

In coordination with AU's Center for Global Peace,  
The Islamic Society of North America &  
Salam Institute for Peace & Justice present:

## THE SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF MUSLIM PEACEBUILDING, JUSTICE, & INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

May 5th – 6th 2007

**Panel I: Peace Education**, *Chaired by Mohammed Abu-Nimer Ph.D., Executive Director & Founder of Salam Institute, Professor at the School of International Service, American University*

### ***Islamic Peace Curriculum in Higher Education***

Amr Abdalla, Ph.D., Professor and Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, United Nations University for Peace, Costa Rica

I visited Tajikistan, where both female and male university professors said they would never let a female wear the hijab in their university. Islam entered Central Asian countries 200 years ago. Islam was later oppressed under the Soviet regime. Post-Soviet Union, Islam quickly came to the forefront of the political atmosphere. There was even the desire for an Islamic state in Central Asia.

There has been an increase in the presence of Islam in Tajikistan. Tajikistan works within a very effective peace process. Hizmeallah is a strong Islamic democratic party, which has helped to diffuse violence during the civil war, creating space for the Islamists.

Mohammed Abu-Nimer and I have gone to Tajikistan to work on curriculum development workshops utilizing a participatory approach. This is necessary in order to work through the suspicion and doubt of the participants. In Tajikistan you are either a religious scholar or a secular scholar. We were sure to include religious scholars to validate the religious aspects of the curriculum. We also involved the government as part of our strategy to develop trust with all sides involved.

Our curriculum has a four part focus:

- 1) Identity formation and dynamics
- 2) General Peace and Conflict Studies
- 3) Modern Islamic Approaches to Peace and Conflict Resolution
- 4) Tajik and Kyrgyz perspectives

## ***The Challenges of Implementing a Peace Education Curriculum in Religious Schools***

Qamar Al Huda, Religion and Peacemaking, Senior Program Officer United States  
Institute of Peace

There are several challenges of bringing peace curriculum to Madrasas. I have worked specifically in Pakistan and in Aceh, Indonesia. In these regions the idea of Peace Studies is a relatively new idea, whereas they are an industry in the West. Peace education also includes the necessary skills of critical thinking and reflection which are not central to the pedagogy of the Madrasa. This however does not mean that these ideas are not found in the Madrasa curriculum, there is just a need to highlight them within the existing resources of the schools. It is wrong to assume that peace education is a western idea and that you need to “import,” these concepts rather the construct them from what is presently taught.

Is something wrong with the Madrasa education? Why are you doing this?

As I mentioned, Madrasas already have the foundations of peace in their education. We need to treat them as colleagues, we are all interested in the same outcome, to develop peaceful humans. Madrasa teachers are seen even within the education systems of their own countries as uneducated. They are often looked down upon, exploited, or manipulated, which creates a challenge for us to first understand this and then to build their trust. In many ways the same is true for the children they teach who are often unwanted or neglected. It is challenging to offer a new module to their curriculum, as it is already so established and strict. For example, there are years of Shari’ah or Islamic law courses taught in these schools. The perspective of these teachers is, the knowledge we are transferring was received directly from the prophet, his Hadiths, and his companions, what else would we need to teach?

What can be done to incorporate what you already have?

In Aceh, Madrasas have been seen as teaching radicalism, especially during the separation movement five years ago. What we were commissioned to do, was a peace education program based on Islamic Studies. The result is found in two books totaling over 320 pages published by the project. Chapters of which include:

1. Peace Symbols
2. The management of emotions
  - Facial expressions and body Language
  - Difference in Genders
  - Anger
  - Perceptions
3. Rights and Responsibilities
4. Pluralism and Diversity
  - The Constitutional Medina
  - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- OIC declaration of Human Rights

This curriculum and information is now being integrated into public schools as well as Madrasas in Indonesia.

In Pakistan, there are some additional conditions that we need to focus on including the fact that there are different Madrasas for Sunni and Shias. There is also a very strong understanding that peace is tied to justice in Islam, so we should promote justice of the pen, spirit, and justice in our relationships. Finally, there is a need to promote time for students to question and participate in group activities, so they learn from each other as well. In conclusion, the Ulama in both countries have great potential it's the hierarchies present which are holding them back. Our most significant action is to ask, how can we support you?

***Religious Engagement of Pakistani Madrasas as a Path to Peace***

Azhar Hussein, Vice President for Preventive Diplomacy at the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy

We have been successful in graduating both Shias and Sunnis from our peace program. Madrasas are challenged in that they must find money to feed their students, as well as educate them. They have a very noble mission and become the families of those they serve.

My experience is based on a project I completed with the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy. We created a local partnership with IPS, who made contact with Madrasa leaders throughout Pakistan. We then initiated a 10 day workshop with the leaders found by IPS. By the completion of the workshop 100% of participants invited us to come to their schools to train all their Madrasa teachers.

Following this project we began a capacity enhancement initiative, which included 75 workshops completed in conjunction with three local partners. There were also three 10 day workshops where strong candidates were selected to complete a training of trainers to build further capacity within their own environment. Now the women Madrasas are coming on board, wanting to implement the project.

All this is not to say that there aren't challenges with engaging Madrassas. There is also a fundamental challenge in engaging the Muslim world, especially when it comes to funding. The Shiekh of Dubai just spent 2.7 million dollars on a horse. It is difficult to think of what could be accomplished with 10% of that applied to Madrasa reform. There is also the issue that Madrasas have been isolated by the elites and academics in Pakistan. These schools are the only remaining bastions of resistance against colonization in Pakistan. Today the language of Pakistan is English. In many cases the Madrasas have dealt with their isolation by further isolating themselves, which leads to unhealthy practices. The public schools in Pakistan are failing as well. By engaging the Madrasas you provide them with respect and identity. There is no way to gain the schools trust if you approach them with a western bias or agenda. The Madrasa movement started as a

reply to the Westernization/Americanization of Pakistan. There is a need to support the notion that you can be modern without being Western or American. The Madrasas which we have been working with are now reaching out to their communities to extend these peace education curriculums. This is part of the history and mission of the Madrassa movement and once we acknowledge this heritage we will be able to enhance its ability.

(Shows picture of child in chains)

Here is the next step of things that need to change.

Question and Answer Session:

**Who are funding these projects? Whose Initiatives are they?**

A major funder is The University of Peace, also in Central Asia those who support the need to form an Islamic identity are interested in supporting. The International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, an NGO which specializes in identity based conflicts, especially religious conflicts is supporting our work.

**Is there an importance of exclusivity? What of a situation where the government is extremely authoritarian regime?**

It is important not to go against the tide. If the condition in the country is not right, we do not try to go against it, as this could end up creating more harm than good. The tsunami was included in the program in Aceh as an example of need for knowledge sharing in the community.

**Have you done this workshop within a Western or American Context?**

Yes, at American University and George Mason University with students from a Western perspective. Islamic peace education began here in the West, there are always need to make adjustments which is the importance of developing relevancy with the local partners.

**What kind of significance does communication have in your curriculums?**

Communication is important from several angles including how we communicate with our colleagues. The curriculum utilizes communication by using dialogue to breakdown assumptions which are not only Western, but within the community as well.

**My question is on poverty elimination in Madrasas, what can you do to elevate these communities so they are not on the fringe of society?**

In a small way, the per diem and salaries of these programs contribute to the local economies and the level of their pride.

### **How do you overcome suspicions and doubts?**

Every situation is different, we have to rely on our background of peace education and conflict resolution. It is important to be open to criticism and watch the dynamics of the group.

