact lay down the proper and necessary foundations of

human rights so that they can be founded on a strong base represented by man's awareness of his value in this life, which sets him apart from other creatures, and makes his attitude towards such rights, which are in turn his duties, one of self-commitment and honest internal interaction with them. This would be the case even in the absence of legal supervision, unlike the case of those whose attitude towards such rights is formed under the pressure of the law and the balance of power, which would soon collapse when exposed to the storms of selfish interests, and when the corresponding deterrent forces are absent or weak, in which case the advocates of human rights would be transformed into violators of same. They may even seek to bend these rights and subject them to their own interests at the expense of man's humanity and legitimate rights.

By insisting on basing human rights on man's humanity, the Kingdom does not depart from the declaration and covenants of human rights. It rather activates some important elements therein on which all humanity agrees, and which occur in the preambles of such covenants.

Thus there is reference in such covenants to: "mind, conscience, dignity, honor, reputation and family". Article One of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights referred to man's dignity, mind and conscience. Article Twelve provides that: "No one shall be exposed to arbitrary interference in one's private life, residence, correspondence or to campaigns against his honor and reputation."

Thus in harmony with the tenets of Islam, the Kingdom is in agreement with the Declaration in that the elements referred to therein represent the basics of human existence

and believes that human rights should preserve the existence thereof, support the enhancement and advancement of same, and should negate what contradicts them let alone what destroys them.

It is in this context that reservation was made by the Kingdom in respect of some elements that were set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It was such reservation which has led to the exposure of the Kingdom to unwarranted distortion and exaggeration although the Kingdom had been quick to accede to many international conventions on human rights, such as:

A- The Convention on the Elimination and Punishment of Crime and Genocide of the year 1949.

B- The Convention on Slavery of the year 1926, which was amended by the Protocol Concluded on December 7, 1953.

C- The Convention on the Prohibition of Slavery and the Elimination of Practices Akin to Slavery, of the year 1956.

D- The Convention on the Elimination of Torture and other Forms of Cruel Treatment and Punishment, of the year 1984.

E- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, of the year 1989.

The reservation by the Kingdom in connection with the human rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration focused on two Articles:

Article Sixteen, which provides for the freedom of men and women to marry when they are of marriageable age, without any restriction connected to race or faith.

Article Twelve which provides that "every person is entitled to the right of freedom of thought, conscience and faith, which includes the right to change one's faith or creed". The reservation touched on the second part of the Article.

The Kingdom's justification of its reservations is based on the awareness of the matter which we have mentioned, namely, the care to be given to man's humanity, in the first place. In the second place, this justification has convinced those in the West who had enlightened thinking and fair-minded dispositions and who truly care for human rights.

In a memorandum sent to the Arab League, the Kingdom has explained that its abstaining from signing the Declaration and its reservation was not "a denial of the goal of this Declaration and this logic, which is man's dignity as enunciated by the provisions of international covenants, but is:

First: a determination on our part to maintain the protection of man's dignity in our country without any discrimination between one person or another, on the basis of the Divine Islamic Creed, not on the basis of the material positive laws. This is because the effect of the Divine Creed in that respect is stronger than that of the positive material laws, and particularly when we see that most of the disruption and deviation in the life of the youth in the advanced world is due to the lack of Divine Creed and the involvement in a purely materialistic life in which crimes and perversion are on the rise in the community, which rise is in proportion to the remoteness of the youth from belief in God.

Second: because we wanted to express reservation as regard some points in that "Declaration" and that "Covenant" in respect of which Islam had a special logic for the sake of

bolstering "human dignity" and for the sake of protecting "man's freedom", pursuant to our Islamic rules which were distorted by the ignorant and those who are prejudiced, and because we adhere to their scientific philosophy which some researchers have not penetrated, and which are supported by conclusive historical facts in that regard. This has made us differ in opinion in respect of what we have alluded to in connection with some applications of the provisions of the "Declaration and the Covenant", not with their basic principles concerning human dignity, man's freedom, peaceful co-existence among all human beings.

While the Kingdom has refrained from signing and expressed its reservation, it did not stop at that; it has, rather, highlighted the grounds on which it has based its position, and pointed to the Shari'ah alternatives to the provisions asserted by the Declaration, which are contrary to the Shari'ah, and called for trying to understand the distinctiveness and humanity of such alternatives and their appropriateness for sound human existence.

This position and call have had a noticeable effect on some Europeans who are concerned with human rights from amongst politicians, orientalists and professors of law, who have expressed their desire to go deeper in trying to acquaint themselves with the concept of human rights in Islam.

The Kingdom responded by organizing three symposia in 1971 during which Saudi professors expounded the reality about Islam and its approach to the care for human rights, and answered the questions raised by those Europeans. The result was that they were convinced that Islamic Shari'ah was the real protector of human rights. One of them said: "**It**

is from here, from this Islamic country -The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - that human rights should be declared, not from any other place." Another said: "**As a Christian. I declare that God is truly worshipped in this country**." He went on to assert that he agrees with Muslim scholars that the provisions of the Qur'an are undoubtedly by far superior to the Covenant on Human Rights.

The Second Level: Some Detailed Saudi Regulations Connected, for example, with the Issues of Workers, Women, Racial Discrimination and Children

These are important, critical and sensitive issues for the organizations that are concerned with human rights and are often subject to criticism by them. Now, do these special regulations or the whole regulation connected with those aspects contain anything that runs counter to human rights? In other words, do they include what is contrary to the Statute of Government which has considered the Islamic Shari'ah - which guarantees man's humanity and rights - the frame of reference of all regulations and provisions, whether issued before or after it?

It is difficult to review the regulations connected with those aspects. Suffice it to give some hints that we hope would serve the purpose in that regard.

A-**Workers' Rights**

Workers are among the elements of society for whom the Islamic Shari'ah has established rights and on whom it imposed duties. They are entitled to the rights of justice, protection against aggression, preservation of life, blood, property, social solidarity and decent treatment. Moreover,

there are special Shari'ah directives in respect to workers, in particular, those connected with the obligation to pay a worker his wages before his sweat dries, not to require him to do more than he can bear, and to consider him a brother equal to the employer in human dignity, as well as other obligations which are well-known to a Muslim who is conscious of his religion, and which many international covenants have called for in our time.

A new and updated Labor Law in Saudi Arabia was released on September 27, 2005. The Law was issued by Royal Decree No. M/51.

The new Law includes a number of articles and provisons that maintain the rights of workers and guarantee that they perform their duties in comfort and tranquility.

For instance, Article (58) of the this Law states, "The employer may not transfer the worker from his original workplace to another place that entails a change in his place of residence, if such transfer is likely to cause serious harm to the worker and is not justified by the nature of work."

The Law states the employer duties towards his workers. Article (61) notes that employer shall be required to:

Refrain from using the worker without pay and shall not, without a judicial instrument, withhold the worker's wages or any part thereof. The employer shall treat his workers with due respect and refrain from any action or utterances that may infringe upon their dignity and religion.

Give the workers the time required to exercise their rights as provided for in this Law without any deductions from their wages against such time. He may regulate the exercise of this right in a manner not detrimental to the work progress.

Facilitate for the employees of the competent authorities any task related to the enforcement of the provisions of this Law.

Article (78) reads, "A worker who has been dismissed from work without valid reason may demand reinstatement. Such claims shall be considered in accordance with the provisions of this Law and the Litigation Regulations before the Commissions for the Settlement of Labor Disputes.

The Law prohibits employers from ending thier workers service due to illness. In this context, Article (82) of the Law says, "An employer may not terminate the worker's services on account of illness prior to availing him of the period designated for sick leave as provided for in this Law."

At the same time, the Law asks employer to pay their workers their end-of-sservce benefits as stated in Article (84), "Upon the end of the work relation, the employer shall pay the worker an end-of-service award of a half-month wage for each of the first five years and a one-month wage for each of the following years. The end-of-service award shall be calculated on the basis of the last wage and the worker shall be entitled to an end-of-service award for the portions of the year in proportion to the time spent on the job. Also Article (88) reads, "Upon the end of the worker's service, the employer shall pay his wages and settle his entitlements within a maximum period of one week from the date of the end of the contractual relation. If the worker ends the contract, the employer shall settle all his entitlements within a period not exceeding two weeks. The employer may deduct any work-related debt due to him from the worker's entitlements.

The Law abides employers to adopt necessary measures to protect their workers. In this context, Article (122) reads, "An employer shall take the necessary precautions to protect the workers against hazards, occupational diseases, the machinery in use, and shall ensure work safety and protection. He shall post in a prominent place in the firm the instructions related to work and workers safety in Arabic and, when necessary, in any other language that the workers understand. The employer may not charge the workers or deduct from their wages any amounts for the provision of such protection." And Article (123) states, "An employer shall inform the worker, prior to engaging in the work, of the hazards of his job and shall require him to use the prescribed protective equipment. The employer shall supply the workers with the appropriate personal gear and train them on their use."

Further to employers responsibilities of dealing with their workers work injuries, Article (133) of the Saudi Labor Law says, "If a worker sustains a work injury or an occupational disease, the employer shall be required to treat him and assume directly or indirectly all necessary expenses, including hospitalization, medical examinations and tests, radiology, prosthetic devices and transportation expenses to treatment centers."

The Law asks employers to conduct periodical examination for his employees. Article (143) states, "An employer shall assign one or more physicians to provide, at least once a year, a comprehensive medical examination for his workers who are exposed to any of the occupational diseases listed in the Schedules of Occupational Diseases provided for in the Social Insurance Law. The findings of the exami-

nation shall be kept in the employer's records as well as in the workers' files. Article (144) adds, "An employer shall provide his workers with preventive and therapeutic health care in accordance with the standards set forth by the Minister, taking into consideration whatever is provided for by the Cooperative Health Insurance Law."

These glimpses of workers' rights derived from the Labor Law should be enough, although many more exist together with their guarantees. But, this does not mean that the law was not fair as regards employers' rights vis-à-vis their workers. Our subject in this context however, is specifically the rights of workers. Otherwise, the law contains many articles pertaining to the rights of employers to preserve their property, their profession's secrets and implementation of the instructions that are laid down and others. Moreover, the law provides for setting up committees for the settlement of disputes between workers and employers and has laid down procedures and criteria for the settlement of disputes and contains the relevant penalties in that respect.

Therefore, it is unfair to say that: "The Labor Law does not protect the workers and that it contributes to their exploitation and that it sides with the employers." This is contrary to the actual facts. It is true that some employers do violate the rights of some of their workers. But in doing so, they would be violating the Labor Law which their workers can have recourse to through the Labor Offices. Moreover, failure to relieve such workers is, in turn, a violation, the responsibility for which lies with the Ministry of Labor. These, then, are violations in the implementation of the Law, not violations warranted by the Law itself.

B- Women's Rights

The issue of women and their rights constitutes one aspect of the agitation by those interested in this field, in terms of what the law and social customs in Saudi society confer on them. In fact, this issue essentially goes back to Islamic Shari'ah which is the basis of government that controls social traditions. As to some customs which are inherited from tribal life – which are of an individualistic character – such as forcing a girl to marry her cousin – these are contrary to Islamic Shari'ah before running counter to the new covenants on women's rights. In any case, such customs are declining as a result of the increasing religious consciousness and the effects of civilized life.

Indeed, many of those concerned with women's rights, whether Westerners or Muslims, who are absorbed in the contemporary frame of women's rights are aware of such a decline. Therefore, they sometimes cut short the distance and point out, in their endeavor to criticize the Saudi system in that respect, that Islamic Shari'ah discriminates against women in the field of inheritance and the giving of testimony, etc….

In view of this criticism, and in view of the explicit provision in the Statute of Government in the Kingdom that the laws and provisions are governed by the Qur'an and the Sunnah, we adduce the following two points:

First: The basis for Islam's view of women and their relation with men:

Islam has liberated women from all sinful concepts and restrictions pertaining to them and the way they are treated and looked at on the part of ancient nations and at the time

of the Prophethood of Muhammad, peace be upon him, and conferred on them a respectful and lofty status without going to either extremes that would be harmful to them. It indicated that they are honorable human beings and are the partners of men in respect of being vicegerents on this earth, of the realization of true servitude to God, and in their common origin, Adam, peace be upon him: "**O Mankind! Be conscious of your Sustainer, Who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread a multitude of men and women**" (4: 1) and that they independently – just like men – shoulder their religious responsibilities and the Shari'ah duties and receive their reward: "**Whereas anyone – be it man or woman – who does [whatever he can] of good deeds and is a believer withal, shall enter paradise, and shall not be wronged by as much as [would fill] the groove of a date – stone**." (4: 124) **"The rights of the wives [with regard to their husbands are equal to the [husband's] rights with regard to them…"** (2: 228) Thus they are in principle equal to men in respect of rights and duties because they are men's sisters, as also enunciated in the Prophet's tradition: "**Women are the sisters of men**."

