

OIC

Issued by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

May - August 2024

Issue 55

Journal



Fund for Youth Support and Employment in Sahel
Region and Lake Chad Basin Under Consideration



Islamic Summit in Banjul

Calls on the World to Recognize the State of Palestine



Banjul, the capital of the Republic of The Gambia, is located on St. Mary's Island, at the mouth of the Gambia River on the Atlantic Ocean. The coastal city is home to the State's official institutions, the Central Market, and the country's vital facilities.



OUR MESSAGE

Israel is Killing All Life in Gaza

We stand today in front of an enemy whose crimes are unprecedented in history; an enemy whose hatred is egregiously manifested in the ruins of war; the hatred that the Israeli occupation forces have propagated in each and every corner where they killed a child, a woman, an elderly person, or a civilian, whether a paramedic, a doctor, or any other person working in any of the remaining service facilities in the devastated Gaza Strip.

Israel, the occupying power, has killed all life in Gaza, both morally and materially, having left no place in the Strip where it has not committed crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing, with all the resulting woes, calamities and massacres.

Alarmed by these unprecedented crimes, I have devoted my editorial in two consecutive issues of the OIC Journal to the Palestinian Cause. The Journal, in fact, provides extensive coverage of developments in Palestine, seeking, in particular, to expose the moral vacuum of the occupation forces. In this editorial, I will review the actions and moves undertaken by the OIC with a view to halting the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip.

On several occasions, I urged all countries to increase funding for UNRWA, so that it can pursue its vital role which is not only limited to providing humanitarian and essential services to Palestinian refugees, but also contributes to enhancing stability in the region; thereby confirming the international community's commitment to protecting the rights of Palestinian refugees and its responsibility for providing a just solution to their Cause.

Having previously welcomed the temporary measures ordered by the International Court of Justice, and I reiterate that now, I renew my call on all States to use all forms of influence in order to pressure the occupation into full and immediate compliance with the ICJ's Orders for the prevention of further acts of genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. I also reiterate my call for the enforcement of international criminal law in order to prosecute the occupation and hold it accountable for all its crimes perpetrated throughout the occupied Palestinian territory.

Guided by the recommendations set out in the Resolution adopted by the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit, held in Riyadh on November 11, 2023, the OIC General Secretariat began coordinating and following up efforts, at all political, media, legal, and humanitarian levels, in the service of the Palestinian Cause.

The efforts and contacts I made with high-ranking officials proceeded from the OIC's position calling for the immediate cessation of the Israeli aggression, the necessity of allowing entry of adequate humanitarian aid to all parts of the Gaza Strip, and the rejection of the Israeli occupation's attempts to displace the Palestinian people.

The efforts undertaken by the Arab and Islamic Ministerial Contact Group, including the visits to international organizations and influential countries, particularly the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (and I had the honor to participate in some of those visits), have succeeded in confirming the solid and unified Arab and Islamic position on the international arena, in defense of the Palestinian people and in support of their legitimate rights. They also sought to engage the responsibility of the international community to put an end to the Israeli occupation's crimes and aggressive policies.

Over the past months, the Islamic Group succeeded in its efforts to have the UN Security Council adopt Resolutions 2720 and 2712, in addition to two resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly. These resolutions stress the need for immediate, safe, and adequate delivery of aid for Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, as well as for an immediate humanitarian truce leading to an immediate ceasefire. The Islamic Group also succeeded in having the General Assembly issue a resolution on May 10, 2024, affirming that the State of Palestine is qualified for full membership in the United Nations, and granting it additional rights and privileges even before the Security Council adopts a resolution in this regard.

On February 24, 2024, the OIC held, in Istanbul, Turkiye, an Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers to discuss the Israeli attacks on journalists in Palestine. Furthermore, the General Secretariat launched the OIC Media Monitoring Unit, recommended by the Riyadh Summit Resolution, to monitor the Israeli crimes against the Palestinians. A website was launched to that end, in which all media materials produced by the Monitoring Unit are regularly published, including weekly media reports, press releases, videos, and infographics, which are all posted on the OIC Social Media.

The General Secretariat also began coordinating with Member States to operationalize the Legal Monitoring Unit, established pursuant to the Riyadh Summit Resolution, by forming an internal follow-up committee. I avail myself of this opportunity to thank all Member States that took the initiative to nominate a legal expert in response to the General Secretariat's request. This will help to promptly operationalize the Legal Monitoring Unit, designed to document the Israeli crimes and prepare legal pleadings that can be submitted to the International Criminal Court.



Hissein Brahim Taha

Secretary-General of the
Organization of Islamic
Cooperation

Israel, the occupying power, has killed all life in Gaza, having left no place in the Strip where it has not committed crimes against humanity.

I reiterate my call for the enforcement of international criminal law in order to prosecute the occupation and hold it accountable for all its crimes perpetrated throughout the occupied Palestinian territory

OIC Journal

Issued by

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation

Chief Editor & General Supervisor
Dr. Abdelhamid Salhi

Editor
Bashir Sa'ad Abdullahi

Layout & Design
Mohamed Abdelqader Qalaba

Advisory Board
Amb. Tareg Bakheet
Hassan Basri Arsalan

Translation
Amgad Hassan
Yahya El-Khatib
Mohamed Essatti

Address:

Madinah Road, P.O. Box 178,
Jeddah-21411, Saudi Arabia
Tel: 012 6515222 Fax: 012 6512288
Telx.: 601366 Islami SJ.
Website: www.oic-oci.org

For comments, enquiries
E-mail: journal@oic-oci.org

**OIC Permanent Observer
to the UN New York Office**

320 East - 51st Street
New York 10022
New York, USA
www.oicun.org

oic@un.int
**OIC Permanent Observer
to the UN Geneva Office**

ICC-20, Route Pre-Bois - Case Postal 1818
CH 1215, Geneve, Suisse
www.oic-un.org
oic@oic-un.org

The views expressed by the writers/authors of the articles published in the OIC Journal do not necessarily represent the views of the OIC, but are the personal views of the authors themselves. However, the OIC reserves the right/discretion to amend, revise, edit, delete or scrutinize any part or portion of the text as and wherever deemed necessary.