### **Could you speak further on the challenges of working in the women Madrasas?**

There are many similar challenges. One of the Madrasas was the Red Mosque in Islamabad. Women from this mosque have been willing to commit suicide bombings. They tend to be more conservative in general. This creates a need for trainers to wear full hijab, and respect the culture present. There is a core Islamic feminist movement happening in these areas. A feminist revival is found in females being able to act exactly like males, including burn video shops and competing to be as extremist as their male counterparts.

**Panel II: Interfaith Dialogue**, *Chaired by Dr. Louay Safi, Executive Director of the Islamic Society of North America's Leadership Development Center*

#### ***New Paths in Interfaith Dialogue: Understanding Islam in Light of Earliest Jewish Christianity***

Rod Cardoza, *Cultural Anthropologist*

Rod Cardoza – My background is in cultural anthropology. I believe that a better understanding of early Christianity and Judaism provides a background for interfaith dialogue. It does so by allowing Christians to understand the prophet hood of Mohammed (pbuh). There is a Surah, which if I can paraphrase states, that humble and learned Christians will tear from the divineness of the Quran when recited. Those whom are not arrogant will recognize the truth. There are however fundamental issues to address when it comes to interfaith dialogue with Christians. Two of the strongest divergences are the holy trinity and the position of Jesus as the son of God.

Recent developments in the understanding of early Jewish Christianity are important to shed light on how these differences can be addressed. Early Jewish Christians continued to observe the Torah. The apostle Paul said all nations are not expected to keep the covenant of other nations, which resulted in different laws for the each early Christian nation. The second development relates to the meaning of the son of God as it was used in early Christianity. The bible actually refers to others as well as Jesus as the son of God. In this time period when two nations came together the kings referred to the subservient and dominate king as my father, my son. It is probable that when the son of God is used in the Bible to refer to Jesus it was using this customary titling. God is the greatest king in the universe so to be the son of God is a title of royalty, and yet still a title given to many.

There is also a possibility of a mistranslation of the Arabic words for Ibn and Walid and the Hebraic term for son of God and Arabic use of the word son. The Bible only mentions

Jesus as the son (walid) of David and Abraham. Quran says we should be more concerned with the message, not the linguistic meanings of the way in which a message is given. The concept of the son of God was given to a specific nation at a specific time it is our translation that causes the problem.

### ***Islam in Modern Tunisia***

Faysal Souissi, Communication and Media Advisor, Embassy of Tunisia

I would first like to thank the organizers of this conference for having me and their hard work in its preparation. I am presenting a case study of Tunisia in hopes it will trigger debate. Ibn Khaldoun said history is a lesson to be learned not a story to be set. Around three percent of people have an interest in religion, its importance is often listed after democracy and human rights. This is strange given the situation of the world. Muslims in Europe, and people in the Islamic world view the war on terrorism as a war on Islam. Democracy means the rule of the majority, while Islam asks us to operate by consensus. People are trying to interpret the Islamic faith in their own way, so there is a need to look back into our history and where we really are today.

#### *What is Islamic Tunisia?*

One of the greatest landmarks of Islamic Tunisia is the Zaytouna Mosque; Zaytouna meaning Olive tree. To get to the mosque you must cross the whole city of Tunis, as it is located in the very heart of the city. This mosque is built on the ruins of Carthage and has a very important significance. Karawan in Tunisian is the fourth most important site in the Islamic faith. In 1896 it gave birth al-Khaldouniah, a religious school of learning built to teach the pragmatic matters of the faith. There is a compatibility of the dogmatic teachings of the Zaytouna Mosque and the pragmatic teachings at Khaldouniah. Khaldouniah, which is imperative for their work translating all Arabic sciences for non-Arabic speaking peoples, and vice versa.

Tunisia is also an example of Islamic pluralism and religious diversity. The Jewish Community in Tunisia numbers around 150,000, whom enjoy full rights and citizenship in the country. There is also a Jewish monument in Tunisia which is fully protected and taken care of by the Tunisian government.

There is also a strong Islamic reformist movement in Tunisia. Polygamy is illegal in the country with a mandatory jail sentence for breaking the law. The issue of inheritance is also addressed in the country by giving partners the option to write their will at the same they write their marriage contract. Women have the right to vote in Tunisia, due to a measure that was drafted even before the constitution. Women also have full rights of divorce and the option of giving her children Tunisian nationality, if she is married to a non-Tunisian.

I have tried to show Tunisia as a society which is both pluralistic, and rooted in Islam. I think the most important outcome of this conference is for us to make our voices louder than those which speak for extremism.

## ***Nigeria: A Case Study of U.S. Government Engagement with Religion***

Liora Danan, Researcher, Center for Strategic and International Studies

My name is Lenora Danan and I am a researcher at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a bi-partisan Washington based think tank. I'd first like to reflect that the level of discussion at this conference is very different then that which is happening at the governmental level. The bar for dialogue in the government is very low, despite the fact that diplomacy with Muslim countries is critical for the administration. It is important for the US that the role of religion and its practice abroad and internally be debated. A de facto position has already been created through promotion of moderate Islam in US government activities.

My presentation is based on research of US government programs in Nigeria. During the time of this study there was the first peaceful transfer of power to a civilian leader, in which power was also transferred from a Christian to a Muslim head of state. This transfer was also a direct result of national elections, which although fraudulent were still a step ahead for the country. During the elections religious leaders of all faiths were involved in speaking against corruption in the voting process. Simultaneously, churches and mosques stalked up on guns and ammunitions in fear of a negative result. There was a great uncertainty of how the elections would progress and unfortunately, shortly after the elections religious conflict did erupt in the country once again.

Religion to Nigerians is stronger than in other populations of Africa, such as with the Afrikans. Shar'iah law is implemented in twelve northern states of Nigeria. Historically Nigerian leaders have used religion as a positive factor in their politics. In general, Nigerians view the United States as Christian nation against Islam, especially from what they see bias against Muslims in US visa process. Sixty- five percent of Nigerian Muslims have negative view of US. Outreach activates by the US Embassy such as Iftar dinners are in general small but helpful activities. There is an over focus on educating Nigerians about religion in America, and not enough effort to show America wishing to understand Nigerian faith. There is also a low level of training of Embassy officers on religious affairs. Many religious leaders are eager to engage with American officials, but have not been invited by US representatives to do so. USAID misses major resources by not using the many faith based organizations found in Nigeria, especially due to the terrorist watch list and general distrust. When one actually looks at these organizations it is hard to find concrete terrorist activity. This classification ends up hurting the organizations ability to be effective in their communities.

US policies have created several gaps of understanding between the two countries. The first occurs in part because of the US government's reluctance to use religion in peace and conflict resolution. The US is reluctant to address the role of religion in conflict at all, taking the stance that it is better to say nothing then to risk being offensive. If religion is addressed it is in a narrow forum and usually focused on the negative aspects of the role of religion. There is an over focus on extremism, while there is no full time religious experts to advise Embassy officials. This is in part due to the difficulty gaining security

clearance for Muslims. It creates a void in the Embassy, which then has no institutional capacity to address religious issues. Finally, I would just like to conclude with saying there is a need to stop defining good Muslims as those supporting US policies, as my boss calls it the, "Find a friendly Muslim Program." There is a need for critical advising and engagement with Muslim communities, by drawing in perspectives from the spectrum of religious communities not just those which support the US.