This explains the surge of women at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and of his companions, and their clear independent options in their faith, their suffering under ordeals, their migration, their discharge of their Shari'ah duties and their participation in all domains of life. Thus in the domain of knowledge, A'ishah, the wife of the Prophet, peace be upon him, was among the six leading scholars of Islam in the first epoch of Islam.

In the social field, women played an important role in social services and charities, in *Jihad*, in treating the wounded and giving them water to drink, caring for the needy, helping their families and husbands with their money. They played a political role in their pledge to stand by the Prophet, peace be upon him, and in giving advice at the treaty of Hudaibiyah, and so on.

This is how Islam viewed women and their activities in the early epoch of Islam. As to the major elements of their rights under Islamic Shari'ah, these are represented in the following:

Their first right is **the right of decent life on equal footing with men**. Any encroachment on women is an encroachment on humanity as a whole. The punishment of one who deliberately kills a woman is the same punishment of one who kills a man.

Their second right is **the right of qualification to practice their civil affairs**, in terms of making and rescinding contracts without being under guardianship of anybody – on account of their being women – as to how to dispose of their property, by way of buying and selling. Thus the Islamic Shari'ah has recognized the financial personality of women, which is not dependent on their husbands, fathers, brothers or sons.

The third right is **the right of freedom and immunity against infringement**. This is associated with their right to the safety of their person, honor, faith, family, property and privacy. Thus husbands are prohibited from divulging such privacy.

The fourth right is the right to be involved in business

affairs and undertakings, to be employed or to practice free professions. Thus they can be involved in preaching, commerce, industry and agriculture within the Islamic framework and Shari'ah interests. "**And [as for] the believers, both men and women are close to one another: they [all] enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Apostle. It is they upon whom God will bestow His grace: Verily, God is Almighty, Wise!**" (9: 71)

There is yet another right for women conferred to them by Islam, namely, the right to their humanity, the safeguarding of their honor, modesty and their distinctive instinct, such as the female instinct which is associated with tenderness and the love of adornment, the instinct of motherhood and similar instincts the forsaking of which by women is a transgression against their humanity and a cheap sacrifice of their dignity.

The Second: Women's rights in international covenants

The status of women in the various regimes, traditions, teachings and religions has varied since time immemorial, ranging between deprivation, humiliation and the encroachment on their rights, on the one hand, and over–liberation, to the point of damaging their humanity and tempting them to be involved in a conflict with men, on the pretext of liberating themselves from men's domination, on the other.

The most important and latest convention is that related to the elimination of discrimination against women which became effective after being signed by fifty states in 1981.

We must point out that discrimination, in this context, has

a different connotation from the one ordinarily associated with the word, namely, racial discrimination. The intended meaning of discrimination in the Convention is the difference between men and women. In other words, the aim of the Convention is to eliminate any difference between them and the establishment of absolute equality and complete similarity between men and women in regulations, activities and all other domains.

This is not the place for considering the articles of the Convention, not even briefly. Suffice it to refer to the most salient of its contents. Among these is the rejection of the supremacy of one sex over the other, the equality between them in the political field, in terms of nomination, election, position, work in international organizations, equality in education curricula and sports activities between them, the encouragement of co-education, guarantee of equal rights with men in employment opportunities, wages and social solidarity, in the various economic domains, equality in laws governing travel, the choice of place of residence, the combating of all forms of trading in women and exploiting them in prostitution, their right in concluding and rescinding marriage contracts, guardianship, custody of children, choice of the family name, family planning and the fixing of a minimum marriage age.

Saudi law, pursuant to the logic of the Shari'ah, confirms a number of forms of equality between men and women which are included in the Convention. Indeed the Shari'ah has recognized them long before the Convention, as the equality in humanity in connection with women's honor, modesty and associated matters; equality in the reward and punishment

for good and wrong deeds; equality in the bearing of responsibility; equality in education and civil personality in respect of financial matters and disposition of property.

The Shari'ah also confirms the provisions of the Convention which reject the dishonorable exploitation of women, this being among their important human rights.

There are, however, certain matters in the Convention which run counter to the Islamic Shari'ah and, consequently, are not consistent with the Kingdom's Statute of Government. Some of the Shari'ah provisions which are contrary to those of the Convention are considered a distinction of Shari'ah, a distinction that is conferred as a privilege on women.

A- Their exemption from bearing the economic burdens of the family, whether in starting the matrimonial home and the subsequent spending thereon, or even prior to that when women are still living with their parents, where men, be they fathers, husbands or sons are responsible for the upkeep of the household. This is by way of sparing women the need to expose themselves to abuse or to exert themselves beyond their capacity. This, however, does not mean that they are precluded from work and making money, nor from contributing to the upkeep of the household. But this would be a gesture of good will on their part and not an obligation.

B- Their different share in inheritance from that of men, which is half the share of males in case males and females belong to the same category: sons / daughters; brothers / sisters, though this is not always the case,

for sometimes they are treated equally "**And as for the parents [of the deceased] (father and mother), each of them shall have one-sixth of what he leaves, in the event of his having [left] no child**…" (4: 11)

The difference, therefore, is based on the different economic responsibility borne by men to the exclusion of women, as indicated in the previous paragraph.

C- When the Convention calls for the cancellation of the women's typical roles such as motherhood and caring for children, it runs counter to Islam in matters of custody, breast-feeding and caring for children, which are associated with women.

In summary, the legal system of the Kingdom, in respect of the privileges conferred on women and the legislation pertaining to them in that respect, has provided for the protection of women's humanity and dignity against violation. The Convention in question is in harmony with the Kingdom's legislation in many of its articles. Where there is a difference, this is attributed to a divergence with the Islamic Shari'ah, which means the state and members of the Saudi nation have no choice but to abandon such a divergence. The community adopts such provisions not as a heritage or as customs which the evolution of life necessitates the discarding thereof or leaving them behind. These are, rather, treated as a divine revelation and legislation from the Lord of the universe for His creatures as He is aware of their true nature and of their needs.

Their Lord has given them the highest degrees of guarantee of their interests. He is the One Who Knows that their

life is evolving through the centuries. He has willed this legislation for His creatures and has constituted it as a religion, the rejection of which is considered tantamount to breaking away from the faith and a rejection of God's judgment, which no true Muslim who believes in his sustainer can risk.

C- Racial discrimination

Humanity has suffered a great deal from all forms of discrimination whether related to class, religion, color or language. This occurred in the ancient civilizations of Pharaohs, Greeks, Romans, Persians and others. When the noble Prophet, peace be upon him, received divine Revelation, one of the tenets of the Islamic Shari'ah which he preached was the abolition of such discrimination and the liberation of people from its destructive effects. This was clearly stated in the Holy Quran: "**O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware."** (49: 13)

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "**No merit can distinguish an Arab from a non-Arab, nor a red person from a black one, except the merit of piety**."

He also said: "**Those who lived before you were destroyed because when an eminent person was guilty of stealing they would leave him alone, but when a poor person stole something they would punish him. By God, if Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, was to steal, I would cut off her hand**!"

When one of his companions abused a man by saying: "You son of a black woman", he was furious and said to that companion "**You are a man was harbors aspects of ignorance**."

These teachings prevailed, particularly in the early years of Islam, but began to shrink in the life of subsequent generations, although the glow of the effects of such teachings can still be seen, particularly in the field of religious rites, where no discrimination whatsoever can be seen, as in the congregational prayer, Hajj (pilgrimage) and the Shari'ah courts, where only the authority of the Shari'ah prevails.

However, other communities generally remained captives of the instinct of arrogance and contempt for others, as well as to other forms of racial discrimination, not only in interaction among individuals but in the legislation of states and the philosophies of nations, until a World War erupted and annihilated millions of people as a result of a racist, aggressive tendency. This has prompted the wise people of the world to put in place international legislation for combating this hateful disease of racial discrimination and absorb its evil consequences. The most conspicuous of these – in addition to the general covenants – was the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of the year 1965. This Convention has condemned such discrimination and called for the abrogation of all laws that involve same, to ban all its forms, and to protect people, and minorities in particular, against the perpetration of discrimination against them by other states or peoples.

Article 2 of the Convention states:

"State Parties condemn racial discrimination and un-

dertake to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and promoting understanding among all races, and, to this end:

(a) Each State Party undertakes to engage in no act or practice or facial discrimination against persons, groups, groups of persons or institutions and to ensure that all public authorities and public institutions, national or local, shall act in conformity with this obligation;

(b) Each State Party undertakes not to sponsor, defend or support racial discrimination by any persons or organizations;

(c) Each State Party shall take effective measures to review governmental, national and local policies, and to amend, rescind or nullify any laws and regulations which have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination wherever it exists;

(d) Each State Party shall prohibit and bring to an end, by all appropriate means, including legislation as required by circumstances, racial discrimination by any persons, group or organization."

Article 4 of the Convntions reads:

"State Parties condemn all propaganda and all organizations which are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race or group of persons of one colour or ethnic origin, or which attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form, and undertake to adopt immediate and positive measures designed to eradicate all incitement to, or acts of, such discrimination and, to this end, with due regard to the principles

embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the rights expressly set forth in article 5 of this Convention, inter alia,

(a) Shall declare an offence punishable by law all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race or group of persons of another colour or ethnic origin, and also the provision of any assistance to racist activities, including the financing thereof."

Article 5 provides that states should guarantee equal rights before law-courts and other bodies and protect every human being against any physical harm emanating from public officials or any institution. Article 6 requires states to guarantee, for any person under their jurisdiction, the right of recourse to law-courts for protecting him against any violation of his / her rights and against any racial aggression, etc.

Now because such principles and requirements as abound in the Convention are consistent with Islamic Shari'ah and God's orders to all believers, and because they are identified with the Statute of Government, Article 8 of which providing for the establishment of government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the basis of justice, Consultation and equality pursuant to Islamic Shari'ah; and because Article 12 thereof provides that the state shall prevent "all that leads to division, discord and cleavages"; and in view of the bills of implementation pertaining to the departments concerned with people's affairs, which emphasize the need to respect human dignity and to punish those that cause the violation thereof, be they ordinary people or officials of such depart-

ments, because of all this, the Kingdom ratified this convention on October 26, 1997, thus rendering it an internal law that can be invoked before the Kingdom's courts or administrative bodies.

D- Children's Rights

The UN Convention on the Rights of Child, which was adopted in 1990, represents the most important contemporary instrument on the protection of children and their rights although world attention to children goes back to 1924 when the League of Nations issued a declaration on human rights.

Although 66 states have expressed various reservations in respect thereof, yet, from an Islamic perspective, it is considered appropriate in many of its provisions and is consistent with what Islam calls for in respect of the protection of man and children, in particular, such as poverty problems, the prevention of the selling of children and their exploitation for prostitution purposes, protecting them against falling prey to drugs, the development of their mental, spiritual and moral capabilities, protecting them against forms of violence, the non-separation of children from their parents, their right to their names and nationalities, their rights to education, rest and the preservation of their identities, protecting them against sexual exploitation, kidnapping and torture, etc. Indeed, some of its positive aspects have corrected some provisions which are different from those included in the Convention on the elimination of discrimination against women, such as the approval of the instrument on children's rights which provides for non-separation of children from

their parents and conceded the basic role of family and parents in looking after children and their protection, as well as the state's obligation to help them perform such duties, unlike the Convention on Women, which called for the elimination of the conventional roles of women which are represented by their care and custody of their children, and which considered caring for children a social function that may be discharged by any person.