OIC Organs

Standing Committees:

Al-Quds Committee

Standing Committee for Information And Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), Dakar (<https://comiac.gouv.sn/>)

Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC), Istanbul (<https://www.comcec.org/>)

Standing Committee For Scientific And Technological Cooperation (COMSTech), Islamabad (<https://comstech.org/>)

Subsidiary Organs:

The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), Ankara (<https://www.sesric.org/>)

Research Centre For Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Istanbul (<https://www.ircica.org/>)

Islamic University of Technology, Dhaka (<https://www.iutoic-dhaka.edu/>)

The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade, Casablanca (<https://icdt-cidc.org/>)

The International Islamic Fiqh Academy, Jeddah (<https://iifa-aifi.org/en>)

Islamic Solidarity Fund, Jeddah (<https://isf-fsi.org>)

Islamic Civil Aviation Council, Tunis

Specialized Institutions:

Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah (<https://www.isdb.org/>)

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Rabat (<https://icesco.org/en/>)

The Union OIC News Agencies, Jeddah (<https://una-oic.org/en/>)

OIC States Broadcasting Union, Jeddah (<https://osbu-oic.org/>)

The Islamic Committee of the International Crescent, Benghazi (<https://icic-oic.org/en/index.htm>)

Islamic Organization for Food Security, Astana (<https://www.iofs.org.kz/>)

Labour Center of the OIC, Baku

Organization of Islamic Cooperation Standing Committee on Scientific, Technological Cooperation (COMSTech Secretariat) Islamabad (<https://comstech.org/>)

Women Development Organization, Cairo (<https://www.wdo-odf.org/en/>)

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation Center for Cooperation and Coordination between Police Agencies, Istanbul

Affiliated Institutions:

Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture, Karachi (<https://www.iccia.com/>)

Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities, Makkah (<https://www.oicc.org/en/>)

Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation, Riyadh (<https://issf.sa/en/>)

Organization of the Islamic Ship-owners Association, Jeddah

World Federation of Arabo-Islamic International Schools, Cairo (<https://facebook.com/wfaiis.oic.schools>)

Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum, Istanbul (<https://www icyforum.org/>)

International Union of Muslim Scouts, Jeddah (<https://msihs.org>)

Islamic World Academy of Sciences, Amman (<https://www.iasworld.org/>)

The Federation of Consultants from Islamic Countries, Istanbul (<https://www.thefcic.org/home>)

General Council For Islamic Banks And Financial Institutions, Manama (<https://www.cibafi.org/Home>)

Federation of Contractors from Islamic Countries, Riyadh

OIC Computer Emergency Response Team, Cyberjaya, Malaysia (<https://www.oic-cert.org/en/index.html>)

Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries, Istanbul (<https://www.smiic.org/en>)

Real Estate Union in Islamic States, Djibouti

OIC Broadcasting Regulatory Authorities Forum, Ankara (<https://www.oic-ibraf.org/>)

International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur (<https://www.iiu.edu.my/v2/>)

Association of Tax Authorities of Islamic Countries, Khartoum Global Forum for Moderation, Amman (<https://wasatyae.net/en>)

OIC Media Forum, Türkiye King Faisal University, Chad, Ndjamena (<https://urft.net/>)

The Islamic Halal Bodies Accreditation Forum, Saudi Arabia

Islamic Universities:

Islamic University in Niger, Niamey (<https://universite-say.com/>)

Islamic University in Uganda, Mbale (<https://www.iuiu.ac.ug/>)

Independent Organs:

Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), Jeddah (<https://www.oic-iphr.org/>)



CONTENTS

Special file

- 5 OIC Secretary-General reviews Islamic world issues at Banjul Summit
- 8 CFM preparatory for Banjul Summit calls for further cooperation and solidarity
- 10 Banjul Summit: Gambian President receives OIC Secretary-General
- 13 Islamic world expresses solidarity with the Sudanese people and their government amid continuing conflict

In-Focus

- 15 Refugee crisis and food insecurity plague Sahel and Lake Chad countries

Palestine File

- 16 Extraordinary CFM discusses the ongoing Israeli aggression on Gaza
- 22 Extraordinary ICIM in Istanbul addresses Israeli aggressions against journalists
- 26 OIC monitors Israeli crimes in a weekly report

Islamophobia

- 32 A new UN resolution strengthens global fight against Islamophobia

OIC News

- 36 OIC participates in the Meeting of Special Envoys for Afghanistan

Special File

- 40 OIC and Gulf Research Centre hold Symposium on "Ramadan: A Collective Rite for Muslims"
- 41 OIC Secretary-General congratulates the Islamic World on the advent of the Holy Month of Ramadan

Humanitarian Affairs

- 46 Humanitarian projects in Somalia
- 47 ICIC meeting addresses Gaza Tragedy

Women

- 48 On International Women's Day: Secretary-General honors female staff members of the OIC General Secretariat

Science and Technology

- 52 OIC holds first coordination meeting with its five universities

Organs

- 57 OIC Secretary-General: ISF occupies a prominent place among humanitarian relief institutions



12 Saudi Arabia: A track record of achievements as Chair of the 14th Islamic Summit



31 Qatar: A world-class destination for conference tourism in the Middle East



39 Marrakesh, City of the «Seven Patrons», Culture Capital in the Islamic World for 2024



42 Ramadan and the Awakening Project



58 "A Ramadan Journey" at ICESCO headquarters





15th Islamic Summit Convened in the Presence of OIC Leaders

The 15th Islamic Summit Conference of the OIC Member States was held on May 4-5, 2024 in Banjul, Capital of The Gambia, in the presence of their Majesties, Excellencies, and Highnesses, Heads of State and Government of the OIC Member States, along with high-level dignitaries from non-member states. "Enhancing Unity and Solidarity through Dialogue for Sustainable Development" was the theme chosen for this session.

The opening session was addressed by the Chair of the 15th Islamic Summit, President of The Gambia, H.E. Mr. Adama Barrow, who, as Chair of the Summit, pledged to promote unity, solidarity, and sustainable development within the Islamic world. He indicated that he will prioritize initiatives designed to enhance economic cooperation, foster cultural exchange, and address pressing issues, such as poverty and access to education and healthcare.

In his speech to the Summit, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, reaffirmed that the Palestinian Cause remains the OIC's central issue, and urged the Member States to step up efforts in order to exhort the international community to

assume its responsibility toward putting an end to the ongoing aggression and genocide against the Palestinian people. "Guided by the OIC resolutions regarding the Palestinian Cause," he said, "we are called upon to redouble our efforts in order to mobilize the international community towards stopping the aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, putting an end to the Israeli occupation's policies, and holding it accountable". He also called on Member States to continue to mobilize international support for the recognition of the State of Palestine and help it obtain full membership in the United Nations.

The Secretary-General announced the establishment of a Media Observatory at the OIC General Secretariat to document and expose, in the media, the consequences of the brutal Israeli aggression, including the number of martyrs, injured, and detainees, along with all other crimes of the Israeli occupation. At the same time, the OIC is working on activating the Legal Observatory to document the Israeli crimes, pursuant to the Resolution adopted by the Extraordinary Joint Arab-Islamic Summit, recently held in

Riyadh.

The Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC's commitment to addressing the pressing political and humanitarian challenges facing the OIC Member States. "Supporting the right to self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir," he said, "is a priority for the OIC. My Special Representative to Jammu and Kashmir has been following up on this issue, primarily through his visits to Azad Jammu and Kashmir and to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to take stock of developments and submit reports thereon, pursuant to the relevant Summit and CFM resolutions, in addition to the numerous meetings held by the Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir".

With regard to Afghanistan, the Secretary-General noted that the OIC has continued its engagement within the framework of its humanitarian approach and its constructive dialogue with the de facto authorities in Afghanistan. He urged Member States to generously contribute to the OIC's humanitarian efforts, particularly in Afghanistan, through the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund (AHTF) under the supervision and management of the Islamic Development Bank.



OIC Secretary-General Reviews Islamic World Issues before the Banjul Summit

In his speech at the opening session of the 15th Islamic Summit, held in Banjul, The Gambia, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, expressed his congratulations to H.E. President Adama Barrow and to the Gambian Government and people on Gambia's assumption of the chairmanship of the 15th Islamic Summit, wishing it every success. He also extended his deepest thanks, appreciation, and gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its chairmanship of the 14th Islamic Summit, particularly to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and his Crown Prince, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud.

The Secretary-General indicated that the OIC "has dispatched delegations of Muslim scholars to Afghanistan, along with leaders from the IPHRC and the Women Development Organization, to discuss issues related to girls' education and women's work.

Recognizing the importance of dialogue and reconciliation, the Secretary-General emphasized the OIC's support for the adoption of this approach for conflict resolution in Member States such as Yemen, Libya, Sudan, and the Sahel region.

The Secretary-General stressed that preserving the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Member States is a crucial issue. He paid tribute to all Member States that have taken initiatives and made commendable efforts to help achieve peaceful solutions to the situation in some countries, by encouraging the conflicting parties to engage in dialogue. He underlined, in this regard, that a political solution remains the only path to resolve the Syrian crisis, indicating that contribution to conflict prevention and resolution through peaceful means, especially mediation, is a goal that the OIC seeks to achieve by strengthening its capacities in this regard.

On the other hand, the Secretary-General affirmed that combating terrorism and extremism remains at the forefront of the OIC's concerns and requires adopting a multi-dimensional approach. Countering Islamophobia and religious hatred, which have been prevalent in recent times, causing deep concern in the Islamic world, especially the desecration of the Holy Quran, is also a key priority for the OIC, which has undertaken diligent work in this regard. The OIC held numerous meetings that yielded significant

resolutions. The OIC and its Member States also undertook several initiatives at the international level, one of the most prominent outcomes of which being the UNGA's proclamation of March 15th as "International Day to Combat Islamophobia".

The Secretary-General commended the significant role played by The Gambia in defending the Cause of the Rohingya Muslim community before the International Court of Justice. He called on Member States to contribute to the financial costs needed for the proceedings, especially in view of the significant achievements made in this legal case. He reiterated deep gratitude to Bangladesh and other Member States for hosting Rohingya refugees on their territories.

In the field of humanitarian action, the Secretary-General stressed that the General Secretariat and the Government of Saudi Arabia are currently making arrangements for organizing the Donors' Conference for the Sahel region and the Lake Chad Basin, with the aim of mobilizing adequate resources to support refugees and displaced people.

OIC Leaders Affirm Their Stance against the Genocide Committed against Palestinians



At the close of the 15th Islamic Summit, held in Banjul, The Gambia, on May 4-5, 2024, the Leaders of the Islamic World affirmed their standing against the crime of genocide being committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people in the besieged Gaza Strip and throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, as well as against Israel's plans to forcibly displace them from their land, through killing, blockade, starvation, and mass and systematic destruction of civilian properties and infrastructures, including health and education facilities.

The Final Communiqué adopted by the Summit demanded an immediate, permanent, and unconditional ceasefire, the cessation of the Israeli aggression on the Palestinian people in Gaza, and the immediate implementation of the UNSC Resolution 2728 (2024). It also demanded the provision of humanitarian and medical aid and relief, the provision of water, electricity, and shelter, and the opening of humanitarian corridors, through all possible means, to allow unimpeded and adequate delivery of urgent assistance to the Gaza Strip. It called for compliance with UNSC Resolution 2720

(2023) demanding immediate, safe, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip.

The Final Communiqué affirmed the State of Palestine's full sovereignty over Al-Quds Al-Sharif, its eternal capital, and expressed its rejection and standing against any Israeli decisions or measures aimed at Judaizing the holy city and consolidating its colonial occupation of it, being null, void and illegal under international law and the relevant UN Resolutions.

The Summit stressed the responsibility of all States to fully comply with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice in the case filed by the Republic of South Africa relating to Israel's violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It called for refraining from any measures contributing to the perpetuation of this heinous crime and supported all international efforts aimed at prosecuting and holding the Israeli occupation accountable for its crimes.

The Conference affirmed its respect for the legitimacy of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, headed

by H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas, and commended his efforts for Palestinian national reconciliation. It called on Palestinian factions and forces to expedite the process of national reconciliation and appreciated the efforts of Egypt and all other efforts exerted in this regard.

The Conference affirmed its support for the UNRWA and its rejection of any impingement on its role and denounced all the pressures and blackmail to which the Agency is exposed amid the tragic conditions in the Gaza Strip and the scarcity of resources and aid. It renewed its solidarity with Lebanon and affirmed its rejection and condemnation of Israel's continued attacks on the Lebanese territories and its violations of Lebanon's sovereignty by land, sea, and air. The Final Communiqué reiterated its commitment to Yemen's unity, sovereignty, security, stability, and territorial integrity, rejected any form of interference in the country's internal affairs, and renewed its support for international and regional efforts to reach a comprehensive political solution to the Yemeni crisis.

Islamic Summit Affirms Support for the Security of Sahel and Lake Chad Basin Countries



The 15th Islamic Summit Conference, held in Banjul, The Gambia, expressed its support for the security, stability, unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin countries, as well as its rejection of any external interference in these countries. It also expressed deep concern over the fragile security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin countries, which are still subjected to recurrent attacks by terrorist groups, causing human losses and massive displacement of populations, and exacerbating the existing humanitarian challenges and climate change impacts.

The Conference underlined the need to adopt a multi-dimensional approach to address these crises, one that combines security, diplomatic, and development efforts. It called on all Member States and the international community to provide the necessary assistance to those countries so that they can overcome and eliminate terrorism, and contribute to improving their economic and humanitarian conditions. In this regard, it requested the Member States to support the General Secretariat in empowering and strengthening its Mission in Niamey, so that it can provide the necessary services to the

Member States in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin region.