***The Contribution of Education to Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue: Gulen Movement Case***

Dr. Hakki Ocal, Rumi Forum

I will start with an introduction of Gulen movement. Gulen was one of the most important thinkers and writers of the in 20<sup>th</sup> century in Turkey and the Muslim World. He was known by his simple lifestyle. Today Gulen and the nur movement are seen as Islamic reformers, with Gulen compared to the Calvin of Islam. In fact, he was an old fashioned Islamic leader who could wake a Jummah with nothing but his recitation of the Quran. He was a modern day al Ghazial. Said Nursi instituted a thematic interpretation of Quran which is required by our times. He wished to rescue the faith of other Muslims and was not interested in a grand scheme of Islamic conquest. The movement is response to secularization as a form of political legitimacy.

Gulen believed that science without religion is as faith without science. Science explains the nature of man and creation, by gaining knowledge of creation you gain knowledge of the creator. Muslims should not just pray just 5 times a day, you must work to create a heaven on earth. Gulen was ready to expand his movement beyond Turkey's boundaries, which occurred as it spread through out central Asia to Africa and Europe, North and South America. The school believes that the main problem in the world is lack of knowledge and that education is crucial to becoming a better Muslim, not only religious education, but education all around. Gulen met with John Paul the II, and agreed on common points, such as the importance of interfaith dialogue. He believed that Islam can not be used for tribal desires, and that the use of Islam for the wrong goals has scared and continues to scare both Muslims and Non-Muslims alike. The movement now also supports the use of modern technology to overcome education crises. If instructors are open minded, and dialogue driven the instructed can not be that different. Intercultural and Interfaith dialogue needs to be involved in the environment of education, learning about religion with dialogue and respectful conversation is very important. Therefore, Gulen community schools use local as well as rural teachers. Every school must observe Islamic traditions and those of the surrounding communities as well.

Questions:

**I am interested in the panelists' opinions of how the reaction of the Virginia Tech murders would have differed if the killer had been an Arab or a Muslim?**

Your question speaks to the role of how America deals with Muslims in America. It is true we must change our biases about Islam. There is a need to put into place institutional restrictions on Islamophobia such as there are for anti-Semitism.

**Faisal, is Ibn Khaldoun is Tunisian? I thought he was Yemeni.**

Khaldoun was born in Tunisia.

**Rod, I find your idea of finding the answers to your religion in other religions, very important. How do you deal with the Sunnahs that talk negatively about Jews and Christians?**

I look at the context in which the Sunnahs were revealed. I trust in God first, more so than a partnership with other faiths. The context is of utmost importance in religious affairs. These Sunnahs are often not critical of the entire Jewish tradition, but the actions of certain Jews. The language of the Quran is not different in its terms of its need to be studied than the Bible is. The importance is not to look at this process in terms of us and them.

**What are the challenges of Interfaith Dialogue in this country?**

Rod: Theological issues create a major gridlock. My paper is an alternative way to look at these issues. There is an undeniable common ground in the way the prophets have asked us to live. We need to help communities see that. I believe there is an emerging church movement to support this including the Post-Modern Christianity school or thought including, Brian McClarian and his book, *Generous Orthodoxy*. First and foremost we need to develop room for humility.

**Panel III: Women & Human Rights in the Context of Islam and Peace, Chaired by Ayse Kadayifci, Ph.D., Co-Executive Director Salam Institute, Professor at the School of International Service, American University**

***Perspectives: Muslim Women and Peacebuilding***

Fatima Hadji, Ph.D. Candidate, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution,  
George Mason University

We need a fresh opportunity to address women's issues, including a holistic understanding and comprehensive analysis of how we should view Muslim women in the Muslim world. The major challenge is of course the dominance of men in all aspects of society. Women cannot emerge as social actors, and therefore are restricted to enjoying and protecting the rights that Islam gives them, although these are determined mostly by cultural adaptations. Women have also contributed to their situation, through the process of socialization by passing these cultural variants to their children.

In Morocco, when feminists changed from a political discourse to a religious discourse they were able to win more rights. Women can use the structure of their nature, to restore

the social fabric to include women's rights. It is also time to look at the women's movement not only from a victimization paradigm. Women are a natural source of social justice & peace, this fact should be capitalized upon. Former President Clinton once said, if we would have had women at Camp David, we would have reached a settlement. It is important for all of us to create a space for women to grow, because if we organize our efforts, and fulfill the basic psychological need for recognition, women will do wonders.

***Community, Identity, and Dispute Resolution Choices: An Empirical Study of Family Dispute Resolution Processes in North American Mosques***

Julie Macfarlane, Ph.D., Professor of Law, University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada

I am a dispute resolution mediator and scholar, I'm coming to this project with little understanding of Islam. The study began around the same time Shar'iah laws compatibility with Canadian law was being debated in Ontario. It was a symbolic moment in Ontario where there was space for internal analysis of our tolerance. In this moment I was commissioned to look at the place of Imams and other 3<sup>rd</sup> party dispute resolution processes in North America, specifically in cases of divorce.

So I asked, what drives people to this process? There are two levels of my analysis, a macro and a micro level. This project is qualitative in nature and includes all the other unintended consequences that may come with this type of analysis. Additional questions I sought to answer included: Why and to what extent do North American Muslims prefer to go to their Imams for dispute resolution? What are the factors in that choice? And how do they rationalize these perspectives? How do the participants in the processes construct the matters? And what is the outcome?

Some of the findings and additional questions:

- 1) What happens when a woman seeks divorce?
- 2) Certain Imams tend to generate a reputation in the city.
- 3) Imams expect to see the man first who has the first point of contact for other matters in the relationship.
- 4) 70 Shar'iah councils in the United Kingdom.
- 5) First Shar'iah council was established 12 years ago in the United Kingdom.
- 6) There are typically no means of enforcing the religious decision.
- 7) Payment of the maher is pretty straight forward.
- 8) There is a frequent question for the Imam as to what to do if the woman earns more than the man.
- 9) US & Canadian courts don't realize the maher – other forms of pre-nuptial agreement.

There is clearly a clear emphasis on reconciliation in Imam facilitated dispute resolution. There are certainly women who feel that they feel that they are pressured into understanding, even concerning domestic violence, and told to stay in their marriages.

There is a set of assumptions about what Islam says about women, and women's positions as framed in Islamic law. Islam is very progressive within the contractual principles of marriage for women. I think I had imagined that women & men who sought

Islamic divorce were very religious, and what I have come to realize is that many are just looking for an Islamic closure to their marriage is very common.

While completing this study people would assume one of three things I was working for the CIA, working as a journalist, or working with immigration. This was very difficult to study because of the personal nature of this program. I found that people were uniformly gracious, and understanding of the need to get more information out there to try and counter some of the stereotyping which exists out there.

### ***Misunderstandings about Women in Islam***

Anita Shah Lakyary, Hubert Humphrey Fellow University of Maryland, College Park

I worked as a T.V. journalist for KTN in Pakistan for many years and am now a Fulbright fellow here at the University of Maryland. We are living in a time when things have completely changed. Our individual freedom has increased to an extent, we wear what we want to wear, eat what we want to eat, and travel where we want to. There is a great freedom and fear that comes with this type of change. This fear is one of the reasons people really engaged their understanding and their hope in some metaphysical force. Faith used to be a compulsion, rather than a choice. Now it is becoming quite the opposite.