And yet, the Convention on children involves certain matters that are not consistent with Islam, such as giving children religious liberty in the absence of a religious way of thinking and background and the approval of adoption of children who have no one to support them, as adoption would entail conferring on the adopted child the name and lineage of the adopting party, which is contrary to the Qur'anic provision: "**[As for your adopted children] call them by their [real] fathers' names: this is more equitable in the sight of God; and if you know not who their fathers were, [call them] your brethren in faith and your friends**." (33: 5)

There remains an important point which Islam covers but which the Convention is lacking. This has to do with the fact that such children's provisions in Islam are more comprehensive, clearer and broader, as they begin before a child's birth, indeed before the establishment of the marital home of which a child would be a fruit whose rights extend up to the end of childhood. The following are some of the most prominent of such rights:

A- The proper mutual choice of husband and wife and their commitment to conjugal life and procreation

B- Proper reception of children at birth, whether males

or females and the prohibition of their rejection – particularly the females – let alone disowning, hurting or killing them. This right – the right to life – applies to the embryo, as abortion is prohibited after life has been breathed into it.

C- The right to be given a proper name and lineage to the child's parents as well as the right to circumcision of male children.

D- To consider the child a blessing and to thank God in celebration of the child's arrival.

E- The child's right to nursing.

F- The child's right to inheritance, which accrues to them ever since they are embryos in their mothers' wombs.

G- Their child's right to preservation of his/her property - if orphans - and to proper treatment.

H- The child's protection from all causes of harm and perdition which would affect his/her faith, mind and honor.

I- The child's right to education and instruction as well as fair treatment of all children in the family on equal footing, especially in respect of gifts.

J- Their right to protection in case of war and the prohibition of their killing since they are non- participants in the war.

K- Their right to upkeep and health and social care.

L- Foundling children have rights of protection and care by the Muslim community, which shall consider them free and shall preserve the money that may be found with them.

Such are some of the rights conferred on children by the Qur'an, the Sunnah and Shari'ah regulations. It should be pointed out that such rights of children are human rights, i.e. they are of the type of human rights in respect of their level of importance and in respect of the attention that should be paid to children. Indeed, the attention to be paid to them under such rights could be far more than the attention that should be given to the rights of grown-ups, in view of the weakness of children, which requires that society should take the initiative in swiftly and firmly securing their rights.

Being based on the Islamic Shari'ah, the Saudi administration upholds these laws in all their details and ramifications, whether through religious guidance of people in respect of such rights, being as they are required tenets of Muslims, beginning with the motivation created by one's faith through recognition of such rights under judicial provisions at the Shari'ah courts.

Thus in recognition of the positive elements contained in the Convention on children's rights and in support of it, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has acceded to it on January 9, 1996. However, in addition to its reservation concerning what runs counter to Shari'ah therein, its accession to it does not mean that the Kingdom stops at the ceiling of such a convention and neglects what is beyond it in terms of the duties of the family and the state towards children, which constitute children's rights in Islam. The fact is the Kingdom rises up towards this Islamic horizon and extrapolates the positive and useful elements in the convention, as part of its comprehensive duty to safeguard the interest of its children.

Such are four aspects of excitement in respect of human rights and the way dealt with them by the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, beginning with the articles of the Statute of Government, followed by the special regulations in the institutions concerned.

The situation as a whole is seen in the adoption and support by the Kingdom of all international conventions connected with those aspects and its support of it, as well as the adoption of a certain convention by virtue of a Royal Decree that approves and renders it part of the internal regulation that may be invoked before the judiciary. In fact, the Kingdom's laws had fostered these rights even before accession to such conventions. As to the items in respect of which the Kingdom has expressed reservation, these were contrary to the Islamic Shari'ah, which constitutes the basis and source on which the Saudi government is built as well as the religion of the Saudi people. The Kingdom has submitted its convincing clarification reports in respect to such reservations.

The third level: Actual examples of what the authorities concerned with human rights consider to be a violation of such rights in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

If the comprehensive position of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia towards human rights, which is based on the Islamic Shari'ah and which incorporates features of the Statute of government does not stop at the juncture reached by human experience and human disposition, but rather encompasses all the positive elements thereof and transcends them by stressing the essence of man, first as being the foundation on which such rights are based, and then by seeking to up-

lift the seekers of truth who are concerned with this matter to enable them to see and appreciate this essence, which convinced some of them and provided excuses for others; **if such sensitive aspects have in turn received their due share in fostering man's humanity and rights, mostly in harmony with the positive aspects of the international conventions which address such aspects, to which the Kingdom has acceded and which became part of its law, if such is the case, then why those provocations that keep pouring from the media and communication networks which emanate from public or private institutions such as "Amnesty International", "The Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Office of the American State Department", "The Human Rights Monitoring Organization" and "The Arab Human Rights Organization" and others, which accuse the Kingdom every now and then of violating some of these rights, of committing aggression on man's humanity and of violating some items of the international conventions on human rights?**

As s result of consideration of such types of reports they may be classified, for easy reference, into three types.

The First Type: This type is somehow connected with Islamic the Shari'ah. It may be definitive and conclusive matters, or it may refer to opinions enunciated by jurists or judges, or Shari'ah matters referred to a Muslim ruler within the frame of justice, the seeking of all that is good and the warding off of corruption.

- There are the physical punishments, such as the execution of murderers of sanctified souls, the amputation of hands, which are dictated by Shari'ah - as is

necessarily and well-known in the religion - which some organizations call "for the immediate cessation thereof."

Flogging is a type of physical punishment. It is dealt to persons convicted of drug cases, harassment of women, and so on. These are punishments that are up to judges to determine, to match the crime perpetrated and to deter criminals.

- These distinctive forms of certain conditions or behavior include – as indicated by these reports:
  - Precluding Saudi Muslim women from traveling abroad for study, if not accompanied by a legal guardian.
  - Segregation of males and females, particularly in the higher stages of education.
  - Considering the child of a "Muslim" Saudi father Muslim.
  - What reporters term as "Islamic apparel", i.e. the decent clothes of Muslim women.

Thus the practice of the community, and the adoption by the official institutions of the state of such matters, are based on Shari'ah provisions derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, or enunciated by Muslim jurists on the basis of Shari'ah rules. There may exist other opinions in respect of such matters, which opinions are given by previous or contemporary scholars. However, the adoption by the Kingdom of contrary opinions is not a deviation from Islam and is not consequently a violation of human rights.

- It is also worth pointing out some cases which those who have prepared such reports have misunderstood in respect of the position of Islam and, consequently, of the Saudi regulation in relation thereto, such as:

- Substitution of the execution of someone who commits a crime deliberately by payment of material compensation. Some have portrayed this as a manipulation of the law, i.e. of the Shari'ah being in favor of some privileged people who are accused of murder. In fact, departure from execution due to payment of blood money, or even free forgiveness, is a Shari'ah provision derived from the Holy Qur'an, in the verse which says: "**O you who believe! Just retribution is ordained for you in cases of killing…. But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain, then grant any reasonable demand, and compensate him with handsome gratitude. This is a concession and a Mercy from your Lord.**" (2: 78)

Thus this is generally applicable to all people irrespective of their position or ranks. It is, however, conditional on the consent of the heirs of the person slain. If they accept the blood-money, or any material compensation, or if they opt for free remission in the hope of being rewarded in the hereafter, then the murderer will escape retribution.

Denying inheritance to an offspring of a "Misyar" marriage[]. This is not true, for neither the Islamic Shari'ah nor Saudi law denies inheritance to an offspring from the father who is legally married, be it a "Misyar" marriage or an ordinary one.

- In view of the difficulty of finding four witnesses to establish that adultery has been committed by one accused of it, the public prosecution can "obtain coercive confessions by threatening and abusing the accused" in order to be able to condemn the accused to the punishment of adultery.

This, again, is a false assumption under both the Shari'ah and in actual fact. Under the Shari'ah, a confession must be purely voluntary. Indeed, when a person confesses to adultery, the judge is required to refrain from hastening to confirm his confession and give the accused opportunity to retract, and if the latter insists on his confession, the judge must make sure of his mental sanity – the story of the Prophet's companion Ma'az is a case in point.

As to actual practice, the stoning of an adulterer on the basis of his confession is rare; indeed, it has hardly occurred during many past decades.

The problem with the reports that mention cases of this type which is connected with the Islamic Shari'ah is that they - or rather the majority of them - are aware that they do not criticize human legal behavior, but object in particular, in respect to Shari'ah punishments, to God's verdict as enunciated in His religion which was conveyed through Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, namely Islam. Therefore, such critics, in order to evade such a provocative position, not only toward Saudis but toward all Muslims throughout the world, opt for portraying the Kingdom's attitude in such cases as being deviations from religion on the part of religious scholars or of the Kingdom's rulers.

- "The practice of Islam in the Kingdom is confined to the interpretation of Islam by the Wahhabi sect of the Hanbali school pursuant to the interpretation of Muhammad bin Abdul-Wahhab and any practices that are contrary to that interpretation are discouraged."
- Moreover, the execution of murderers, the amputation of hands, and floggings are performed by the government "according to its interpretation of Islamic Law or Shari'ah."
- The Islamic apparel in the schools of the Kingdom; this was imposed on Saudi women "on the basis of a radical interpretations of the rules pertaining to Islamic apparel."

The Second Type: This relates to practices that are considered violations of human rights or constitute evidence of such violations, such as:

- The running away of maids from the families with which they work, presumably because of suffering.
- The suffering of some children from the cruelty of their parents.
- The exploitation by some officials of their posts for acquiring personal gains at the expense of public interest.
- The jailing of people by the police without any indictment.
- The torturing of some prisoners before they are sentenced.
- The oppression of some workers either by delaying payment of their wages or by giving them hard, ex-

hausting jobs.

- The individual aggression by a security or traffic officer or authority against people without legal cause and similar practices that cannot be denied and that are perpetrated by people of weak faith and patriotism and, mostly, of people lacking in humanity. Their possible occasional occurrence may be attributed to ignorance and personal quarrel.

The responsibility of the State in such matters lies in enhancing the education of people and uplifting their faith and cultural consciousness as this will be reflected in their exemplary conduct. It also lies in applying the rules and regulations that would contribute to the reduction of such practices and purify society from the corrupt elements that exploit people's ignorance of the regulations and their bureaucracies in order to harm society and its members, and in alerting people to the ways and means of securing their rights.

The responsibility of the people lies in refusing to yield when confronted by such practices and to spare no effort to expose them and to call for combating them through the media and making direct complaints and so on. The fact of the matter is that such practices violate the Islamic Shari'ah before violating international human rights.

It should be stressed that the claim by some reporters that such practices are not met by legal deterrents is far from true. We have already touched on some provisions of the Labor and Workmen Law in respect of workers' rights, which prohibit all the violations alleged by such reporters and prescribe appropriate penalties for the violation thereof, wheth-

er as related to "failure of payment of wages, or imposing longer working hours without agreeing with the workers on increasing their wages, and so on."

The Third Type: Public issues which, nevertheless, have actual living implications, the raising of which may be instigated by criticism that is primarily addressed to individual violations of human rights that stem, in the view of the critics, from a defect in those public issues. Alternatively, they may be raised as a result of the temptation caused by counter part cases in other societies. The following are some of the most conspicuous of such issues:

- Deficient activation and development of the Shoura (Consultative) Council for enhancing democracy and increasing participation in drawing up state policies and assessing the performance of its institutions.
- Deficient transparency in trials and investigations that take place in law courts and other places, and blocking attempts to make them public and enable the relatives of the accused to attend the trial.
- The doses of the freedom of information do not keep pace with informational and communicational liberality and openness.
- Failure to sternly deter the encroachments by some police officers or civil servants on, and negligence of, people's rights, and the defense by officials of the police forces and civil servants, which tempts the latter to step up their encroachments.
- The scant opportunities available to the organiza-

tions concerned with human rights to have access to conditions in the Kingdom and become acquainted with the truth regarding the alleged complaints connected with human rights violations, etc…

There is no doubt that improving matters in such and similar issues is sought by every ambitious people. Saudi society is aware of such matters and discusses, in all gatherings and meetings with many officials, the aspects of deficiency and defects in the political and administrative mechanisms and the violations resulting therefrom. Such a state of affairs causes pain to Saudi society, disrupts social life and reflects on the cultural status of the state in the world community. This is particularly so in view of the fact that a Saudi person does not compare his society with the societies of military revolutions that take no account of human values and human rights. Comparison is rather made with civilized communities where law prevails, where the branches of government are independent and where their actions are transparent. Indeed, he aspires to a condition where his Saudi community excels in this field because it is built on the Islamic Shari'ah which provides safeguards against the pitfalls of civilized communities. In all fairness, it is incumbent on us to say that the state of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which started from scratch under its founder, King Abdul-Aziz, may God bless his soul, is seeking to uplift its people and institutions, and hence its civilized existence in successive steps which are not taken hastily for fear of faltering and falling. However, it has not stopped or regressed.