The Final Communiqué expressed deep concern over the alarming security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin region. It commended the implementation of the Women Empowerment Project in areas hosting refugees and displaced persons in Burkina Faso, and took note, with appreciation, of the efforts made by the OIC General Secretariat and the Islamic Solidarity Fund for the implementation of this project, in coordination with the OIC Regional Office in Niamey. It urged Member States and the OIC General Secretariat to strengthen the capacities of this Office by providing it with the requisite human and financial means that enable it to effectively carry out the tasks entrusted to it, and provide support to the Member States' efforts in this region.

The Final Communiqué expressed deep concern over the rise of the extremist discourse inciting terrorism among young people in the Sahel region and Lake Chad Basin, especially amid unemployment and lack of training and qualification. It welcomed the establishment of the OIC Fund to support young people in the Sahel and

Lake Chad region, as part of an integrated strategy to combat extremism, promote the true, moderate understanding of Islam, and enhance the culture of tolerance and moderation. It commended the efforts of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Chair of the 49th CFM, in implementing the relevant CFM recommendations, and took note of the outcomes of the workshop held on February 7-8, 2024 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat to discuss the draft Statute of the Fund. It requested all Member States and relevant OIC organs and institutions to support this Fund when its Statute is approved as a specialized institution by the next CFM session, and to complete the procedures for its activation, which would enhance the OIC's role in supporting the efforts of Member States in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin region.

The Conference expressed appreciation to the Government of Saudi Arabia for its plan to host the Donors' Conference to alleviate the suffering of IDPs and refugees in the Sahel and Lake Chad Region, scheduled to be held in the last quarter of 2024, with the aim of mobilizing resources to support refugees, IDPs, and other affected people.

CFM Preparatory for Banjul Summit Calls for Further Cooperation and Solidarity



The meeting of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers preparatory for the 15th Islamic Summit Conference was held in Banjul, The Gambia, on May 2, 2024. Addressing the meeting, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, expressed his sincere congratulations to The Gambia on taking over the Chair of the Islamic Summit. He thanked the Gambian government and people for the successful preparation to host the Summit.

The Secretary-General extended his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the leading role it has played and the valuable efforts it has exerted during its chairmanship of the 14th Islamic Summit. He expressed his deep gratitude for the Kingdom's support to the OIC and its continuous interest in all its activities, under the generous patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince, and Prime Minister.

The Secretary-General stressed that the challenges facing the OIC require stepping

up efforts, cooperation, and solidarity, especially with regard to the Palestinian issue, the central and unifying Cause of the joint Islamic action system. He highlighted the serious developments facing the Palestinian Cause, especially the ongoing aggression on Gaza, and the escalating crimes of deliberate killing, colonial settlement, Judaization of the city of Al-Quds, and violation of the sanctity of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Secretary-General addressed the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and the lack of progress in achieving the legitimate aspirations of the Kashmiri people for self-determination. He expressed hope that the OIC's engagement with the de facto authorities in Afghanistan will pave the way for those authorities towards achieving the OIC's and the international community's expectations in terms of human rights, women's rights, education, and combating terrorism. He stressed the OIC's determination to redouble efforts in line with its commitment to the Afghan people.

The Secretary-General went on to say: "We have closely followed developments in Ye-

men, Sudan, Libya, the Sahel region, Somalia, and Syria, as well as Azerbaijan's liberation of its entire territory. We will pursue our support for the issues of Muslim communities and minorities in non-member states, in accordance with the OIC Charter." He also indicated that he is closely following developments related to Islamophobia and the acts of insult against Islam and its symbols, especially against the sanctity of the Holy Qur'an. The opening session was also addressed by H.E. Eng. Waleed bin Abdulkarim El-Khereiji, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who commended the efforts made by The Gambia to ensure the successful organization of the 15th Islamic Summit in Banjul.

For his part, H.E. Mr. Mamadou Tangara, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad, delivered a speech, in his capacity as Chair of the CFM preparatory meeting, in which he welcomed the delegations of the participating countries, and emphasized the role of the OIC in addressing the various challenges facing Member States.

SOM Preparatory for Banjul Summit: The Summit Takes Place at a Critical Juncture



The Senior Officials Meeting preparatory for the 15th session of the Islamic Summit Conference was held in Banjul, The Gambia, on April 30, 2024. The meeting aimed at discussing the documents of the 15th Islamic Summit and submitting its report to the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, which would in turn submit a report to the Summit.

Addressing the meeting, the OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, H.E. Mr. Yousef Al-Dobeay, expressed sincere congratulations to the Republic of The Gambia for taking over the Chair of the 15th Islamic Summit. He reiterated the OIC's thanks to the Government of the Gambia for the successful arrangements made for hosting this Summit. He also expressed his profound appreciation and gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its valuable and appreciable efforts and initiatives during its chairmanship of the 14th Islamic Summit, thereby demonstrating its strong commitment to joint Islamic action and to the OIC mandate. He commended the continued support offered by Saudi Arabia, the OIC host-country, to the Organiza-

tion, under the generous patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

Mr. Al-Dobeay noted that the 15th Islamic Summit is being held at a critical juncture marked by significant developments in all issues on the OIC agenda, foremost among which is the Palestinian issue, the central Cause of the OIC. He indicated that the OIC would address all issues relating to peace and security, Muslim minorities and communities in non-member States, along with legal, humanitarian, social, cultural, economic, science and technology, information, administrative, and financial matters. He added that the Secretary-General's Report submitted to the Summit, the draft Final Communiqué, and the draft Banjul Declaration covered all of these issues.

The Banjul Summit offered a unique opportunity for Member States to enhance their cooperation in order to promote joint Islamic action and engage in constructive dialogue on global issues and challenges facing the Islamic Ummah.

At the beginning of the meeting, H.E. Dr. Abdalla Altayer, Advisor at the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Multilateral Agency for International Affairs, spoke on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the 14th Islamic Summit. He reviewed the valuable efforts and initiatives undertaken by Saudi Arabia, along with its achievements in the economic and scientific fields, and the numerous events and conferences, spanning various sectors, organized by the Kingdom during its chairmanship of the previous session. He took this opportunity to reiterate his support for the efforts of the OIC's General Secretariat.

For his part, Mr. Lang Yabou, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad, speaking on behalf of his country hosting the 15th Islamic Summit, welcomed the delegates of the Member States. He affirmed that his country is sparing no effort to ensure the success of the Summit, held under the theme of: "Enhancing Unity and Solidarity through Dialogue for Sustainable Development".