Also there is now more migration in the world than ever before. On one hand the world has become smaller, but the gaps between us have become really wide. Under these circumstances, we need to develop an understanding of one another. For measure let us refer to the place of women in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, in Arabia. Women were really not considered very valuable. They were like property without a status. Infant females were buried alive. Then in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Islam gave right to own property, they participated in battles and won wars. With these things in mind it is beneficial to talk about the misunderstandings of women in Islam today

1. Veil/Hijab – In actuality there are elements of flexibility, and there can even be a feminist reading of hijab.
2. Domestic violence – Domestic violence is a problem in all societies, not just Islam, but its prevalence in Islam is often misunderstood.
3. Women's inheritance
4. Women's right to work – There are those that are conceived that women are not supposed to drive, women are not supposed to work, and women should not have what they own in Islam, all of which is incorrect.
5. Polygamy – Polygamy is the most abused concept of women Islam. Man must be able to be absolutely fair to every wife, which is almost impossible and not recommended.
6. Honor killings

It is important to bring these misunderstandings to light and work from a place of understanding with our brothers and sisters as we are doing here today.

***Unique Peacebuilding and Dialogue Projects between Muslims and Jews: Successes, Challenges and Lessons Learned***

*Judy Kuriansky, Ph.D., Adjunct faculty in the Department of Clinical Psychology, Columbia University Teachers College; Main representative to the United Nations for the International Association of Applied Psychology*

I have worked in and out of Israel and Palestine for over twenty years now. What I have done is attempt to shed light on some of the ways in which Arabs and Jews are working together towards peace. I do take a gendered view to my analysis and tend to focus on the role women have in the reconciliation process. This is a bit stereotypical as men are becoming more involved in the process, but still women in these cultures are supposed to be the loving, harmony seeking party.

There is a huge affect of the conflict on people's psycho social well being in Israel and Palestine. There is a grave need to lobby governments about this issue and care about the mental health of people around the world. Many large issues on a global scale are now being found in Palestine and Israel such as trafficking, HIV, and gender mainstreaming. Women in Palestine are now doubly burdened; they work full time jobs and then are still responsible for domestic duties. Men are often emasculated by not being able to secure work while theirs wife can, which provides a significant amount of frustration and has lead in many cases to domestic violence. One out of four women in my study said they had been domestically abused; furthermore ten percent of women have been sexually abused or exposed to violence. There is no telling the amount which may have suffered from emotional abuse.

In Jordan, I found that men don not pay enough attention to their wives, especially after they have children. The women I studied said men don't spend enough time with them. Men are looking to affairs to fulfill their sexual needs. This can in some ways be attributed to the Madonna/prostitute syndrome, where men need to keep their idea of the mother of their children are a Madonna-type figure, which forces them to look for another women to be sexually explorative with.

Another focus of my study was on women who chose to be suicide bombers. The first suicide bomber in the conflict was a 27-year old divorcee whose brother had been imprisoned. She had had a miscarriage and was told that she could never have children, which lead to her husband divorcing her to have children with another woman. She was terrifically shamed. It is not just about the commitment to the cause, but personal matters which lead to her decision. Mothers in Palestine also expressed an extreme pride in their children who were martyrs or fighters in the conflict. These experiences show negative roles women can have in conflict as well.

In conclusion, there is on both sides a shared mourning and grieving in Israel and Palestine. Seeking common ground is a gender-based concept, we need to utilize these gender stereotypes to support women in their development as peacekeepers.

**Panel IV: *Workshops on the Art of Dialogue and Interfaith Youth Outreach***

***Islamic Approaches to Interfaith Youth Service Work***

Jenan Mohajir, Outreach Education & Training Program Associate, Interfaith Youth Core

Good afternoon, I am here to present on Islamic approaches to Interfaith youth service projects. It would help I think to know a little about myself as well in this conversation. My story begins with a question, how does a Muslim girl find Islam at a Catholic University? This is essentially what happened to me as one day I had a conversation with a convert who knew more about Islam than I did myself. It was this conversation which began my spiritual journey to look deeper into Islam, and I believe that instances such as this happen every day in our activities. We are an organization which couples the spirit of service with interfaith dialogue, by bringing youth together for days of service in the Chicago area. The interfaith youth core was established by a man named Eboo Patel. The idea for an interfaith youth core came to Eboo as he was attending small interfaith conferences that had no emphasis on action and service. He also noted that outside these conferences there was no public discourse of faith, which makes it impossible to relate to other faiths and communities. With these observations in mind Patel created the Interfaith Youth Core in 1998. The organizations methodology is based on learning through service. The conversations that begin when youth are cleaning a park or serving others in a food pantry are organic and do not require that participants represent their entire communities. This is crucial for interpersonal understanding as religious communities are really narrative communities. When you hear someone's story you can relate to them as a person instead of as a religious other.

***Moving beyond Stereotypes within and across Communities: a mini-workshop using the Public Conversations Project's Exercise on Stereotyping***

Mavash Hassan, Program Consultant, Public Conversations Project

The Public Conversations Project facilitates dialogues between highly conflicted groups. We believe that the creation of a safe space is needed for communities to explore the complexities of their own value systems. Once they are able to do so they will create a foundation for further Intra/Intergroup dynamics to be discussed. The exercise we will ask you all to participate in today works with diversity and stereotyping.

*(Participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire on the stereotypes they believe are applied to themselves from others. Participants were then asked which stereotype they found most offensive. Then participants were asked to mark the most inaccurate stereotype, and which stereotype, if any, is understandable.)*

Okay let us now come back to the larger group to share our experience. I hope to remind you all to speak for yourself and not for your partner or larger group identity. It seems like many of you are referring to the fact that intra-faith misunderstanding is often more hurtful than interfaith stereotyping. I hope you have all enjoyed this activity and used it as

an experience to learn more about yourselves and your peers here at the conference. I am always available to answer any questions and thank you very much for your time.

**Panel V: Islam and Peace Theoretical/Theological Reflections, Chaired by Patricia Anton, Director, Asia Relief**

***Islamic Conflict Resolutions: The Best for Mankind***

Imam Hassan A. Amin, Chaplain, Johns Hopkins Hospital

I would like to begin with a little back ground into conflict resolution and the place of the arbitrator or mediation. Arbitration and mediation are similar in that the goal of both processes is to obtain peace. There is however a major difference between a mediator and an arbitrator in that the decision of an arbitrator is imposed on the parties of the dispute, meanwhile a mediator's decision is not imposed. As I mentioned the aim of both practices is to stop wrongdoing and eradicate evil. There are specific conditions that must be present for Islamic Mediation. The arbitrator's main goal is to bring about peace, whether that means that a couple stay together or must divorce. The outcome must please Allah and it is suggested that the arbitrators of mediators are relatives of the two spouses.

Steps in Islamic Mediation-

- First Step – sides should not be taken even if a wrong person can be identified. The main goal is to create peace therefore it does not matter how the conflict began.
- Step Two – Support the person who has submitted to the will of Allah. There is a saying, help your brother whether he is the oppressor or the oppressed. Often you help him by preventing him from oppressing.
- Step Three – Once both have submitted, you can make peace between the two parties. It is necessary for a group of peace seeking Muslims to help encourage submission and acceptance of the decision between two combatants.

***Transformation of Violent Jihadist Narratives***

Manal Radwan, Ph.D. Candidate, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution,  
George Mason University

There is a grave need to differentiate between Jihad and violence. There are many different types of jihad, such as the civil Jihad of coming here on a Sunday morning. We as Muslims are still struggling with the name. Violence is an action based on beliefs, the results are not questions. Violence is most often based on blind faith, which is the opposite of the results of jihad. Islam used as a social political agent wants to change politics. To complete jihad you must base your action on what the Quran dictates. There is use in looking at the past and applying it to today. I looked at the Meccan (Tahqir) period, while there tends to be a focus on the Median period.