We can also say that Saudi society – the Saudi people – have responded favorably to the civilized moves initiated by

the state. Their response is considered exemplary considering that a large part of the Saudi people were immersed in the desert life of Bedouins and the static life of the rural population.

The first starting point in this field was the adoption of the Islamic Shari'ah as a way of life and government. This helped King Abdul-Aziz to take his state beyond desert life towards the horizons of civilization by adopting the accomplishments of civilization, which had been met with apprehension and rejection at first by some of his people. Subsequently the march proceeded forward by establishing the state's institutions, laying down the regulations therein and acceding to international conventions and covenants that do not run counter to Shari'ah, and incorporating their provisions as a source to be added to the regulations that had been issued.

The process of accession is still ongoing, and higher councils are continuously created and regulations are issued which aim at improving government performance and elevating the people to keep abreast of the movement of civilization.

Those who pin their hopes on the Saudi nation are optimistic in view of the recent successive enactments of regulations connected with pleadings, penalties, advocacy and the like, which no doubt need rationalization and improvement. This will be achieved through studies and experimental applications in the hope that the ways and means will be found for the achievement of levels of justice that are appropriate to the civilized condition under which Saudi society is living in the context of the complexities of modern life, its

openness to world conditions and its awareness of the need to know its rights and duties in a manner that does not stop at moral sermons but rather interacts actively with the relevant authorities and legal observation of regulations.

There is no doubt that Saudi society, in the context of cultural changes that are taking place in and around it, needs a new impetus to achieve optimal performance of government institutions, sheer transparency, and strong activation of all councils, including the Shoura (Consultative) Council, indeed of all institutions for the purpose of transcending monotonous professional performance, realizing achievements that match the ambition of society and the hopes it pins on them, securing an honorable position for the state they represent and closing the gaps through which critics penetrate and fling their libel, be they sincere or otherwise.

Saudi society is not *sui generis* among the peoples of the world. It has not reached and will not achieve perfection whether in its Islamic identity or in its protection of human rights. Such a perfect society is an ideal society that is a figment of philosophers' imagination. Saudi society is a human society – its government and its people. It is subject to weakness, as others are. Hence there are deficiencies and violations of human rights and of the law of the Most Merciful. But such are, in the majority of cases, in application and practice. Thus the Kingdom, in terms of the above mentioned levels, is based on three pillars:

The First: is theoretical and sublime. It is unanimously accepted by the Saudi people and is supported by more than a billion Muslims. It is among the principles and rules of Islam which represent the basis of government in the King-

dom and is derived from the Holy Qur'an and the pure Sunnah. It is complete and perfect: **"The Word of your Lord does find its fulfillment in truth and in justice**." (6: 115)

The Second: Regulations that are based on principles and rules and are echoed by sound international covenants. They are valid, though they always need development and modernization within the framework of the realization of Shari'ah interests.

Muslim society will not be harmed, no matter how keen it is to maintain its Islamic commitment, by adopting the institutional mechanisms, and the courses of interaction that others have evolved and that have proved their positive effect in realizing public interests, facilitating living conditions, and deepening the spirit of peace and mutual understanding among the categories of people and between the people and the state. Indeed, these are Shari'ah requirements, as long as they do not violate Shari'ah rules emanating from the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The Third: Practical applications and practices by individuals and institutions. These may become deficient and run counter to the regulations and even to the Shari'ah. They need adjustment, follow-up and bringing to account. This is because human weakness and the strong effect of whims and selfishness can affect some people when their belief in religion and social sincerity recede and drive them to tyranny and the exploitation of their post, to hurt others, to rob them of their rights or to evade payment of their entitlements. This may sometimes occur as a result of the wrong application of regulations or even the wrong extrapolation of rules.

In general, the problem lies in application and implementation. The solution to the correction of the situation lies **first in deepening the belief in God, in His watching over us and in the Day of Judgment.** This represents the source of the strongest commitment in the drive towards virtue and the refraining from vice. **Second, it lies in the development of the human spirit and the civilized personality** that is characterized by social sensitivity. Third, it lies in the activation of the forces of governmental and administrative control which those whose spirit of faith and humanity have become weak feel the pressure thereof and consequently opt for the sound course of conduct.

Finally, when a person or a certain power wishes to wage war against a peaceful party, they would seek, in order to justify their war, to provoke such party into committing a foolish act against them, or even against others, which would be considered an aggression that would give such power a pretext for assaulting and destroying it, with the support of other powers. But if the other party does not carry out what may be blamed on it, the lurking power would seek to instigate others against it by exploiting what it imagines to be certain weak points and deficiencies by exaggerating them and by recruiting persons or powers to assail such party on such contrived grounds.

Many people imagine that the contents and implications of human rights receive unanimous world approval so that taking a position of reservation in respect of any part thereof is considered a deviation from the world consensus and an antagonism towards human aspirations.

This, however, is a manifest mistake. During the Cold

War, human rights were one of the causes of conflict between the liberal and socialist powers. The first used to concentrate on civil and political rights and highlight the violation of such rights by the socialist states. On the other hand, the socialist states used to highlight the violations by the capitalist states of economic and social rights. Thus the pattern of the regime of liberal democracy, which was committed to the sanctification of the individual and his freedom; and the pattern of socialist democracy that was concerned with the rights of the productive worker: these were the criteria for the characterization of human rights by each of them.

After the end of the Cold War, and as a result of the collapse of the communist camp and the emergence of globalization, which aims at generalizing Western values (the values of capitalist liberalism) through its detailed characterization of human rights: those of workers, women, family or children, or otherwise, its antithesis, which was provoked by globalization with its dominating spirit, emerged in the form of cultural and national particularities that refused this merger and coercion (this orientation was manifested clearly in the position adopted by many of the states that participated in the Vienna Conference on Human Rights between 24-25 June 1993) when they showed their adherence to their cultural particularity in the issue of human rights.

Although the nations that have their own particular cultures refuse to give way and melt in globalization, and which comprise various nations in Africa and Asia and other places, yet the world driven by the West that rejects the cultural independence of others and has targeted “Islam” as the focus whose elements set it aside from the process of

globalization.

It targets Islam as a culture that is immune to taming and merging and that renews itself while keeping its distinctiveness, as an ideological and legal system.

It targets Islam which has practical exponents (Islamic awakening, calls for the application of Islamic Shari'ah, *hijab* (veil)… etc).

The most serious practical exponent of Islam that confronts globalization is represented perhaps by the applications of the Islamic Shari'ah at state level, as in the case of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which definitively declares its adoption of Islam, the applications of its Shari'ah, and the propagation of its culture in society through the relevant institutions.

The most conspicuous of the fields of the culture of globalization vis-à-vis such application is the field of human rights. Such application has made the Kingdom the alternative symbol to the Soviet Union which the liberal front, in the field of human rights, accuses of violation thereof.

It does not follow, as we have seen, that all the criticism is directed towards Shari'ah rules that are derived from Islam. Otherwise the wise people, who abound in the Muslim and non-Muslim communities, would not accept such criticism. They, however, identify the criticism of Shari'ah rules with social traditions, as well as individual forms of behavior that violate the Islamic way of life before they violate human rights, with the result that such criticism appeals to those who appreciate human values and disapprove of those who violate them whether in theory or in practice.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not required, justly so, to

merely adopt the human rights that are supported by Islamic values; its responsibility is, in view of its Islamic position, much wider and more intensive. Its reservations relating to what runs counter to the Islamic Shari'ah in the international covenants are praiseworthy. It is, however, required to seek to globalize the Islamic picture of human rights and to attract the wise people in the world to the distinctive values and rights championed by Islam, which international covenants did not attain or whose characterization is not consistent with man's humanity. We do not doubt that such an effort will bear glory to Islam, will serve religion, will further strengthen the position of the Kingdom and prove to be an asset to all humanity.

It is certain that this project requires, beforehand, the practical application, at all levels, of the values of Islam and the satisfaction of the rights and duties that have been established for people to lead the most perfectly possible way of life. This is because the contemporary mind evaluates things on the basis of their practical applications before considering, if at all, their theoretical forms.

Jihad is for Establishing Peace

Islam Abhors Killing

Perhaps there is no other relevant text that goes as far as the Holy Qur'an in asserting the ultimate horror involved in destroying an innocent human being: "…**That if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land, it would be as if he slew the whole people."** (5: 32) Islam is extremely keen to protect and preserve human life, and it establishes here a general and universal principle that is perhaps unprecedented and not imitated by any other legislation. It is a unique and decisive text in asserting the great value of human life: He who kills just one individual also kills the principle of the right to live, thus slaughtering all mankind.

The Qur'anic expression implies a new and sublime meaning that sanctifies the value of life and elevates its protection to the same level as that of creating it, because it defends the principle of the right to live according to which all people are equal. Islam equates the protection of people against injustice and evil with the re-creation of life in them. This notion decisively proves that Islam holds the strongest position in protecting man and preserving human life against any form of aggression or degradation.

Islam holds that peace for the world and security for individuals are two of the most important conditions and rudimentary basics of human life which, without security, becomes miserable and horrible. Killing is one of the most

abhorred examples of human behavior, and fighting for mundane matters is one of the strangest patterns of behavior and a clear indication of moral relapse, lack of rationality and wisdom and the absolute dominance of animalism on humans. The failure to settle disputes except by resorting to force has always been a detestable mark of disgrace in the record of human history. Unjustifiable resorting to force exposes the ignorance of man of his human value and reveals his slavery to abhorred savage instincts; it is trifling with reason, neglecting the role of logic, diverging from human characteristics and devaluation of human life and rights to survival, dignity, freedom of choice and security.

The Holy Qur'an reminds man that he is, by nature, indeed unjust and foolish, fretful and hasty; it urges him to elevate himself above his nature and stresses that his distinction over other creatures depends completely on such elevation. Islam aims at bringing man from darkness to light, from injustice to justice, from discord to concord; it aims at liberating him from paganism to the worship of Allah, the only one God, at achieving equality among all people, eliminating the causes of hatred and creating a human environment based on fraternity, mercy and love, besides freeing humanity from superstition and aggression of whatever source or origin. This pivotal objective is crystal-clear in the commandments of Islam. The Holy Qur'an asserts that God has sent His messengers in order to establish justice: "**We sent aforetime Our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of right and wrong), that men may stand forth in justice…"** (57: 25)

This is also an explicit text asserting that God's messages

aim at clearly expressing truth and removing all obstacles that hinder man's striving for the knowledge of God. Man is then fully free to accept this new knowledge about God or to deny it; what is crucial is that there should be nothing that would prevent man from contemplating the messengers' proof-based divine signs, for God's messengers depend in their calls to worship Him on evidence (proofs) to which human minds have been orientated, by instinct, to respond positively, except when they are spoiled by arrogance, stubbornness and prejudices. Such explicit texts are frequently repeated in the Qur'an, reflecting Islam's insistence on this objective.

Islam's concern with man is extremely strong on both the level of the individual and that of the community; hence its concern with human relations in general from their psychological, social, cultural and other aspects, both in situations of discord and concord, in war and peace. Islam's concern with people's security and safety and establishing relations among them based on justice, the doing of good, love, mercy, leniency, clarity, telling the truth and frank exchanges, in addition to freeing their minds from shackles and helping them in elevating their morality, ripening their thought, developing their talents and rationalizing their behavior - these are some of Islam's clearest and most asserted commandments. They are also some of the most vital components of world peace, which is the ultimate outcome of the various sound human relations.

Islam Calls for Peace

Islam has made peace a general objective for religion and a fundamental base on which it has built its rules and legis-

lation concerning both its internal and external affairs. Thus the word Islam, which is the name of this religion, is derived from the root of "salam" (peace), which is an indication that it is a religion of peace and its adherents are people of peace. God Almighty says: "**O you who believe! Enter into peace whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of Satan, for he is to you an avowed enemy."** (2: 208) Peace in this verse is the religion of Islam because it is the religion of peace. God also says: "**This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion."** (5: 3) In another verse He says: "**It is the religion of your father Abraham. It is he who has named you Muslims previously…"** (22:78) Thus their religion is Islam. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "**A Muslim is he who spares his fellow Muslims any injury by his tongue and his hand**."