Banjul Summit: Gambian President Receives OIC Secretary-General

The President of the Republic of The Gambia, H.E. Mr. Adama Barrow, received, on May 3, 2024, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, on the sidelines of the 15th Islamic Summit in Banjul, The Gambia.

The meeting focused on strengthening cooperation between The Gambia and the OIC, particularly as regards the final preparations for the Islamic Summit Conference, held on May 4-5, 2024.

The Secretary-General congratulated The Gambia for the excellent preparations and facilities put in place for the successful hosting of the Summit. He assured of the OIC's continued efforts towards the success of the Summit, and thanked the President for Gambia's active role within the OIC. As The Gambia assumes chairmanship of the 15th Islamic Summit, President Adama Barrow expressed his commitment to advancing the OIC agenda and fostering greater unity and solidarity among Member States during his tenure and beyond. He reaffirmed Gambia's commitment to the principles and objectives of the OIC, and its determination to strengthen cooperation among the OIC Member States in the face

of common challenges.

On the sidelines of the 15th Islamic Summit, held in Banjul, The Gambia, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ishaq Dar. The meeting discussed the issues on the agenda of the 15th Islamic Summit, including support for the Palestinian Cause, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, and Islamophobia, and stressed the key role of the OIC in promoting joint Islamic action. The meeting also addressed bilateral relations between the OIC and Pakistan.

On the sidelines of the 15th Islamic Summit, held in Banjul, The Gambia, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Mauritanians Abroad, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug. The meeting discussed the issues on the agenda of the 15th Islamic Summit. It also addressed the continued cooperation and consultation between the General Secretariat and Mauritania, Chair of the 49th CFM session, for the implementation of the CFM Resolutions. The Secretary-General took this opportunity

to congratulate Mauritania on assuming the presidency of the African Union.

On the sidelines of the 15th Islamic Summit, held in Banjul, The Gambia, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, witnessed, on May 4, 2024, together with H.E. Mr. Carlos Pinto Pereira, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, the signing ceremony of 9 agreements and conventions of the OIC and its institutions.

The nine agreements were the following: the Statute of the OIC Women Development Organization, the Statute of the OIC Labor Center; the Statute of the International Islamic Court of Justice; The Agreement Establishing the Islamic Committee of the International Crescent; the Agreement on OIC Immunities and Privileges; the OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism; the Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam; the Statute of the OIC Center for Police Coordination and Cooperation; and the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Convention of the OIC Member States on Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Cooperation.



Sierra Leone President Receives OIC Secretary-General At 15th Islamic Summit

The President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, H.E. Mr. Julius Maada Bio, received, on May 5, 2024, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, on the sidelines of the 15th Islamic Summit Conference in Banjul, The Gambia.

During the meeting, the Secretary-General expressed his appreciation for Sierra Leone's support to the OIC's activities, and thanked the President for his country's support to the Palestinian Cause. The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on May 3, 2024, in Banjul, with the Minister

of African Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Senegal, H.E. Ms. Yassine Fall.

The meeting addressed the issues on the agenda of the 15th Islamic Summit, support for the work of the OIC, the Palestinian Cause, food security, reactivating the Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), and support for the institutions of joint Islamic action.

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met with H.E. Ismatullo Nasreddin, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of the

Republic of Tajikistan. On the sidelines of the Banjul Summit, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met with H.E. Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye. The meeting discussed the items on the agenda of the 15th Islamic Summit, including the issue of Islamophobia, support for the Palestinian Cause, and the humanitarian and medical aid provided by Türkiye to support the Palestinians and UNRWA.

OIC General Secretariat and Senegalese News Agency (APS) Sign MoU on Media Cooperation

On the sidelines of the 15th session of the Islamic Summit, held on May 4- 5, 2024, the OIC General Secretariat and the Senegalese News Agency (APS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Media Cooperation. The MoU aims to strengthen cooperation between the two parties in terms of media content, information exchange, databases, information collection, vocational training, and increased media visibility for the OIC.

The MoU was signed by Dr. Abdelhamid Salhi, Acting Director of the Information Department at the OIC General Secretariat, and Mr. Thierno Ahmadou SY, Director-General of APS. The signing



of this MoU is a significant step in strengthening relations between the OIC and Senegal, a founding Member State of the OIC.

During the signing ceremony, Dr. Salhi highlighted the crucial role of the media in promoting common values, dialogue, and solidarity among Islamic peoples and countries. For his part, the Director-General of APS expressed his gratitude to the OIC General Secretariat for its support and cooperation. He affirmed that the APS stands ready to contribute to the dissemination of information on the OIC's activities, initiatives, and achievements in response to the challenges facing the Islamic world.



Saudi Arabia: A Track Record of Achievements as Chair of the 14th Islamic Summit

During the 15th session of the Islamic Summit Conference, held in Banjul, The Gambia, in May 2024, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reviewed its significant track record of major achievements, actions, and initiatives undertaken in various fields, as Chair of the 14th session of the Islamic Summit since 2019, in an endeavor to support the OIC and Member States' efforts to promote joint Islamic action.

Following the holding of the 14th Islamic Summit Conference in Makkah Al-Mukarramah five years ago under the theme "Hand in Hand Towards the Future", the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the OIC host country, has made vigorous efforts to follow up the resolutions adopted by the Summit and serve the various issues on the OIC agenda.

The Kingdom started its chairmanship of the 14th session of the Islamic Summit by hosting and funding the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the OIC, under the generous sponsorship of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. At the end of 2023, Saudi Arabia sponsored and provided financial support for the OIC's move to its new headquarters. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic

was one of the major events that took place during the Saudi chairmanship of the Islamic Summit. The Kingdom offered financial support in the amount of 20 million SAR to back up the OIC's initiative for the provision of vaccination for health workers and elderly people in the least developed Member States.

The Kingdom was honored to assume its responsibilities as Chair of the 14th Summit, and deeply proud to serve the Member States and the Islamic Ummah. It convened and attended various meetings at the level of Permanent Delegates, Ministers, and Leaders. Saudi officials toured the influential capitals around the world, as part of the Kingdom's relentless endeavors to expound the Islamic viewpoint and mobilize support for the issues plaguing the OIC Member States, particularly in the political sphere, foremost among them is the Palestinian Cause.

In this context, Saudi Arabia hosted the Extraordinary Joint Arab-Islamic Summit in Riyadh on November 11, 2023, to discuss the Israeli aggression on the Palestinian people. It also played host to the International Conference on Women in Islam, held under the

theme of "Status and Empowerment", as well as to the Fourth Mediation Conference. In addition, the Kingdom called for convening various official meetings at all levels to discuss issues of concern to the Muslim world.