In modern times there have been many who have resorted to violence out of their beliefs. There is a belief that an Islamic state can be created out of violence, the Jummah Islamiah

is an example of a group holding these beliefs. Jummah Islamiah started as a student association in the Sadat era. Sadat wanted to change the discourse began by Nasser, the strongest counter narrative was an Islamic narrative, which had been marginalized during Nasser. Sadat opened the environment for these groups to flourish, especially in Upper Egypt, less so in Cairo. At the same time there was an opening of new universities which shifted the environment in upper Egypt, towards Westernization. At the time another organization Al Jihad formed a secret wing of the Jummah Islamiah which was kept a secret and compromised of those who have given up on society. They saw no difference between civilian and non-civilian casualties.

In 1997 the Jummah Islamiah said they would end violence unconditionally. This signals a dramatic shift in the reasoning of the group, which is not easy for dogmatic religious groups to do. The group then went back to their previous publications of Jummah Islamiah to examine all the tenets they used to legitimize the use of violence and republished with notes about how their interpretation was incorrect. This was the first Jihadi Taferi group to transform itself from its previous use of violence. It is important to highlight that this process came from their faith and use these new texts as example of Islamic reform.

### ***Islam, Human Rights and the Duty to work for Peace***

Hisham Soliman, Peace Studies Program, University of Notre Dame

My name is Hisham Soliman I am originally from Cairo, Egypt and am now getting my Masters at Norte Dame. I am presenting on Islam and Human rights and the duty to work for peace. There has been much research completed on the compatibility of Islam and Human Rights, but are still aspects which have not been explored. There is a need to support the concept of the universality of human rights, but there is also a need to embrace the universality of the notion. The way it is practiced today is due to the fact that the concept was hijacked by the allies after WWII. As they supported the concept it became based on the rights of individuals, not on the parallel duties to the group. This duty is sourced from third tier rights, environmental rights, solidarity, etc., which today hold no designation of whose duty it is to protect. Social and economic rights which are needed more so in the rest of the world and are seldom emphasized in today's human rights dialogue. This is just one example of how human rights are biased to the West. There is a notion that these rights are inferior to western human rights. Cultures are now trying to bend themselves to work within these western human rights concepts forgoing duty to others and a duty to the creator. International Organizations should, through education, start a dialogue to between these two visions of human rights.

### ***Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue in Islam according to the Ahlulbayt school of thought.***

**Mohameed Taqi – Baker – Imam Ali Center**

I began to think of this topic after there was a large car bombing in Iraq, and reporter came to the Imam Ali center and asks me, "What's going on? Are the killers what you would consider true Muslims?" This experience moved me to think of the story of Adam

when Allah sent him an Angel who asked him to choose between three things, the power of knowledge, *dunya* or life, or religion? Adam chose *Aqul*, the power of knowledge. Later the angel Allah sent asked, “Why did he choose *Aqul*?” Allah replied, “If he doesn’t have *Aqul* he doesn’t have life or religion.” Muslim killers do not have *Aqul*. In the Ahulbayt school of thought our members compose the household of man. We debate on the Bible and the Old Testament as well as the Quran. It is our knowledge which provides us the ability to do so. Imam Ali ruled less than five years, but there is still a need to go back to his letters, which explain the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Pluralism is the encounter of difference in relationship of one to another. The language of pluralism is dialogue, both speaking and listening and this is what is followed in the Ahulbayt school of thought.

Questions:

**The Islamic world is not just the Arab world. In Bangladesh where I am from, there are many interfaith conferences. Does Islam see women and men in equal terms? Why can women not be arbitrators? Is it contextual or is it forbidden, if it is forbidden then why?**

Imam Hassan – You can not change the Sunnah which says that yes the arbitrator must be a man. This is the same as women can not lead men in prayer. It is Islam, you can not change that. Before Islam there were no women’s rights whatsoever. To change our customs you need proof from Quran or the Sunnah.

Dr. Safi – This is true but it is also within Islam that no human that can prohibit an act. This is a historical context of the place of women then, there is no text that says women can not be arbitrators of Islam.

Dr. Abu Nimber – **There are many instances of women being mediators in Islamic history. We have had Sunni and Shias saying Islam is Peace. What are the real differences between Shia and Sunnis?**

Imam Taki-Bakr – To answer that I would like to use the example of Ayatollah Sistani. The Shia of Iraq came to him and said we are the majority; we cannot live this way, under occupation. Sistani replied, “Even if they kill me do not kill one of them, this would not be an Islamic action.” There have been many conferences in Iran for intrafaith dialogue between Shia and Sunni to address just these issues.

Manal – The closed narratives we have today are remnants of al khawarj. These were always at the periphery of society. The Islamic narrative is not about these closed narratives. Going back to the Quran and the Sunnah is a way out of these closed narratives. I mean from what I have heard today I believe in Ahulbayat, although I am a Sunni I can find no difference between us. I don’t understand the Sunni – Shia split, I believe it started based on political aspects. This is our core issue as Muslims the misuse of religion for political means, which then becomes part of identity. We are not good at politics we started by killing our second Caliph. We are good at culture.

**Question: I have found through working with mediation in Virginia that there is often a lack of screening before parties come to mediation to determine that it is indeed what they want. Where is a background for this in Islam? Also from my experience we have no Muslim brothers as mediators in Northern Virginia, so we as women have stepped up.**

**Question: Is there an institutionalization of Islamic mediation in the US? What are the numbers and process of this mediation? Also on a separate topic how does one communicate the complexity of Islamic thought to American foreign policy?**

Imam – Many Imams do not have the skills to deal with mediation. They do not understand or want to deal with domestic violence, some even have it in their own homes. Women are mediators in many aspects of Islamic life such as with their children. Women can encourage their Imams to develop further training in mediation. Men and women need to support their Imams in looking for alternatives to their styles of mediation. Most Imams do not use the process described. The decision of the arbitrator is final and must be abided by, which makes the process even less intriguing.

Manal – Prophet Mohammed was the last Prophet, he was the seal of all prophets. Those who follow are societal leaders. Whatever benefits humanity is in Islam, whatever does not benefit humanity is not in Islam.

**Panel VI: Current Dynamics and Challenges in Muslims Communities, Chaired by Imam Johari Abdul-Malik**

***Peace in the Ummah begins with Peace in the Home: Putting a Stop to Family Abuse***  
Salma Elkadi Abugideiri, Co-Director, Peaceful Families Project

There are very few people in our Muslim *ummah* willing to talk about Muslim domestic violence. The Peaceful Families Project is an organization dedicated to fighting domestic violence in Muslims communities. The conversations we have are difficult because there is a thought that domestic violence doesn't happen in Muslim communities, Jews say not in our synagogues, Christians not in our church, Muslims say not in our mosque, but it is a reality. Our organization's goal is effect change through education. Domestic violence is not a woman's problem, but a problem for our *ummah*. Global peace is not possible to achieve without having peace in our homes. Understanding peace means understanding violence; thus we need to understand what violence in the home looks like and how we can identify and prevent it. Then we can implement model given in the Qur'an to eliminate the practice. Domestic violence raises the hair on people's heads, because terminology alienates people. Domestic violence is really oppression in the family context; when one person in the family is abusing their power to control another person. It is a violation. We turn a blind eye when domestic violence comes up and someone says my abusive partner is a Muslim. No distinction between men and woman as to who is *khalifa*. "We are supposed to be mutual helpers, mutual friends and protectors."

Force is not always physical, and it is not always something you can readily see. You may see physical damage, but domestic violence is really about living in a climate of fear. Some of these violent practices are culturally accepted practices and we take it as okay a disciplinary action. We don't consider this abuse. Each ethnic practice has some variation of it but at the core it is the same. Ritual abuse is the worst, in faith communities; abusers are good at this kind of abuse. They take teachings from Qur'an and Sunnah and they manipulate them to get their way i.e. get the other person to do what they want by taking teachings out of context.