A Muslim avoids causing any harm to people, deals with them in the best of manners, and talks to them in the best of terms as ordered by God in the Qur'an: "**Speak fairly to people."** (2: 83) In the Qur'an "salam" (peace) is one of God's beautiful names: "**God is He, other than Whom there is no god; the Sovereign, the Holy One, the (source of) Peace."** (59: 23) In a tradition of the Prophet: "**God is Peace**." Peace is also the greeting of Muslims which the Noble prophet has ordered us to propagate on earth: "**Peace is one of the names of God Almighty. He has ordained it on earth. So spread peace among yourselves."** In other words peace is God, blessed be His Name, from Him it emanates and to Him it returns. He is the possessor and the giver thereof. He has ordained the spreading thereof among

people because they need peace The order to spread peace aims at spreading love and continuously reminding people of the vital importance of peace in establishing security, the feeling of safety among them and in saving each other from aggression against life, property and the honor of women in a man's household.

Peace in Muslims Relations' with Other People

In the eyes of Islam, the state of peace is the normal relation between Muslims and other people. Peace has always been the advocated slogan of the Islamic state ever since the dawn of Islam which raised the banner of peace and set the best method for carrying humanity to the shores of safety. The Holy Qur'an is abundant with the verses calling for peace; for example, God says: "**…therefore if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (guarantees of) peace, then God has opened no way for you (to war against them)."** (4: 90) More than a hundred and thirty verses in the Qur'an explicitly mention the word "peace" and its derivations; either urging Muslims to resort to peace or praising peaceful means; while only six verses in the whole Qur'an refer to the word "war". Islam, thus, holds that peace is a fundamental rule of its legislation, and only deals with the rules of war as exceptional and transitory cases, when Muslims face aggression or when some forms of freedom and liberty are suppressed and people are forbidden to follow the true path.

Islam Establishes the Principles of Peace

In confirming that Islam has founded the principles of

peace and has firmly established them in practice during its cultural sovereignty, we rely on explicit, numerous and mutually supporting texts. Moreover, the history of civilization testifies to this obvious fact. It is not possible to justify the condemnation of a religion like Islam with all its greatness, extensive spreading and numerous adherents on the basis of individual acts emanating from individuals or small groups that do not represent the general Islamic view.

Islam is a religion that has more than one billion adherents throughout the world. Most people in strategic regions are Muslims. This religion has endured over more than fourteen centuries. We are here concerned with addressing individuals in the world, particularly in the West. This means that we present simple facts that would make it possible for other people to appreciate our position, as Muslims, as regards terrorism, so that the true image of Islam would become clear to those who are looking for the pure truth. In doing so, we can confront the flood of Western media that have inundated the world with distortions of Islam and maligning hundreds of millions of its adherents, with the result that many in the West, particularly the American people, have been deceived.

In expounding our Islamic culture, we can categorically state that God's messages to all His prophets aimed at a set of priorities that include the realization of justice on earth and the spreading of the values of good throughout mankind.

Thus we understand by Islam a sublime value for the making of good for humanity at large, for respecting private and common rights. God has sent the last of prophets as a

"mercy to mankind", i.e. to the whole world, even to those who did not believe in him, because Islam has safeguarded their rights and has given them, under its historical rule, an unprecedented level of justice that they never dreamed of.

It is true that ours is a special vision that determines our Islamic identity; it is also true that we share a set of concepts and values that are common to the set of concepts of other nations and peoples, particularly the concepts of justice, good, mercy and human brotherhood.

It is further clear that we do not accept some Western concepts, particularly in view of the fact that we give absolute priority to spiritual values, and believe that such values play a vital role in the life of individuals and society, and that we have our own choices. We also realize that the others practice their own choices and we concede their right to their private choices.

While Islam lays down a special scheme in life for Muslims which involves a set of values and concepts, it has put forth, within this scheme, the principles of joint relations with others. These comprise the establishment of the rules of justice and the respect of rights in private and public relations. History tells us that Prophet Muhammad dealt with the adherents of other religions gently, safeguarded their material and moral rights and has recognized their right of free choice.

Among the values of Islam, we can point to its calling for enjoining forgiveness and the creation of wide areas of tolerance and the safeguarding of civil security. Within such an extended space of tolerance, it would be naïve to think that Muslims are targeting the declared values of justice

and freedom of the American people or any other people, or that Muslim values encourage them to kill others who differ with them, or because they practice justice or freedom. These illusions are in sharp contrast with the reality of the teachings of Islam.

Such wrong conception is simply a prelude to a catastrophe, which would mostly affect the American people before any other community in the world. To be fair, it must be admitted that the relationship of Muslims with the West has been fashioned more by the West than by the Muslims. In fact the Inquisitions in Spain and the Crusades with their bloodiness and atrocities in the past are not the only negative friction by the West against Islam and the Islamic region, for the memories of colonialism, the confiscation of the rights of peoples, the assault on national resistance in several Islamic countries have a more pronounced presence in the minds of Muslims and Arabs today. Hence those who look for negative Islamic attitudes against the West will find great difficulty in obtaining any truthful historical evidence.

Fair-minded people should realize that the actions of a certain Islamic group against a certain Western country must be looked at as an isolated occurrence. An intelligent and responsible approach would be to seriously consider trying to discover the underlying motives and causes, and not to ignore them or interpret them arbitrarily.

It is only logical to ask why the Americans in particular were targeted and not other communities, that are more remote from Islamic culture, such as Buddhism or the communities that have no real contact with Islamic and Arab communities. To deal with this subject more clearly we

might, here, consider some Islamic values to which certain groups – in the US media and politics – try to attribute the phenomenon of terrorism, particularly the values associated with *Jihad*.

Some Objectives of *jihad* in Islam: The Establishment of Security and the Prevention of Sedition

Terrorism is obviously not one of the values which Islam wanted for dealing with problems it encountered with other people, or for spreading its beliefs among others.

"Terrorism" is not a term that is in circulation in the Islamic Shari'ah. Hence we may ask the following question:

In specifying and determining the concept of terrorism, could anybody accept the statement that it is, for instance, whatever has occurred against the United States?

How can we secure for peoples their rights to defend their interests and rights against any foreign aggression? Under what pretext does the United States wage destructive wars here and there? Is this not under the pretext of the war against terrorism?

Hence, there is such a thing as a just and legitimate war.

How could we, then, in view of all this, determine the features of this war?

When is such a war acceptable?

When is it unacceptable?

Islam certainly rejects terrorism most strongly. However, it cannot possibly indicate its position *vis-à-vis* terrorism except in light of a clear and specific definition, not on the basis of a term that is not known or specified.

Anything that comes under the purview of corruption on earth, injustice or aggression against the innocent is rejected in Islam, regardless of the name applied to it, of the perpetrator thereof, or the place where it is perpetrated, whether in America, Afghanistan, Palestine, Japan, Nicaragua, Lebanon, Iraq, Vietnam or Libya, etc.

Whatever falls within the purview of legitimate self-defense, resistance to the occupier, expulsion of the colonizer, is an acceptable and justifiable justice. But even in such a case, war in Islam is governed by a strict moral discipline.

There are several forms of terrorism, including the following:

1. Colonialist terrorism which sets out to plunder the riches of other people's lands.
2. Settlement terrorism, as practiced by Israel and previously by South Africa.
3. Intellectual terrorism which is practiced by Zionism against those it calls anti-Semites. It confines Semitism to Jews only and ignores the great majority of Semites.
4. International terrorism that is practiced by states and governments against others under flimsy names.
5. Economic terrorism, which is practiced by states in the rich North against the states of the poor South.

Jihad Was Primarily Ordained to Repel Injustice and Aggression

Jihad was not ordained by God until the infidels had pushed their persecution of Muslims in the early days of Islam beyond limits, despite Muslim peacefulness and for-

giveness. They had gone too far in persecuting the weak among Muslims to force them to renounce their new religion. They even plotted to kill the Prophet himself: "**Remember how the unbelievers plotted against you, to keep you in bonds, or slay you, or get you out (of your home). They plot and plan, and God too plans, but the best of planners is God."** (8: 30)

The infidels had already laid siege to one of Makkah's hills where the Prophet Muhammad and his followers were isolated; they boycotted anyone daring to break the siege; they even confiscated the property of some of those who challenged them. It was simply divine justice to allow Muslims to defend themselves against such injustice and aggression: "**To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged; and verily, God is most powerful for their aid. They are those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, (for no cause) except they say, 'Our Lord is God.'"** (22: 39-40) "**Fight in the cause of God those who fight you but do not transgress, for God loves not the transgressors."** (2: 190)

According to all rules, whether religious canons or statutory laws, the Islamic state has an inalienable right to self-defense. One of the universal norms established by God is to support the oppressed and the weak in challenging despotism, oppression and aggression. Otherwise, evil and corruption would spread all over the earth, preventing the fulfillment of the mission God has created man to perform, i.e. to worship Him as the one and only God: "**…. If not for God checking one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries,**

churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure. God will certainly aid those who aid His (cause); for verily God is full of strength, exalted in might." (22: 40) In another verse, He says, "**And if God did not check one set of people by means of another, the earth indeed would be full of mischief: but God is full of bounty to all the worlds."** (2: 251)

While allowing Muslims under God's Shari'ah, to resort to Jihad, Islam emphasizes that the sole aim of Jihad is to restore peaceful co-existence with the aggressor, to spread justice, equality and good for mankind and to fight vice, injustice and evil. God describes Muslims as follows: **"(They are) those who, if We establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give zakat, enjoin the right and forbid wrong. With God rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs."** (22: 41) He has also ordered Muslims to immediately restore peace with those they had fought against when the latter abandon aggression: "**And fight them until there is no more persecution and the religion becomes God's. But if they cease, let there be no hostility, except to those who practice oppression."** (2: 193) God has, again, ordered the Believers to accept the aggressor's offer for peace during the fight: "**But if they incline towards peace, then you (also) incline towards peace, and trust in God, for He is the One that hears and knows (all things)."** (8: 61)

Islam, therefore, orders its followers to live peacefully with other people, go for reconciliation and accept truce with their enemies. The proof of the distinguished position of Islam as a religion so keen to preserve the continuity of

peace among individuals and nations, and to show good intention towards even those who fight against Muslims, is that it urges its followers to accept a "Shahadah" (declaration) by a warrior of Islam and to count him off the fight even if all signs of evidence show that he only did that to save himself: "**O you who believe! When you go out in the cause of God, investigate carefully, and say not to any one who offers you salutation: 'You are a non-believer!', coveting the perishable goods of this life. With God are profits and spoils abundant. Even thus were you yourselves before, till God conferred on you His favors: therefore carefully investigate, for God is well aware of all that ye do."** (4: 94) It is then not fair, nor is it objective, to accuse Islam that it is "The religion of war"; for peace, in Islam, is the rule and the norm, while war and war-mentality is the exception. It is resorted to only, and strictly only, if necessary.

Kindness Toward Non-Muslims

The Qur'an does not stop at ordering Muslims to respond positively to peaceful offers from non-Muslims, but goes further to remind them that they should be kind to all non-Muslim, do good to them and to treat them with fairness: "**God does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being from dealing kindly and justly with them. Indeed, God loves those who are just. God only forbids you with regard to those who fight you for (your) faith and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friend-**

ship and protection). And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers." (60: 8-9)

Mankind has been created for the purpose of getting to know one another, living in concord with each other, and rejecting conflict and enmity: "**O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Indeed the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who) is the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).**" (49: 13)

Hence, when the Prophet, peace be upon him, arrived in Madinah, he concluded treaties of peace and good neighborliness with non-Muslims.

Islam, however, does not allow Muslims to give up their own rights or accept humiliation for themselves or for their religion. When they do have to face enemies, then they must fight only against warriors. Women, children, old people and those who devote themselves to worship in their temples must be treated kindly: "**Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress; for God loves not transgressors.**" (2: 190)

To demonstrate its keenness to treat non-warriors with mercy and kindness, Islam even ordered its followers to refrain from fighting the wounded and not to destroy enemy property. Those who spread havoc are severely disgraced by God: "**When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and progeny; but God loves not mischief.**" (2: 205)

Moreover, Islam orders Muslims to retaliate only in kind, and even urges them to forgive and recommends the exer-

cise of patience: "**And if you punish let your punishment be proportionate to the wrong that has been done to you. But if you show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient."** (16: 126)

The Principle of Straightforwardness and the Prohibition of Treachery

Forbidding treachery is one of the fundamental rules in Islam. It is considered 'Haram' (forbidden) in any form. Since the purpose of signing treaties is to ensure the continuity of peace and restore peace after war, Islam holds as a general rule that treaties must be honored. Even if the enemy commits treachery, Muslims are not allowed to do the same, but they should explicitly inform the enemy that the terms of the treaty have been breached before taking action so that the enemy would not be taken by surprise: "**If you fear treachery from any group, throw back (their covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms: for God loves not the treacherous."** (8: 58)

Such legislation would prompt the enemy to review their position and could well be a chance to make them reconsider their position and abide by the provisions of the peace treaty.