As Chair of the 14th Islamic Summit, Saudi Arabia followed with interest the efforts to restructure and develop the OIC and reform its organs, and bore the cost of the study prepared, in this regard, by the Saudi Institute of Public Administration.

These are only some of the most prominent achievements, among a long list of actions, initiatives, and projects implemented under the Kingdom's chairmanship of the 14th Islamic Summit. These accomplishments are the fruit of the directives of the Saudi Wise Leadership, the active diplomatic efforts invested by the Kingdom's Foreign Ministry, as well as the close and continuous follow-up by the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the OIC in order to mobilize support for the OIC's work and programs and scale up its performance in all fields.

Saudi Arabia has devoted its chairmanship of the previous session of the Islamic Summit to strengthening joint Islamic action,



Islamic world expresses solidarity with the Sudanese people and their government amid continuing conflict

The 15th session of the Islamic Summit Conference held in Banjul, The Gambia, affirmed, in its Final Communiqué issued on May 5, 2024, the OIC Member States' full solidarity with the people of Sudan and its Government amid the continuing armed conflict that had begun in mid-April 2023, and expanded to several regions in the country, causing loss of lives and property and the displacement of thousands of innocent civilian citizens.

The Summit underlined the importance of maintaining security, stability, and respect for the unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Sudan, and warned against any external interference in Sudan, whatever its nature or source, calling for the necessity to preserve the cohesion of the country's state institutions.

The Conference commended Saudi Arabia's significant efforts as part of the Jeddah Platform, as well as Egypt's efforts within the Sudan's Neighboring Countries Mechanism, and in receiving Sudanese citizens fleeing the war. It called on the international community and on the OIC Member States and institutions to provide support to those

countries. It also called for adherence to the provisions of the agreement signed on May 11, 2023, including taking steps to facilitate the increase of humanitarian aid and the evacuation of civilian areas, housing, and public facilities, as well as the implementation of trust-building measures and resumption of dialogue within this framework, with the aim of reaching a permanent ceasefire agreement and a peaceful settlement for the conflict.

The Conference appealed to the Member States and the OIC financial institutions to consider establishing a fund that would contribute to the reconstruction of what was destroyed by the war, including projects for the construction of infrastructure as well as education, health, and public facilities. It also called on Member States and humanitarian organizations to continue providing urgent humanitarian, health, and relief assistance to alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people in Sudan and in neighboring countries.

With the escalation of fighting in various regions of Sudan, over 36,000 people were forced to flee their homes in the west of the

country. An IPC alert for Sudan was released outlining the dramatic situation of food insecurity in the country. Alarming, 17.7 million people – more than one-third of the country's population – are facing acute food insecurity (IPC3+) under a warning of potential famine issued by FEWS NET and underwritten by the Global IPC Group. Of these, 4.9 million people are on the brink of famine. Nearly 9 out of 10 people in IPC4 are in conflict-affected areas in Darfur, Kordofan, Khartoum, and Aj Jazirah. With the onset of the lean season from April onwards, food insecurity is expected to further worsen.

Khartoum and Aj Jazirah states, as well as greater Darfur and greater Kordofan, could face catastrophic outcomes in case of further intensification of the conflict, resulting in sustained displacement, and limited to no humanitarian access to the population in need. Of highest concern are North Darfur and Khartoum states, including Omdurman locality, as well as areas in greater Darfur hosting IDPs in overcrowded camps.



A Fund for Youth Employment in Sahel and Lake Chad Basin

The OIC General Secretariat held, on February 7-8, 2024 at its headquarters in Jeddah, a workshop on activating the recommendation of the 49th CFM session to establish the OIC Fund for Youth Training, Employment, and Support in the Sahel Region and Lake Chad Basin. This initiative is part of an integrated strategy to combat extremism, promote the true, moderate understanding of the Islamic religion, as well as enhance the culture of tolerance among young people. The workshop was attended by officials and experts from Member States and from relevant OIC organs and institutions.

In his opening speech, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, pointed out that the Sahel region and Lake Chad Basin have, in recent years, witnessed an increase in terrorist crime rates, especially against defenseless civilians. This led to the loss of human lives, looting of property, displacement of thousands of families, increase of refugee situations, shutting down of thousands of schools, and the displacement of millions of children, which further exacerbated other scourges such as human

trafficking and drug smuggling. These incidents, he added, undermine peace and stability and thus hinder development in the region, with young people being the most affected by these terrorist acts.

The Secretary-General also indicated that the workshop is part of the OIC's efforts to support the endeavors of the Member States and the OIC organs and institutions in combating extremist thinking and terrorism among youth in the Sahel region and the Lake Chad Basin. He noted that these goals are key focus areas in the OIC-2025: Programme of Action, the OIC Youth Strategy, and the relevant OIC resolutions. The workshop, he added, seeks to discuss and enrich the draft Statutes of the Fund, in preparation for submitting the relevant recommendations to the Council of Foreign Ministers through a preparatory Senior Officials Meeting.

The Secretary-General stressed that the most effective way to protect young people from joining terrorist groups and violent extremism conducive to terrorism is to provide them with training and job opportunities, in

addition to enhancing their role in the economic and social life of their communities. To that end, he urged Member States and the relevant OIC organs and institutions, especially the IsDB Group, ICESCO, and the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF), as well as other OIC institutions concerned with youth capacity-building alongside partner institutions, to support this mechanism, starting with the process of its establishment, and later by providing it with all the necessary means and resources so that it can carry out the tasks assigned to it.

The Secretary-General expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for its cooperation with the OIC General Secretariat in following up on the implementation of the CFM resolutions. He also extended his thanks and appreciation to the government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the Fifth Session of the Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers, for its firm and continuous support for the activities of the OIC General Secretariat.



Refugee Crisis and Food Insecurity Plague the Sahel Region and Lake Chad

A silent crisis is plaguing the countries of the Sahel region and Lake Chad Basin, especially with the rising number of refugees and displaced persons in these regions, in addition to the adverse consequences of climate change on the economic situation, with the continuous drying up of Lake Chad and its effects on local populations.

Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have already faced years of climate distress and growing food insecurity that have compounded pressures. In the majority of households in these countries, basic needs such as access to water, healthcare, education, and security can no longer be met, according to a UNICEF report.

Food insecurity in the Sahel region, aggravated by the war in Ukraine, which has disrupted grain exports, could push scores of migrants to flee the region and move north. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, said: "Europe should be much more worried" that more people from the Sahel region could arrive. "People are still suffering — they do not have food, do not have water, do not have shelter, and have to flee... I'm very worried about Sahel. And I don't think that we talk enough about this region that is, by the way, so close to Europe. And I think Europe should be much more worried," he added.