Some may ask why we are focusing on domestic violence in our organization. We do so because as Muslims we say the family is the basic unit of society and domestic violence erodes that unit. It transfers from generation to generation. We operate on auto-pilot and don't stop to reassess and stop the cycle of violence. Domestic violence effects even the fetal stage of development. The fetus feels the negative emotions of its mother, especially if she is being violated. Gender roles are also problematic in our society, especially with socialization of girls and boys. Meanwhile all of these behaviors are learned in the home.

There are so many verses that I can pull from the Qur'an. "A goodly word is like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches reach to the heavens. It brings forth its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord." And this is the example that needs to be set at home. If family members are suffering through physical and psychological abuse and this is the example set at home, this is what children will carry forth in the world.

General research findings:

Eighty- five percent of domestic violence victims are women, a third of American woman report being physically or sexually abused by men. How does that compare with Muslims in US? Ten percent of our families experience physical abuse, and we are still without emotional or psychological studies. There is a positive correlation between domestic violence and mental health issues. People go to their imams first and they want help in the masjid, but if the imam doesn't know what it is or how to deal with it then they can not have the appropriate intervention. Islam is a preventive model and we have to use prevention. We have to recognize that by the time someone comes for help they've been through too much, we can not ask them to try one more time and it will increase the danger to her. I urge you all to consider this issue as an important to all of us, as men and women, as family members and community leaders.

***The Immigrants and the Converts of American Islam: A Rift and a Promise for Unity***

'Abd al-Hayy Michael Weinman, Department of Communication & Journalism,  
University of New Mexico

If dialogue is successful at all, it is ongoing. In the Muslim communities, interfaith/intra faith community dialogue must go hand in hand. Real dialogue is a transformative experience. An example is my first meeting with Dr. Khan. "Ma'sh'Allah Brother, you new Muslims are better than us!" This is very common for converts to hear, but at the same time brings a separation of identity between us. In Urdu, "no Muslim is new Muslim." In my paper I focused on immigrants and converts to Islam in the United

States. Most new Muslims in the US are immigrants; however there were also older Muslims who were here before the floodgates of immigration opened in the 1970s. This rift is serious between new immigrants/converts and older Muslim communities in the United States. The door is not closed but it is closing between the two groups. There are more immigrants now than converts. For immigrants, ethnicity is also important.

There was a PBS documentary on Muslims in American and if you look at the interviews they conducted the Imams always look like they are from another country and the converts are always white. In reality, more than 95% of converts are African-Americans, so I am actually a minority in my co-culture but this is not what PBS was showing to us.

Rumi has a story about doctors praying for everyone to be sick so they can feed their families. By having a political point of view it blinds me to other views, even my Islamic reference. then drank himself. Musa said what is going on, ocean is knowledge of life infinite. The same sheikh 13 years later in Al Aqsa mosque wants to know about Islam in America and he asked me about what I am doing and I explained my research and this amazing, diverse mosque that we have in Albuquerque and all these different ideas, ethnicities. Well this is very difficult, he said, only way we can succeed is if you build this in your heart first before you start your dialogue. There's one more thing, you have to know all these people in your heart are better than you. This is an understanding of phenomenology from Islamic point of view. Give converts chance to speak because they are most vulnerable in society.

***Compatibility between Islamic and Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a Means for Peacebuilding***

Abdul Bangura, Ph.D., Professor at the School of International Service, American University, Center for Global Peace Fellow

I come from a Roman Catholic, due to the fact that I went to Catholic school growing up but I am still a Muslim. For me they are the same religion but with different names. The tenets I am going to describe you will see the commonalities with whether you are a Jew, Christian or Muslim. Before starting I would like to make some clarifications on what we have heard so far today. The first is that there is no polygamy in Islam. There is a fundamental difference between polygamy and polygene. This was difficult for many Africans who became Muslims, because 50 or 100 wives was the norm for them, but because of Islam, they then stopped at four. Another clarification, it has been said that Islam is an *ummah* there is greater importance placed on the community as a group, therefore the individual plays a secondary role. I disagree because relationship between individual and Allah is direct. Thus the idea of individualism does exist. One more thing: The idea that Islam is the youngest of the religions. This is a tough theological construct. If we say the Revelations came through Judaism, then of course we are all Jews, but in my Christian teachings we were also taught that there is the holy trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. It is taught that these three bodies predate all else, so if this is true then maybe Christianity was the first religion. Finally, Muslims will say in Torah and Genesis, Allah was in the books. In Aramaic, they call God, "Allah" and The Prophet

Mohammed PBUH said I did not bring a new religion, I am making some clarifications on what there is. Thus maybe all three began at the same time.

I suggest that a careful reading of the Qur'an would expose one to the universal declaration of human rights. It is imperative for those who are trying to force a dialogue must have had careful reading of this document. There are verses present in the Qur'an to support this equality, intellectual freedom, freedom of religion, enjoying a lawful marriage. In contrast there are no human rights for divorce, but Islam secures this right. Additional rights secured in Islam include procreation, rights of the child, the right to live and earning a living, ownership, home privacy, protection of honor, self-defense, justice, and freedom of political opinion. There is no universal human right for resistance of corruption, protection of the poor and orphans, rights protecting the sanctity of their wealth and familial relations. So you can see we have a lot of merging to be done, but I would like to conclude with the point that the Qur'an is the Divine Guidance for all humanity forever.

### ***Islam, Human Rights and Peacebuilding***

Riffat Hassan Ph.D., Professor of Humanities, University of Louisville, Kentucky;  
Director of the Global International Institute for Research, Education and Dialogue,  
Lahore, Pakistan; CEO, The Iqbal International Institute for Research Education and  
Dialogue, Lahore, Pakistan

This is a vast topic. The discourse on human rights is one of the most important currently occurring. First, it has to do with the Western perception of Islam. After 9/11, Islam has been stigmatized and negatively stereotyped. True, this existed before when Islam first appeared on borders of Europe and were perceived as "Others," but fear of Islam has now become part of the Western unconscious. Human rights are thought of as a Western secular concept, though this is not true its concepts are found across cultures. The second major issue, if you examine contemporary discourse in Muslim countries, there are very marginal but powerful groups that take exactly this position that Islam and human rights are not compatible.

Anyone who has read the Quran without bias knows that the stipulations of Universal Declaration of Human Rights are affirmed in Quran. Islam is all-embracing for various rights and affirms human rights. This does not mean it is enforced worldwide or in the Muslim world. Human rights are what they ought to be the case, but communities don't necessarily have them. From an Islamic perspective, human rights are given by God not by any political authority or ruler.

There is a need to address what is going on at the ground level. While there is more legislation in the Quran about men, woman, and family there is a big gap between what Islam teaches about women and what is happening to women in the Muslim societies. Most of these rights are not found in many Muslim cultures and communities. To show this I would like to draw from a scenario in Pakistan. In Pakistan, the public discourse is dominated by religious and anti-religious extremists. The former takes the position that Islam is perfect and everyone is treated perfectly. My contention is that these rights are

given, but not practice. Pakistani women especially in villages are poor, illiterate and living in subhuman conditions. The anti-religious extremists were created by Western agencies to go against Muslim extremists. They claim Islam is misogynistic, and not compatible with human rights. My contention is with the using Islam in this statement. Also how can you take message of UDHR to a woman in a village if not through Islam? If you take the message of human rights in the name of Islam- it relates so much more. Islam has been the sustaining factor this women's life. but it has also been a restraining factor having been told that there are so many things she cannot do. Now Islam is empowering her because self-actualization must begin within, before it can be realized.