Thus we find that all such rules contribute to the restriction of the scope of war, prevent the eruption of violence, and restore the state of peace whenever peace is shaken, as well as maintaining trust between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The Numerous Types and Different Fields of Jihad

One of the misleading illusions in the West is the belief

that the concept of Jihad in Islam is synonymous with fighting. Jihad is a broad concept of life: it is striving to repel bad and evil deeds and abhorred ambitions; it is striving against one's lustful wishes and temptations; it is striving against a Muslim's own and other people's ignorance; it is striving to be fair and just in words and actions; it is striving to do one's duty and beyond that to do good to others, it is to cultivate virtues and seek perfection as much as one can; it is striving against oneself and others in reconciling people and settling disputes; it is to preach love among people; it is to give of oneself and his time, effort and money. Any effort aimed at bringing good to people or keeping evil away from them is a benevolent act of Jihad for the sake of God. The greatest of all forms of Jihad is for a Muslim to be an example of good manners, generosity, morality, sincerity, honesty and perfection of one's labour. A Muslim's life should thus be devoted wholly to Jihad for the sake of God.

All Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the book of explicit truth and that they should, as far as their knowledge and capabilities permit, convey the principles and commandments of the Holy Book to all people and try to convince them of what they know about divine truth with the most lenient and tolerable of arguments. Such devotion is one of the greatest acts of Jihad. God has ordered His Messenger, peace be upon him, to perform Jihad with the Qur'an itself, i.e. by conviction, not by coercion but by gentle persuasion. Calling for following the true path with wisdom and establishing proof of the Qur'anic texts are some of the most precious fields of Jihad as exemplified in this commandment by God to His Messenger: "**Therefore listen not to the unbeliev-**

ers, but strive against them with the utmost strenuousness, with the (Qur'an)." (25: 52)

The miracle of Islam is represented by a readable Book, which is a clear indication to the fact that Islam focuses its attention on addressing people's minds with sound persuasion and proof, and that it does not resort to force or to muscles except to repel aggression, defend the weak and the oppressed or free the slaves to enable all of them to see right and truth and enjoy the freedom of choice.

Another commendable field of Jihad is the striving against one's own self: "**And those who strive in Our (cause), we will certainly guide them to Our paths. For indeed God is with those who do right."** (29: 69) This is achieved by striving for good, purification of one's soul, and strengthening one's faith and against evil, lust and temptation: "**And if any strive, they do so for their own souls, for God is free of all needs from all creation."** (29: 6) Jihad, thus, is a broad concept covering every aspect that would elevate man above his animal instincts and bring him up to the realm of spirit, mind, virtues and fraternity.

Generous giving of money and wealth is yet another field of Jihad for the sake of God as, for example, spending on the poor, the orphans, the widows, on building hospitals and asylums, on education, writing of books, doing research, seeking knowledge and inviting people to God. Striving in the above fields (Jihad) and diligent endeavor to establish valid and correct religious opinions (Ijtihad) have quite obviously the same etymological roots in Arabic – the language of the Qur'an as the term "jihad". Such close meanings recur frequently in the Holy Book.

Another established field of Jihad is striving in one's labor and deeds, such as the effort a believer makes for the sake of God like teaching, educating, calling for the right path of Islam, advocating good, setting an example of a good human being by refined conduct, honest dealing, telling the truth and embodying the teachings of truth, good and love.

This has been very effective indeed in attracting people to Islam. Indonesia, the largest Islamic country, for example, has never been conquered by Muslims, but was won over by the good examples and honest dealings of the Muslims. The same applies to Malaysia and many other countries in Africa, which were converted to Islam through persuasion. All this is an exemplification of intellectual and moral Jihad.

Although Islamic historical rule has shrunk in many parts of the world, indigenous people there have remained Muslims, still carrying out the message of truth in spite of the persecution and injustice that were inflicted on them, as we have witnessed in the Middle East, North West Africa, the Caucasus and the Balkans, where people adopted Islam after the departure of Islamic rule. This is quite unlike Western colonization under whose long authority many Islamic countries remained Muslim, despite the fact that the colonizers were not Muslims.

It is, therefore, a terrible mistake to restrict the meaning of Jihad to "killing" or "War". The concept of these two words, as we have explained, is only one specific aspect of the meaning of Jihad in Islam

To this we may add that Islam under the banner of Jihad calls for protecting all societies against injustice and domination, seeks to show people the way to the true faith of

God, to worship Him and believe in His oneness. It seeks to spread the values of good, virtue and morality with wisdom and gentle preaching: "**Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best."** (16: 125)

Under Jihad, Islam also calls for social reform and for combating ignorance, superstitions, poverty, illness and racial discrimination. One of the fundamental objectives of Jihad is to protect the private and public rights of the weak and powerless against the despotism of the strong and powerful: "**And why should you not fight in the cause of God and those who, being weak, are ill-treated? Men, women and children, whose cry is: 'Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from You one who will protect; and raise for us from You one who will help!'"** (4: 75)

God thus strongly orders Muslims to stand up for the cause of the victims of injustice and despotism and to help them to get rid of oppression and poverty.

Thus, one aspect of Jihad is to resist injustice and ensure the right of nations to stand up to oppression and aggression: "**Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors…"** (4: 75)

Islam forbids committing injustice, against even those who are opposed to it: **"…and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just."** (5: 8)

The Qur'an also warned the believers against being unfair to the Quraysh, which stubbornly prohibited them from entering the Holy Mosque in Makkah to pray: "**And**

let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just." (5: 8) Muslims are, therefore, ordered to show kindness and fairness even to those who deny them access to worship God, which is their basic religious right.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, went as far as warning his followers against the invocation of God by a victim of injustice, even if he were a non-Muslim: "**Beware of the invocation of those who suffer injustice, for nothing will preclude its being answered."**

Finally, another aspect of Jihad is to resist dictatorships which seek to maintain superstitions and ignorance, and to deny the values of faith in God and morality in social life.

Charities in Saudi Arabia

Introduction

Amidst the frenzied media and systematically procedural American campaign against Islamic charities, we feel we must remind here that charitable activity is not exclusively Islamic, but a universally human action cherished and exercised by people of all religions and denominations. The current campaign in the U.S. in particular and the West in general, is simply a proof of that kind of unrealistic reaction one would show if vexed or if he behaves emotionally. One's actions become imbalanced and far from being realistic and he becomes unable to maintain objectivity and justice towards any party he considers to be his enemy. Such strong feelingsof enmity make him close one's ears and shut off his mind, quite often completely, refusing rationalization, verification and reconsideration, forgetting all about wisdom and thus driven by a blind desire to incriminate and condemn others and to justify vengeance and aggression.

The American current onslaught against Islamic Charities, in the media by taking legal and other actions against them, runs contrary to objective facts and human trends everywhere, particularly inside the United States itself and the West in general, where charities are more numerous and diverse than in any other parts of the world. The U.S. cannot claim that these charities are faultless; when an activity is charitable, it does not automatically follow that those who

run the business become infallible – they remain human with human shortcomings and mistakes. Islamic charities are of course no exception, in spite of the utmost attention given to the running of their business in strict integrity.

Charitable and voluntary societies in the U.S. are active in all charitable fields to meet as many human needs as possible. They have their own political weight and lobbying influence as well as a great impact on public opinion both inside the U.S. and throughout the West. They delve into so many affairs, big and small, from politics to the environment and even in private affairs that do not usually fall under charitable business. Some would think it is bizarre to find a charity in Britain specializing in making absolutely sure that someone is really dead before burial, thus helping to bring back to life many of those whom doctors believed they were forensically or clinically 'dead'. This is only an example of what charitable people with a high sense of humanism are ready to do.

Hence the paradox and injustice: while the US appreciates voluntary enterprises and charitable work to the point of enacting laws to this effect, and while it encourages businessmen and corporations to be generous in giving to charities by granting them tax incentives and exemptions, the US government takes such a negative attitude towards Islamic charities, which highlights the paradoxically unjust and emotional conduct of a great power.

Saudi charities, just as all similar societies all over the world, aim at offering help and assistance for the poor, the needy, the homeless and the refugees; they contribute to the alleviation of the impact of catastrophes and war, to the de-

velopment of human fraternity and solidarity with a characteristic keenness to positively react to and cooperate with others. This is exactly the same objective as charities have in the West. Institutional voluntary work is an actual overt fact in all societies and religions with no exception. Therefore, there is no logical or objective reason to launch such a campaign against Islamic charities. These do not operate secretly, nor are they politically motivated or unique in performing a job that is abnormal to human activity. On the contrary; they are active in the fields of human interest in which all nations of the world participate. Rare individual irregularities by some charitable workers or benefits gained by radical elements abusing charitable services do not at all justify generalization or campaigning against particular charitable institutions: penetration does occur even in the most cautious and highly trained intelligence services. There can be no wonder then if rare irregularities occur in open and public charities, whose members are presumed to be sincerely willing to dedicate themselves to the public good away from selfishness and personal ambitions; for working in this field, whether as paid employees or on a voluntary basis, is based on spontaneity, openness, transparency and simplicity.

The US, which leads the campaign against Islamic charities, often referred to by international agencies as being the largest donor of "official development assistance." According to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) DAC/OECD) the US official donations reached $23.53 billion in 2006, followed by the United Kingdom ($12.46 b),

Japan (11.19 b), France (($10.60b), Germany ($10.43b), Netherlands ($5.45b), Sweden ($3.95b), Spain ($3.81b), Canada ($3.68b), Italy ($3.64b), Norway ($2.95b), Denmark ($2.24b), Australia ($2.12b), Belgium ($1.98b), Switzerland ($1.65b), Austria ($1.50b) and Ireland ($1.02b)

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been the principal US agency that extend assistance to countries like, for instance, those recovering from disaster and trying to escape poverty.

USAID's history goes back to the Marshall Plan reconstruction of Europe after World War Two and the Truman Administration's Point Four Program. In 1961, the Foreign Assistance Act was signed into law and USAID was created by executive order.

With headquarters in Washington, D.C., USAID's strength is its field offices around the world. We work in close partnership with private voluntary organizations, indigenous organizations, universities, American businesses, international agencies, other governments, and other U.S. government agencies. USAID has working relationships with more than 3,500 American companies and over 300 U.S.-based private voluntary organizations.

- Furthermore, the United States aid to Africa from the year 2000 to the year 2004, has increased 56 percent, while official development assistance to Africa (aid programs directed at sustainable development) increased by 43 percent during the same period. Of these programs (in nominal dollars):
- Funding for the Child Survival and Health Programs

Fund increased by 70%, primarily for HIV/AIDS.

- Development Assistance funding increased 1% over FY 2000.
- Global Health and HIV/AIDS Initiative, which did not exist as a separate program in FY 2000, received $263.8 million for Africa in FY 2004.
- Peace Corps funding increased by 19%.
- African Development Bank funding increased by 24%.
- African Development Foundation funding increased by 31%.

The leaders of the Group of Eight (G8) during their Summit in Japan in July 2008 set a five-year deadline to commit $60 billion in funding to help the African continent fight disease. If this is the case in the US, how come, then, the Americans condemn Muslim involvement in charity work?

Now if those who benefit from the services provided by charities are sometimes not those for whom the charity services are intended, as fanatics, reckless or unscrupulous elements may well infiltrate into different charitable activities, such unintended irregularities do occur within any human activity and endeavor. This is particularly so in view of the fact that the work of such charities is based on sincerity, spontaneity, and good will which preclude suspicion in the motives of both the volunteers and beneficiaries. Mistakes or irregularities in charitable work simply fall into the category of normal human faults which should not objectively be deemed abnormal.