According to a spokesperson for the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), there have been "significant increases" in migrant flows through Niger and Mali

toward North Africa in the first quarter of 2022, compared with previous years.

Acute climate change is threatening the

Reports from international organizations revealed that Lake Chad, once the 6th largest lake in the world in the 1960s, is drying up and is at risk of extinction.

economies of the countries of the Sahel Region and Lake Chad Basin and is exacerbating the already poor humanitarian conditions resulting from displacement, migration, and refugee crises. Amid this situation, terrorist groups are seeking to exploit poverty and destitution to increase their influence.

Nigeria had urged the international community to "fully support its efforts to save Lake Chad from extinction and revive its potential," affirming that "the shrinking of the lake is negatively impacting the livelihood of populations who are leaving the region

at an increasing pace," with over 40 million people affected.

Lake Chad Basin is the largest inland drainage area in Africa. It covers an area of 2,434,000 km², equal to 8% of the total area of the African Continent.

Last year, reports from international organizations revealed that Lake Chad, once the 6th largest lake in the world in the 1960s, is drying up and is at risk of extinction. They indicate that the lake has shrunk by 90% as a result of over-use, prolonged drought, and the effects of climate change.

The central Sahel region is facing a severe humanitarian and protection crisis that has already forced over 4 million people to leave their homes.

While more than half a million people were forced to flee their countries as refugees, over 3.8 million people were internally displaced within their countries. Movement restrictions and economic challenges continue to reduce the resilience of populations.

On the other hand, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is increasingly concerned that more Sudanese refugees will cross to Chad from Darfur in the coming period, amid a worrying lack of food and other essentials.

Chad urgently needs more humanitarian aid and significant development investment to stabilize its fragile socio-economic environment, especially in the Eastern refugee-hosting regions, which will allow the country to continue its generous open-door stance towards refugees.



Extraordinary CFM to Consider Ongoing Israeli Aggression on Gaza

In continuation of the OIC's efforts, launched since November 2023, to stop the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, the OIC convened an Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers at its headquarters in Jeddah on March 5, 2024.

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, called on all States to increase funding for the UNRWA so that it can continue its vital role in providing humanitarian and essential services to Palestinian refugees, and thus contribute to enhancing stability in the region, especially amid an Israeli campaign targeting the UNRWA's very existence and role. He indicated that the OIC is following, with great concern, donor countries' suspension of their contributions to the UNRWA's budget. He insisted that increasing funding for the UNRWA will confirm the international community's commitment to protecting the rights of Palestinian refugees and its responsibility to provide a just solution to their Cause.

The Secretary-General stressed that the meeting is being held amid the continuing escalation of the Israeli aggression, which violates all international standards, laws, and norms, and commits horrific massacres, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, the latest of which is the targeting of hun-

dreds of civilians while they were waiting to receive food aid. These crimes, he added, have so far claimed the lives of more than 30,000 Palestinian civilians, wounded nearly 70,000 others, most of whom women and children, and displaced nearly two million Palestinians inside the Gaza Strip.

The Secretary-General emphasized that the Israeli occupation persists in its systematic policy that is based on siege, starvation, torture, arrest, killing, and displacement, in addition to the indiscriminate destruction of infrastructures, houses, mosques, churches, hospitals, schools, universities, UN institutions, historical buildings, and economic facilities, as part of a genocide committed in an attempt to uproot the Palestinian people from their land.

The Secretary-General expressed his thanks to all participants in this extraordinary CFM session, which carries deep political significance, especially the emphasis on the centrality of the Palestinian Cause. He also expressed his appreciation to the Member States that called for convening this meeting in order to strengthen and coordinate the OIC's efforts as part of implementing the resolution adopted by the Extraordinary Joint Arab-Islamic Summit, hosted by Saudi Arabia on November 11, 2023.

The Secretary-General confirmed the success of the efforts of the Arab and Islamic Ministerial Contact Group emerging from the Summit, including the visits paid to influential countries, especially the Member States of the UN Security Council and international organizations.

The extraordinary CFM session discussed the developments and repercussions of the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. It carried deep political significance, especially the emphasis on the centrality of the Palestinian Cause and on the joint commitment to pursue the OIC's efforts in support of the Palestinian people and defense of their legitimate rights.

The Secretary-General welcomed the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice and called on all States to use all forms of influence to pressure the Israeli occupation to fully and immediately comply with the Court's orders regarding preventing further acts of genocide against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. He also called on the International Criminal Court to expedite the process of holding the occupation accountable for all the crimes committed in the entire Occupied Palestinian territory.



Secretary-General: We have Launched Legal and Media Efforts to Document and Expose Israeli Crimes

In his speech before the Extraordinary CFM session, held to discuss the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, indicated that in implementation of the Resolution adopted by the Joint Arab and Islamic Summit, held in Riyadh on November 11, 2023, the OIC General Secretariat had begun to coordinate and follow up efforts at all political, media, legal and humanitarian levels to serve the Palestinian Cause.

The Secretary-General's efforts and contacts with high-ranking officials were based on the OIC's position calling for an immediate cessation of the Israeli aggression, insisting on the necessity of allowing entry of adequate humanitarian aid to the entire Gaza Strip, and rejecting attempts to displace the Palestinian people.

The efforts undertaken by the Arab and Islamic Ministerial Contact Group succeeded in affirming the unity and solidity of the joint Arab and Islamic position in the international arena, in defending the Palestinian people and supporting their legitimate rights, as well as in engaging the international community's responsibility to put an end to the Israeli occupation's crimes and aggressive

policies.

The efforts of the Islamic Group during the past months also culminated in the adoption, by the UN Security Council, of Resolutions 2720 and 2712, as well as two resolutions by the UN General Assembly, all of which stressed the necessity of ensuring prompt and safe delivery of adequate aid for Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, along with an immediate humanitarian truce leading to an immediate ceasefire.

The Secretary-General reiterated his denunciation of the United States' use of its veto power several times over draft UNSC resolutions on developments in the Palestinian Territory, stressing the need for the Islamic Group to continue its efforts and endeavors, in coordination with other Groups and friendly countries, for the adoption of a decisive resolution calling for an immediate end to this brutal aggression against the Palestinian people.

The Secretary-General indicated that the OIC General Secretariat has activated, since January 23, 2024, the OIC Observatory for Israel's Crimes Against the Palestinians, by launching a window on the OIC website through which all media materials pro-

duced by the Media Monitoring Unit are regularly published, including weekly media reports, press releases, videos, infographics, and graphs. These materials are also published on the OIC Social Media pages.