Within these two groups the Muslim extremist have hijacked Islam and the anti-religious zealots have hijacked the discourse of human rights. What about the remaining ninety-five percent of people in the middle? This is who President Musharraf refers to as the silent majority. They don't have a discourse, it consists of many sub-groups. They have strong Islamic values, faith in God, they believe in deen and doniya, they want to educate their daughters. Today in Pakistan the ratio of students, women to men is four to one. My struggle as an activist in Pakistan has been how to create a discourse for these people in the middle who are the vast majority and try to bring this awareness to them. In the year 2000, I was able to start a dialogue with President Musharraf in the context of women's rights, specially in regards to honor killings. I wrote him a letter saying he needs to respect the fundamental human rights of all Pakistanis. In 2004, I was able to convene a conference of international Muslim scholars on human rights. We asked during this conference, "What is your vision of an enlightened Muslim society? How do you actualize this vision? In order to actualize this vision, if we could create an institute in an Islamic country, how would you define its nature?" Unanimous recommendation was it should be created in Pakistan. President Musharraf asked for the findings of this conference. In August 2005, he approved the Iqbal Institute as a focal point for progressive Muslims around the world. We are trying to create a new paradigm of human rights, grounded in normative Islamic ideas of human rights. Peacebuilding is an educational process. First you need to educate people the right way about Islam and human rights. Iqbal said for reform, you have to deconstruct and reconstruct and so we have to participate in this process.

## Questions

**When we talk about women's rights, is this not an exclusionary discourse? Aren't men's rights being abused as well?**

Hassan: Women's rights are part of human rights and vice versa. Women's rights are the most violated in Muslim world as in all patriarchic societies. I don't think that by talking about women's rights we are marginalizing women.

**Prof Hassan, I like that you have two vocal centers. Can you see this new reform, from Iqbal, happening away from these two centers? Should you engage them?**

Hassan: Engagement is an obsession for the Americans especially. My point is we have to focus on the middle to create a substantive number of people that we can then engage in dialogue with others. Like reform of Islamic studies curricula but there is something wrong with how Islamic studies are taught not only in madrasas, but in public schools as well. At this stage it is important to have critical mass of students in the middle. We can't waste all our energy dealing with extremists, in doing so we would inevitably will lose the middle.

**Islam cannot be represented by individuals or groups, it has to be wider than that. I acknowledge as 'Abd al-Hayy said there is no scientific dialogue between Muslims in East and West, the dialogue needs to be scientific. I have a question for Dr. Bangura about Islamic human rights principles versus Western human rights principles. You mentioned a verse from the Qur'an that there are boundaries and we as humans should not be transgressing these boundaries, can you go into that a bit more. Finally for Dr. Hassan, is it true that radical Islamic groups in Pakistan are a minority?**

Dr. Hassan: Yes radicals are minority.

Dr. Bangura: There is something in the Qur'an that says we should not just search on Earth, but beyond. That which he allows us to prove, we should prove. Things that the Qur'an said ages ago, we have scientifically proven just a few years ago. Allah in his infinite wisdom, gave us the time to learn. Allah gives us the ability to grow.

'Abd al-Hayy: We use this word extremism so many times. This was a word that was put on us. We are all part of the same thing. The definition of it is complex, I don't want to be a part of it. The concept of extremism needs to be reevaluated by us and the way it is used by others.

Dr. Bangura: I agree Islamic fundamentalism is another one of these terms.

***Cities of Light: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Spain***  
***A preview of the PBS Documentary airing August 22, 2007***

*During the lunch time break participants heard a presentation from Lobna Ismail and Alex Kronemer of the Unity Faith Productions. They presented their new initiative of 20,000 Dialogues. A description of the project can be found below, and additional information can be found on the project website at <http://20000dialogues.org>*

20,000 Dialogues is a nationwide campaign designed to bring people of different faiths together using films about Muslims to stimulate discussion and promote understanding. It brings the concept of interfaith dialogue into the hands of ordinary people who want to make a positive difference.

Interfaith dialogue has never been more necessary or more important than it is today. When you think of the term, 'interfaith dialogue' you usually think of religious leaders

like ministers, rabbis and imams. 20,000 Dialogues adds another model. It is intended to reach the average person.

At its heart is the idea of democratizing dialogue through a "bottom up" approach that gives any interested individual the materials and tools needed to host and/or participate in small, grassroots generated discussions. It is an empowering project for those looking to get away from the helplessness of the headlines and do something positive in the world.

Why Muslims? Why Now?

At a time when the notion of a 'Muslim-Western' Clash of Civilizations has become commonplace, it is important to realize that humanity is at a crossroads.

Will we begin moving in a more peaceful direction, or will the forces of conflict, misunderstanding, fear, and animosity continue to tear our world into fighting factions? This is a challenge that must be addressed at many levels. 20,000 Dialogues seeks to address it at the grassroots, where people live and work. It will strengthen understanding and help build relationships across faiths, even when people disagree.

There are millions of American Muslims, who are friends, colleagues and neighbors. This project uses a film to bring them in contact with people of other faiths together to stimulate discussion and positive action.

The nominal goal of each dialogue is to foster relationships between the group participants, create a forum where knowledge and opinions are shared, and encourage greater understanding about the subject matter. We hope that participants continue the discussions on their own, form relationships, and find ways of working together.

### **Panel VII: Cases of Peace Making**

#### ***Somali Reconciliation Conferences: The Unbeaten Track***

Mohamed Haji Mukhtar, Ph.D., Professor of African & Middle Eastern History,  
Savannah State University

I am glad to be back at the conference I hope that it will continue to occur annually. Somalia is the first failed state there is extreme stress on the country. When Somalia became independent it had several overarching goals. Part of these goals was the dream to bring all 5 Somalis identities under one nation. They were able to unite two of the five. There were many that expected the opposite to happen. During this time it was expectations for Somalia to reconcile. There were 16 international conferences supported by all the major actors including the United Nations, in-country and out of country actors. All were well represented at these conferences, although the end result of all the conferences has been failure, with no tangible results. My research is an attempt to answer the question why these initiatives failed. Historically, Somalia crises have been able to be resolved peacefully. In this instance there has been a magnitude of civil

violence, unrest, and a lack of trust worthy leadership. I found this was in part due to the fact there were too many self-interested partners.

My other findings include the fact that there was no application of the rule of law. There is a need for in-country truth and reconciliation conferences. During the peace talks there was a lack of using indigenous models of reconciliation. Somalis were attempting Western models of conflict resolution, but not their own. There was no use of tribal or Islamic reconciliation techniques. I conclude that there is no sovereign state of Somalia, because there is still no collective Somali identity. Somalia needs to develop the infrastructure for grass-roots governance, disarmament, and a locally held national conference.

***Tanenbaum's Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution***  
Sheherazade Jafari, Assistant Program Director, Religion and Conflict Resolution  
Program, Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding

The Tanenbaum Center looks to take a practical approach to facing problems of religion. An example of our work includes working with healthcare practitioners to help them to understand the religious needs of their patients. The goal in these programs is not to change their minds toward one religion or another, but to help the doctor understand that many of peoples' health decisions are based on religion, for example fasting.

We have three main programming areas, religious diversity in the workplace, religion and diversity in education, and religion and conflict resolution. This last program operates on the premise that religion can be a positive force in resolving conflict. Grassroots religious peacemakers have been irreplaceable actors for building peace. These peacemakers have a set of criteria to meet. They are religiously motivated, working in areas of armed conflict, at risk, on the ground and yet still are relatively unknown for their work. One of projects of the Tanenbaum Center is to work on publishing a book which includes personal interviews and dialogues with these peacemakers. Our book is for two target audiences: diplomats/policy makers and international relations students. These religious peacemaking techniques have already been picked up and used by secular peacemakers as well. We've seen in the work these peacemakers have done, using religion as a primary resource in their work which is something we want to support and continue to work against misunderstanding of.