Charitable, voluntary, religious and environmental organizations are found in great abundance all over the U.S.

leaving no charitable field out of their activities. Charitable environmental societies abound everywhere in America. They organize education campaigns via the media, are empowered to form pressure groups to lobby Federal Congressmen and local authorities to pass legislations for ecological protection. Their power even extends to lab-analyzing underground water and performing soil tests. Charities also provide lodgings and treatment for drug addicts, the elderly and the handicapped. A youth charitable federation has under its umbrella a number of institutions, organizations, groups and public agencies, as well as volunteering individuals who collectively work to ensure juvenile basic care by grown-ups who provide care and guidance for young people in a safe environment with regular and supervised activities; to ensure special health care for pregnant mothers and their babies physically and psychologically before and after birth by an attendant doctor or especially qualified nurse; to ensure effective training for the acquisition of the qualifications necessary for the competitive market, development of young talents and abilities and opening up new horizons in job advancement.

Volunteer work in the US, the West and all over the world, is not confined to merely providing financial and material support, but extends to cover such grounds as volunteering in free work.

According to the statistics of the U.S Department of Labor, about 60.8 million people volunteered through or for an organization at least once between September 2006 and September 2007.

The proportion of the population who volunteered was

26.2 percent. This 0.5 percentage point decrease in the volunteer rate follows a decline of 2.1 percentage points in the prior year. The volunteer rate had held constant at 28.8 percent from 2003 through 2005, after rising slightly from its 2002 level of 27.4 percent.

In the year ending September 2007, both the number of volunteers and the volunteer rate declined from the previous year. About 29.3 percent of women did volunteer work during the year, down from 30.1 percent during the prior year. The volunteer rate for men was about unchanged at 22.9 percent. As in previous years, women volunteered at a higher rate than men across all age groups, educational levels, and other major characteristics.

Volunteers of both sexes spent a median of 52 hours on volunteer activities during the period from September 2006 to September 2007. Median annual hours spent on volunteer activities ranged from a high of 96 hours for volunteers age 65 and over to a low of 36 hours for those 25 to 34 years old.

The American "Technology Links Organization" focuses on assisting charities to improve performance and services by suggesting tasks, programming work, planning policies, the selection of volunteers, setting work frontiers and helping schools in using technology effectively.

Another charity in the U.S. is the "Human Habitat Organization" which has been remarkably successful in providing homes and shelters for the destitute in many parts of the world, building ten thousand homes a year, besides collecting and spending billions of donation dollars from individuals, institutions and corporations.

A giant pioneering charity is Oxfam which was established in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century. It cares for orphans, the starving, the besieged, prisoners of war, refugees, people made homeless by conflicts and victims of floods or draughts. It also has programs "against poverty", and launches a worldwide campaign under the slogan: "Together for rights, together against poverty".

There are also watchdog organizations that monitor states behavior towards their citizens, such as the International Peace Corps and human rights organizations. Although these bodies principally have humane objectives, they sometimes interfere with the internal affairs of other countries and are in some cases exploited for political gains. This simply proves that charitable and aid organizations may have people amidst their ranks who may act in ways that do not fit in with their missions and real objectives, which is also typical of any collective activity. If mistakes or irregularities are committed by some members of Islamic charities, this obviously does not mean that they reflect the true case and activity inside these organizations. They simply reflect the spontaneity, good intention and absence of suspicion inside them or an individual conduct, the responsibility of which rests solely with the culprits.

The desire to do good and take part in charitable work is not confined to only one nation. In Japan, Australia, Korea, etc, there are charities, as in many other parts of the world, that extend a helping hand to the poor and the needy. In South Korea during the economic crisis of 1997, people competed to donate charity that hit the stunning figure of $20 billion.

European charities are active all over the European continent and the world, such as "Médecins sans Frontières" whose doctors and volunteers hasten to offer medical assistance for victims of conflicts, earthquakes, epidemics and other disasters all over the world. In France, people are annually invited via TV campaigns to donate money for a certain purpose, e.g. fighting genetic diseases. In a couple of hours between $224 and $240 million are collected annually on average. In Germany, there are many charities of which "Anti-Starvation Worldwide" is internationally famous for its innovative methods in carrying out its mission: it calls the Germans who spend around DM160 million on fireworks for the New Year's Eve to divert this money to feed the victims of starvation all over the world under the slogan: "Fireworks for Bread."

The activities of Saudi charities are not different from those of any other charities in the world. They are no more than channels to deliver aid to the needy and support charity enterprises and programs according to their specific regulations; they are thus merely institutions with the sole task of practically supervising the implementation of those programs.

It is worth mentioning here that charity work is an integral basis of Islam and an essential element of Muslim behavior embodied in "Zakat", which is one of the basic five Pillars of Islam. It specifies the percentage amount of money a Muslim must pay for the poor and the needy as their 'right' and not as mere charity. Zakat is the minimum a Muslim must give for the sake of God, and then comes the role of doing good and social solidarity whose fields are as

numerous as the needs of each society and whose level of spending is as high and generous as the level of faith in the heart of each Muslim.

Saudi charities are of course conscious of the Shari'ah duty towards the needy and victims of disasters, e.g. earthquakes, floods, droughts, famines and wars, where Muslims suffer the most. It is a basic religious duty of Muslims to respond to appeals from those in need, i.e. the poor, orphans, widows, victims of catastrophes, etc. Fair and objective observers will note that the efforts made by Islamic charities, as numerous, generous, and diverse as they are, are far from being adequate to satisfy the perpetual needs of those victims. These modest and limited efforts have no room for any political activity, because of the huge requirements of Muslim victims of disasters worldwide. With their limited resources, compared to the immense scale of spending, Islamic charities can hardly do their basic job of feeding those who fast during the month of Ramadan and victims of starvation; providing drinking water for the thirsty in drought seasons in many parts of the world; providing clothing for the poor in winter, traditional feasts and social occasions; providing modest housing for the destitute and displaced; providing medical and health aid such as building clinics and hospitals or erecting field hospitals for the victims of war or natural disasters and providing schools and educational institutes to fight illiteracy. Some of these charities have also built places of worship and mosques for Muslims who were deprived of them, in addition to repair work to maintain old mosques and religious institutes as a sign of Muslim solidarity and cooperation.

Volunteer work on which Islamic charities rely has its roots in the history of the Islamic nation and is not the product of passing emergency circumstances; it is now trying to develop at the same pace as the forms of improvement of contemporary voluntary work and its many demands.

Islamic charities have also been necessitated by the miserable state of Muslims in many parts of the world, in the face of instability, displacement, wars and disasters that require prompt rescue and continuous assistance. Islamic nations currently suffer - as everybody knows - from the consequences of absolutely hideous conditions. International statistics clearly show that 90% of world refugees are Muslim, exceeding in some periods 27 million people. One in two hundred Muslims is either a refugee or a displaced person.

The activity of various Saudi charities falls under charitable voluntary work the importance and urgency of which in removing a nation's suffering or in enabling its people to communicate with other societies in the wider circle of social solidarity nobody can deny.

Saudi Islamic charities are not only the response to urgent human needs, but are also a response to repeated U.N. appeals for help and aid. They form part of international voluntary work in coordination with local, regional and world organizations. Their aims are very clear, their work is very transparent and their procedures are very simple. They do not fall into any political or propaganda category, and are not motivated by any materialistic aim, but by a sense of duty towards the poor, the needy and the victims of catastrophes: all this is on a par with world humane activ-

ities. There is no logic, therefore, that can justify suspicion towards Islamic charities who strictly abide by international law to achieve purely humane objectives.

Nations compete to establish and develop voluntary charities and making ample room for them. Governments of different regimes quite often work to facilitate administrative procedures for charitable activities such as granting tax and customs exemptions. In more civilized societies, charities receive direct support and subsidies to ensure survival and development and hence, the emergence of giant charities capable of competing with governmental organizations. With the increase in the volume of donations and the scale of support, the international view towards charitable activities also developed in the form of establishing specialized international bodies with annual budgets exceeding those of many countries. There is still room for charities to grow with the ever-growing need for international relief work, particularly amidst current local, regional and international conflicts.

The Basis of Muslims Charitable Work

Charitable work is not new to Muslim life; it started with the dawn of Islam, developed with the development of the new religion and grew with its geographic expansion. They are as diverse as human needs. For a Muslim, offering help for the needy is more than just a voluntary work: it is his religious duty. History tells us that Muslims, since their early years, have been brought up not only to offer donations at the time of need or in emergencies, but also to think of charitable work as a strategic policy that is not restricted by considerations of time or passing circumstances. *Awqaf*

(religious endowments) have always been steady sources of finance of Islamic charities in the fields of education, relief, housing the orphans and the elderly, caring for the handicapped and extending a helping hand to the stranded and the needy passer by.

Voluntary work and charitable activity are parts of a Muslim's daily vocabulary as a response to God's order: "**And do good that you may prosper."** (22: 77) This is a general rule in Islamic Shari'ah out of which stems voluntary charitable work in its different aspects and numerous fields. Muslims act within this framework to meet the needs of the needy, for they know that they: **"… Shall be rewarded (for helping) every living creature."** The Prophet, peace be upon him, urged Muslims to volunteer in charitable work in such encouraging words as: "**Guard yourselves against hell, even by giving half of a date."** He also said: "**A woman went to hell because she had tied up a cat: she neither fed it nor allowed it to go and eat from the roughage of earth."**

He promised those who care for orphans to be his companions in Heaven and warned Muslims against apathy towards other people's conditions: "**God will deliver from a distress of the Day of Judgment Anyone who delivers a Muslim from a worldly distress."** He also urged cooperation between all people: "**God helps his servant as long as the servant helps his fellow human being."**

Charitable work is not, by nature, confined to just one field, but rather to many areas open to everything that benefits people or protects them from harm. Such work also differs according to the different people who need it and the nature of their needs. Of the needy are: women, the elderly

and the handicapped; some of the fields of their needs are: relief in general, rescue, health care, social security, care for young people, parentless babies, the invitation to the true path of Islam, education and encouraging marriage. Each of these needs is an independent field and requires special expertise.

The Nature of Saudi Charities

There is genuine communication and cooperation between Saudi charities and their regional and international counterparts either as field partners or as donors. The relief work of Saudi charities is closely associated with certain aspects of the invitation to Islam as an activity branching out of the psychological rehabilitation of the victims of disasters and war. Nations certainly realize the importance of the rehabilitation of those who have lost relatives or property. This has its origin in the common spiritual compassion between Muslims and followers of other religions. Being the last of all other divine religions, Islam has a special reverence for other religions and beliefs.

These facts clearly show that the media campaign launched against Islamic charitable work, of which Saudi charities are but one part, is unjust and nonobjective; it is based on emotional and not rational or sound grounds. We are quite confident that the parties who launched this campaign, who question the objectives of Islamic charities, impose sanctions on their activities and freeze their accounts and assets, will reconsider their groundless stance when the surge of emotions has passed, and will re-instate these increasingly needed Is-

lamic charities. Moreover, we expect the perpetrators of this campaign to apologize to Muslims for their conduct and to declare that Islamic charitable work has nothing to do with terrorism or any other suspect, irregular or questionable activity.

Non-Islamic Places of Worship in Arabia

Introduction

We Muslims believe that Islam is the last of the divine religions, in other words, it comprises the last statement and message of God to mankind as a whole. This calls for the imperative need of having to keep a tiny area of Islamic land away from direct contact with any source of blemish. It is a manifestation of the wisdom of God that Islam has emerged from the barren desert of an isolated corner of the Earth which involves no harm to the interests of humanity, because throughout the centuries no one laid a claim thereon and where there was no source of life that mankind would depend on or need, and which has never stood in the way of communication between nations: it is rather an empty geographical pocket almost entirely void of resources and of people. This barren spot, though, has been privileged by including within its confines Two Holy Shrines: The Ka'bah in Makkah and The Prophetic Mosque in Madinah. As for the first of them, i.e., the Ka'bah, all Muslims direct themselves to it in their prayers wherever they are in the world. When Islam sprang from this barren spot, which was surrounded by old civilizations with heavily populated fertile empires, historically established customs, traditions and values of pagans, Mayans, Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews, it was necessary that it should have its own 'habitat' away from contact with other religions, denominations and beliefs till

it was firmly established and disseminated, as this would secure its purity and would guard its teachings against confusion with other teachings and enable its followers to spread them in their clear and pure form to all corners of the world, and so that this barren spot would remain purely Islamic.

Thus it was a spot that nobody coveted, nor had a claim to. It is a barren desert spot, devoid of rivers and rain, with no attractive assets to be coveted by anybody. It is a tremendous area and no harm was done to non-Muslims for its being considered the first, permanent and pure home of Islam. This was not a kind of negation of others. It is rather the maintaining of an established status quo and the continuation of a situation of stability.

It is only logical that a religion like Islam, with its universal and comprehensive message, needs an exclusively pure spot where it is firmly established and its teachings are clearly completed before first meeting with other religions and civilizations and, then, moving, as a new fully fledged religion, to spread everywhere after its followers were able to clearly differentiate between their religion's teachings and those of other beliefs in order to convey them to all people as revealed by the word of God, and as embodied in the Prophet's exemplary life. This does not encroach on anybody's rights. It is, rather a commitment to God's order and the duty to propagate His religion.

Why non-Islamic Places of Worship does not Exist in Arabia

In connection with questions in the West about forbidding the erection of non-Islamic places of worship in Saudi

Arabia we would like to explain the following ten points:

First, before Islam, Arabia was pagan. By converting to Islam, paganism vanished with its superstitions and ignorance, and Arabia became a purely Islamic land with a scattered population and scanty resources that were confined to Makkah, Madinah, Taif and a few other villages and towns. It was only logical that, in order not to be flooded by followers of other well established civilizations and beliefs, Arabia should be confined to Islam until the new religion was well founded and ready to spread all over the world, while its original spot remains purely Islamic till the Day of Judgment. Yet this spot is historically and actually no more than a tiny part of the land of Islam where a tiny little portion of the Islamic population lives. This proves that this matter has no relation to the vision and attitude of Islam towards other religions which Islam respects and reveres.

Although Islam is the final message from God, it has shown throughout its history great respect for the places of worship of the People of the Book, i.e. followers of other divine religions, and prohibited causing any harm whatsoever in any way. The Prophet, peace be upon him, and his Companions insisted that hermitages and churches be safe havens for worshippers. He commanded his followers just before leaving for the battle of Mu'tah: "**You will find people living in hermitages in total isolation from people. Do not bother them at all."**

When Abu Bakr, the Caliph (successor) of Muhammad, was about to dispatch the Muslim army to fight in Al-Sham (Greater Syria) under Yazeed bin Abu Sufyan, he commanded him as follows: **"You will find people claiming that they**

have devoted themselves to worship. Leave them alone to do what they claim to have devoted themselves for."

Umar, the second Caliph after the death of Muhammad, gave the inhabitants of Jerusalem a pledge, a paragraph therein read as follows: " **This is what the servant of God, Umar, the Chief of the Believers, has given the people of Eilat: he gives them safety for themselves, their property, their crucifixes and all their denominations. Their churches shall not be inhabited or destroyed. They shall not be diminished, nor will their areas, crucifixes or property be damaged, and nor are they to be forced to abandon their religion."**

The Peace Document given by Khaled bin Al-Waleed to the people of "Anat" included the following: "**They shall be free to strike their bells at any time and to carry their crucifixes in the open during their festivals."**

The scrupulous respect for their rights in their temples was clearly demonstrated by the Caliph Umar when he refused to accept the honorary offer by the monks to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher lest Muslims may make a religious tradition of that prayer and lay claim to the Church. Christians maintained their worship in their churches, many of which were built throughout Islamic history outside Arabia. These are established facts attested by history. Christians in Egypt, for example, enjoyed more religious freedom under Islamic rule than under the Romans, who are supposed to be Christians though of a different denomination.

Objective historians have recognized such justice, tolerance and respect of pledges under Islamic rule everywhere. Will Durant believed that the People of the Book: Christians

and Jews; Zoroastrians and Sabians, enjoyed a high degree of tolerance under the Umayyads that has had no parallel in Christendom: they were free to practice the rituals of their religion and kept their churches and places of worship safe and secure.

Another historian, Treton, believed that the conduct of Muslim rulers quite often exceeded the limits of commandment set by Islam for its followers to observe towards the People of the Book. This was clearly shown by the erection of many churches and places of worship in purely Arab and Islamic towns.

Considering this bright image of Islam, which has been so keenly maintained by successive Islamic states, two important aspects should be noted:

1. Behaving the way they did, Muslims were prompted by a self-motivated inspiration emanating from the teaching of the noble Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and not from any foreign thought. There were no covenants, international conventions or organizations; there was nothing to deter or prevent a victorious army from practicing innovative methods of killing, pillaging and destruction; there were no limits to aggression. History bears witness to this when the Persians defeated the Romans. According to Western historians, the Persians looted and burnt the churches in Jerusalem, desecrated the place where Christians believe Jesus had been buried, and stole the same cross on which the crucifixion was believed to have been committed. The Persian clergy celebrated their victory over Christian clergy with gloating joy.

2. Islamic tolerance and respect for other people's beliefs and places of worship were met by their adversaries with opposite and negative behavior. Unfortunately, we all know what the Crusaders did in Jerusalem; their massacres of the inhabitants of the Holy City were committed with the blessing of some of the clergy. The German historian Siegrid Honke, quoting the European historian Michel d'Arcier said that the Patriarch himself was seen running in the alley ways in Jerusalem brandishing a bleeding sword he was using to kill all the 'infidels' he came across on his way to the Holy Sepulcher where he washed his bloody hands reciting these words from the Bible: "The righteous rejoice when they witness the punishment of the evil ones, and wash their feet with their blood, then people say: truly, a friend is rewarded, and on earth God disposes."

The open courtyard connecting Al-Aqsa Mosque with the Dome of the Rock, where Muslims then took refuge, turned into a pool of blood in which the horses of the Crusaders ruthlessly waded.

There are many cases of converting mosques to churches during the Crusades. The same happened in Andalusia after the collapse of Muslim rule. The infamous Inquisitions in Spain during that period and their exceptionally harsh treatment of Muslims and Jews, reflect numerous details of religious and fanatic intolerance.

Neither the Crusades, nor the Inquisitions, nor any other examples of injustice against Muslims were able to make them diverge from the true and steady path of good con-

duct towards, and treatment of, even their enemies. This was clearly manifested in respecting other people's beliefs and protecting their religious and human rights. Muslim forbearance and generosity, particularly in preserving the places of worship of other religions, extended all over the Islamic state at the apogee of its expansion from China to Spain. However, the Islamic State has exempted the area of Western Arabia from that practice on the analogy of the Vatican where no non-Christian, and particularly non-Catholic places of worship, can be erected.

Even after the disintegration of the Islamic state in the modern age into many small states, the historically old tolerance has been kept and non-Muslims continued to be free to worship in their own places of worship throughout Muslim countries.

The special status of modern-day (Saudi) Arabia, which is a purely Islamic land where places of worship other than mosques cannot be accepted, has been recognized by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is only logical that the geographical base of a religion cannot accommodate double or multiple affiliation. The state running the affairs of such a spot has a spiritual and political duty to preserve the special status of the metropolis of Islam. The government of Saudi Arabia today bears the responsibility of performing this duty, supported by the hearts and minds of over one billion Muslim worldwide.

Second, this privacy and special status is not a matter of opinion that can be reconsidered; it is rather an obligation based on the Prophet's commandments to Muslims in respect of their duty to maintain such privacy, as an exception

from all the countries of Islam. Thus he said: **"Two religions shall not be left in the Arab Peninsula."** And: **"Two Qiblahs shall not co-exist in the Arab Peninsula."** The Second Caliph, Umar, was hesitant about this issue until he learnt that the Prophet, peace be upon him, had indeed uttered these words.

The importance of such traditions indicate that a permanent settlement of non-Muslims in the Arab Peninsula, together with the consequent establishment of non-Muslim places of worship therein, is not permissible. There has been unanimity on this issue among Muslim clergy of all denominations.

All Muslims believe in such texts and abide by God's commandments by obeying the Prophet, peace be upon him. They also know that these texts indicate the special status of Arabia as the geographic base of Islam and as the sanctuary which embraced the newly-born religion, allowing the believers to convert to Islam in great numbers throughout the successive generations. These texts also oblige Muslims to protect their geographic and religious base of Muslims which had never been inhabited by any other people except its indigenous tribes who all believed in the new religion and have been committed to it ever since.

Third, there is no law or creed that allows the feelings of over a billion Muslims believing in the sanctity of Arabia to be hurt for the sake of the foreign few who have provoked the anger of Muslims worldwide by desecrating that sanctity. Since personal freedom is allowed as long as it does not overstep the freedom of others, overriding this rule is tantamount to clashing with the freedom of all Muslims who insist that the metropolis of Islam should be protected by the

rules of Islam.

Practicing non-Muslim rituals in special places of worship there, interferes with the freedom of Muslims to practice their own religion in its indigenous origin, the Arab peninsula, for one aspect of Islam's tenets worldwide is that Arabia is purely Muslim. It does not harbor any other religion. Any proclamation of a religion other than Islam constitutes a violation of the freedom of Muslims in respect of their creed and country, the cradle of their religion. Paragraph three of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Civil, Political and Human Rights states that the freedom of proclaiming one's religion or belief should be governed only by the constraints imposed by law and deemed necessary for maintaining public safety, public order, health, morality or other people's rights and basic freedom.

No doubt the rights of Muslims worldwide and their basic freedom to practice their religion in the sanctity of its geographical base are some of the constraints governing the practices of non-Muslims.

Fourth, the rules of these Shari'ah texts have been applied in Arabia for over 1400 years: there were no places of worship there but mosques, no rituals practiced except those of Islam and no people inhabited Arabia except Muslims. Visiting foreigners recognize and respect this special status.

Fifth, prohibiting the establishment of non-Muslim places of worship in Saudi Arabia is part of the implementation of Islamic rule, which is in fact the constitution of the country and the source of its laws and legislation. Today, it represents a historical continuation of a distinctive case that has been preserved and cherished by Muslim generations

in Arabia and all other Islamic countries for over fourteen centuries. It also reflects the sanctity of the land in the eyes of well over a billion Muslims around the world who direct themselves towards it five times a day in their prayers, and who cannot allow a dichotomy of worship in the geographical origin of their religion.

Sixth, if the Vatican authorities prohibit the building of mosques inside its holy compound, Muslims in all corners of the world hold a sense and belief of distinction and holiness towards Arabia stronger than those held by others towards the Vatican courtyards, because it embraces the Honorable Ka'aba, the Holy Shrine of Makkah, the Tomb of the Prophet, peace be upon him and his Mosque, besides being the spot where ceremonies and rituals of Al-Haj (pilgrimage) take place. The rest of Arabia is but a protecting fence for these holy places.

Seventh, Islamic Law (Shari'ah) forbids permanent residence of non-Muslims in Arabia, and consequently it bans any measures that would permit such permanent settlement therein. Places of worship are naturally one aspect of stable settlement in a land that is purely Muslim.

Eighth, protecting this legitimate sanctity of Arabia and preventing the establishment of non-Islamic places of worship are the duty and responsibility of the government of Saudi Arabia which has no other choice, being based on a religious origin that can not be overstepped or annulled. Any demand to do so is tantamount to demanding the violation of the general rules of a country's constitution. For the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular, this definitely means a violation of a basic rule of Islam, which is a divine canon

and not a statutory law liable to change or annulment. At the same time, it touches upon the public order in the Kingdom and its national security, both of which are based on the Islamic Shari'ah.

Ninth, there are no non-Muslim citizens in Saudi Arabia. There are temporary residents who have arrived pursuant to valid work-permits which clearly oblige them to observe the country's laws and regulations and respect its special religious status.

Tenth. This issue has been discussed by Muslim clergy on different levels, and after dialogue with the Vatican, it has been decisively settled in the statement issued by the International Islamic Council for Da'wah and Relief, meeting in Cairo on 10/10/2000: which clearly emphasized that "Arabia and its heart, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is the geographic stronghold of Islamic faith where no two religions are allowed by Shari'ah and in no way should any other faith but Islam be proclaimed there.

The Council's Presidency deplores the revival of old calls to build churches on Saudi Arabian soil after settling the issue previously in a lengthy dialogue with the Vatican through the World Islamic Committee for Dialogue, where it has been agreed to consider this file closed and not be opened again."

Prohibiting the establishment of non-Islamic places of worship in Arabia has never been a problem since the population there are 100% Muslim, which precludes any need for non-Islamic places of worship in the land. To raise this issue as a problem or as evidence of the negation of 'the other', is a claim that is remotely distant from objectivity.