***How Sufi Establishments and Concepts of Peace helped the Balkans Transition from Byzantine to Ottoman Rule***

Julianne Hazen, MA candidate, International Peace and Conflict Resolution, American University, MS Teaching and Curriculum, University of Rochester

Sufis came to the Balkans with respect for the community, not with the intent to conquer it. Sufis established tariqas, including a sheikh or murid (disciple) sent into Balkans to establish a place for religious study. "Love is the inspiration for one on the Sufi path." Tawhid is another key principle of sufism. The Sufis came to the Balkans with respect for other humans. One of the first Sufis in the area was Sari Saltuk of the Bektashi order.

Balkans had very elevated spiritual beliefs so when the sheikhs came and showed signs of personal transcendence, the mostly Christian population attributed it to saints. Sheikhs provided guidance to everyone regards less of the religion. The Sufis lived in communal lodgings or tekijas which became intellectual and spiritual centers. Traveling dervishes allowed this to spread the word. Some of the Sufi practices were already present in Byzantine society.

Saint Gregory of Sinai set up Hesycham Movement (quietude) in 1330 in Bulgaria. Sufis encouraged Balkan participation and introduced Islam in a non-threatening manner to create new ummah in Balkans.

### *The Pursuit of Justice through Nonviolence in Bahrain*

J. Kristen Urban, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Political Science Department, Mount St. Mary's University, Maryland

Islam came to Bahrain in 629 AD. Bahrain is officially a Muslim state with Shari'a providing guidelines for family law. Bahrain today has good internal and international relations and promoting global citizenship. It is the banking center for the Middle East and a model democracy, but some plebiscites and reports have the watch dogs worried that the country is going backwards in terms of democratic governance.

Bahrain has an educated citizenry. Forty percent of the population compromised of an expatriate community including a large south/southeast Asian workforce. The Bahraini population is compromised by both tribal and monarchical origins. The Bahraini *intifada* in the 1990's was violent and resulted in the disenfranchised numerous populations.

This uprising also resulted in the move from a central authoritarian government to constitutional monarchy governing the country. The opposition today opposes the amount of power that is given to the king. Today the governing structure is composed of bicameral constitution with king in power, and a parliament where those in power are generally aligned with al Khalifa monarchy. The voting districts have been drawn up by the king in a gerrymandering way with under representation of Shiite interests. In terms of Shiites and Sunnis being treated as equals, schools in Bahrain are supposed to give new courses which teach that all sects should be given respect. The 1979 the Iranian revolution was a watershed, as it led to a coup attempt on Al Khalifas. This led them to be more paranoid and more oppressive. Today's opposition was not supportive of lagging democratic progress and led to mobilization by citizens, international human rights support has also poured in.

Questions:

**In 1994, I was in Bosnia opening a hospital where everyone who wasn't Croatian Catholic was ghettoized. It was tragic seeing some of the pictures. The spirituality of the place was overwhelming. We brought Croatians to hear testimonies of women who had been raped whose children had been killed...we broke bread with the two groups, so your presentation was very moving. Sheherazade, who funds the Center?**

Sheherazade: We receive funding from individuals and several foundations.

**Sheherazade, are you focusing on armed violent direct conflict?**

Sheherazade: Yes, we focus on areas of armed conflict with various activities.

**Dr. Mukhtar, as far as Somalia is concerned, I know it is not Sudan, Ethiopia or Eritria, but it is East Africa. What is it that the US government wants in this part of the world?**

Dr. Mukhtar: The Horn of Africa has been one of the major crises in history. Today there are several competing global powers emerging in its location. The conflict is about geopolitics. The Horn of Africa has representatives all of the faiths. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Western powers have more opportunities to engage in the region. Somalia today is in a situation that is indescribable. The country has one of the longest coastlines, which could provide a safe haven for terrorism or nuclear waste dumping. The U.S. interests probably lay there it could be a concern for terrorism.

**Dr. Kristen, you mentioned the party Al Wefaq, they now have 10 or more seats, have they been affected by Hizbollah or anyone else?**

Kristen: Members of Al Wefaq are conservatives some are even Marxists, but they are all Shia. The people I've spoken to in the party say the threat is nonsense- the king is king, we don't want a king with no powers but we want the people to have a voice as well. There recently has been violence in some of the village areas. The youth are getting frustrated. Some are top of their classes and can not get jobs in their field. There are no government jobs, and no jobs in economic development that accommodate Shia.

**Since the US supported the Shias' of Iraq. How does or has that impacted Bahraini policies?**

Kristen: US is fiscally invested in Bahrain so they won't do anything to screw up relations with the king. Bahrain likes having the US there too as it solidifies the Al Khalifa's position.

***Final Thoughts:***

**Mohammed Abu-Nimer:** I have to take some time to thank the many, many people who have made this conference possible.

One of the questions I wanted to pose to you as a group is, what are you leaving with now that you have been with us for two days? I know you came up with something or came in with something, what thoughts or impressions do you leave with?

Comment: I feel refueled by good thoughts, especially understanding nonviolence and different contributions toward peacemaking and coexistence. I have also discovered how important communication is to these processes.

Comment: I've done interfaith work before, but I've never been in an intra-Muslim environment. I thought the intra-Muslim gender panel was especially enlightening. I think that this is truly relevant work, and we're all peacemakers.

Comment: This conference is refueling for sure. I would like to make the suggestion that next year we should take a whole panel and look at Islam and altruism.

Comment: I feel there were many gaps in the intra-faith dialogue. I think those are challenges for thinking minds and I believe if more and more communities between this intra-Islamic faith come together, then these potholes can be covered faster and in qualitative manner.

Comment: I've learned of a lot of official resources we have to help people with problems or tragedies in their lives. So really my hope is that the resources I've seen here, how to make peace, how to negotiate, can turn into action. If we could be more proactive, I have a hope that by our third or fourth conference, we will come with good news that some of the crisis areas of the world have been solved.

Comment: This is my second year coming to this conference and there are two things I would like to say. I do not see a representation of African-American women who have been active in Muslim communities for a long time. Secondly, is with the media? I think we need to add representation of both these groups.

**Mohammed Abu-Nimer:** Thank you these are really great suggestions. Are there any others? The idea was to make a space for people to talk, how would you alter this space of change it next year?

Comment: I will be happy to assist wherever I can, especially when you think that next year will be 2008 an election year and a critical year for all of us.

Comment: I am so happy there was enough time between panels for us to network and get to know each other. I would suggest a panel on who is making the money? For example when looking at the strategic position of Somalia, we need to be looking at the Trans African pipeline that is being proposed. We can not run around as gerbils trying to make peace when we don't know about the conflict and violence root casue.

Comment: I think we need more people at the policy level to be involved. The whole structure of the conference needs to be more streamlined.

Comment: More literature on these issues of gender issues, ethnic issues, etc., would be really helpful. Sharing the presenters' papers from would be great as well!

**Mohammed Abu-Nimer:** We're going to try to put stuff on the website as much as possible. So presenters expect an email from us.

Comment: I really appreciate the effort at bringing together Muslims from around the world for this.

Comment: It would be good to have women from Iraq, from Palestine to talk about their personal experiences instead of having someone else talking from them.

**Mohammed Abu-Nimer:** I would like to thank you all again for coming and for your support.