The Secretary-General also pointed out that the General Secretariat has launched coordination with Member States to activate the Legal Observatory that was established in the implementation of the Resolution issued by the recent Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit, by forming an internal Follow-up Committee. He expressed hope that Member States would provide voluntary technical and financial support to the General Secretariat so that it can develop its work in this regard.

The Secretary-General noted that the General Secretariat, along with 25 Member States, had submitted written information to the International Court of Justice and participated in the oral arguments that took place on February 19-26, 2024 regarding the legal implications arising from Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territory since 1967 and its continued violation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.



OIC Calls on Member States to Provide Support to Gaza

The Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held on March 5, 2024, at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and cessation of the all-out Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza, the provision of unimpeded and adequate humanitarian, medical, and relief aid, the provision of water and electricity, and the opening of humanitarian corridors to deliver urgent aid to the Gaza Strip. It warned of the danger of continuing the crime of genocide and ethnic cleansing, including starvation, deprivation of water, and preventing entry of fuel, which led to a genuine disaster for all health and humanitarian sectors. It reaffirmed that it categorically rejects and stands by all means against any attempt at forcibly displacing, expelling, or transferring the Palestinian people from their land.

The Resolution adopted by the Extraordinary CFM session emphasized its strong condemnation of the unprecedented barbaric aggression against civilians in the besieged Gaza Strip and the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory, including killing, bombing, and deliberate destruction, and the perpetration of atrocities against them, including the crime of genocide. It stressed the absolute rejection of targeting civilians under any pretext, forcibly displacing them from their homes and lands, subjecting them to

starvation and thirst, depriving them of safe access to humanitarian aid, and targeting civilians seeking to access basic aid arriving to Gaza and killing them in a despicable barbaric manner revolting to human conscience, all in violation of all international norms and laws and of the most basic humanitarian principles and values. It called on all States and relevant international organizations to condemn these ignoble crimes, conduct investigations into them, and hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes. It held Israel, the occupying power, fully responsible for the fate of civilians in the Gaza Strip and for the ongoing genocide they are subjected to with all types of weapons, under bombardment and siege, suffering from starvation inflicted upon them as a weapon of war, denied access to electricity, food, and clean water, and forced to abandon their homes.

The Resolution called on Member States to dispatch humanitarian assistance to the entire Gaza Strip, in cooperation and coordination with international organizations, pursuant to the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice in its ruling of 26 January 2024. It also called on Member States to take immediate measures requiring the international community to put pressure on Israel to allow the unconditional and unrestricted entry of all humanitarian aid and necessities to the Gaza Strip in an

immediate and sustainable manner and to engage in supporting these actions by all States.

The Resolution urgently called on the OIC Member States to take all necessary steps, at all levels, to stop and stand against the crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people, to hold the perpetrators of these crimes accountable, and to provide all forms of financial support and humanitarian relief to break the siege imposed on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip for more than 16 years.

The Resolution commended the Member States and General Secretariat for their contributions to the International Court of Justice regarding the advisory opinion on the legal implications arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Al-Quds, based on the request of the United Nations General Assembly, and appreciated the presence of H.E. the Secretary-General and his address to the Court alongside the OIC legal team.

The Resolution welcomed the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice, and emphasized the need for the immediate implementation of these measures to prevent Israel from continuing its acts of genocide against the Palestinian people, and thanked South Africa for filing the complaint to the ICJ.

Extraordinary CFM Session Condemns and Rejects Displacement of Palestinians

The Resolution adopted by the Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held on March 5, 2024, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, warned all the States participating - directly or indirectly - in committing genocide against the Palestinian people and considered them as direct accomplices in this despicable crime. It welcomed, in this regard, the steps taken by the Republic of Nicaragua at the International Court of Justice.

The Resolution condemned and rejected all plans and policies drawn up or pursued by the Israeli occupation government, which are based on continuing and expanding Israel's colonization of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, dismantling its geographical unity, turning it into ghettos, displacing its people, and isolating the Gaza Strip from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in plain defiance of the current international stance. It emphasized that work is underway with the UN Member States, specifically in the Security Council, to issue a clear position that wholly rejects these destructive plans and policies and their components, establishes a political path and a clear law that lays the ground for serious and irreversible steps conducive to a solution based on international legitimacy, and enables the embodiment of the two-state solution, while calling for suspending Israel's membership in international organizations, particularly the United Nations.

The Resolution called on the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to assume their responsibilities under the joint article I of the Geneva Convention, and to take all necessary measures to promote respect for the principles of international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, to deter the grave violations perpetrated by the colonial occupation authorities against Palestinian civilians, and to hold the perpetrators of these violations accountable by convening a meeting of the States Parties as soon as possible.

The Resolution condemned in the strongest terms Israel's non-compliance with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice, and called on all Member States of the United Nations, in particular

the States Parties to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to assume their legal responsibilities and take practical measures to stop the Israeli occupation's violation of the Convention, including by imposing sanctions on it and refraining from any involvement, assistance or incitement to these violations, in any form whatsoever. It stressed the responsibility of all States to fully comply with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice in the case filed by South Africa in relation to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to implement these measures in the Gaza Strip, and to assume their responsibilities in this regard.

The Resolution deplored the positions of some countries that claim to respect human rights while continuing to support the ongoing brutal aggression against the defenseless Palestinian people and granting impunity to Israel, in violation of the rules of international law, including justifying the aggression and imposing sanctions on the Palestinian people and their institutions.

The Resolution commended the historic initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, in accordance with Article 99 of the United Nations Charter, on 6 December 2023, by drawing the attention of the Security Council to the urgent need for a "humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza" and assume its responsibility for maintaining global peace and security. It hailed, in this regard; the significant role played by the UN organizations operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, specifically in the Gaza Strip, and stressed the need to provide them with the needed support.

The Resolution warned against the escalating attacks by the Israeli occupation army and the terrorism of the settlers who are supported with arms and protected by the occupation forces in Al-Quds Ash-Sharif and the West Bank in their continuing aggression against civilians and their properties, including acts of killing, destruction, displacement, building and expansion of settlements, as part of a frenzied colonial campaign aimed at annexing the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It stressed, in this re-

gard, the need to take all necessary steps to hold the settlers accountable for their crimes, including imposing trade and visa sanctions, placing them on terrorist lists, and prosecuting them.

The Resolution called on the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to expedite the criminal investigation into the war crimes and the crimes against humanity being committed by officials of the Israeli colonial occupation government against the defenseless Palestinian people, and to bring the criminals to international justice. It extended thanks to South Africa, Comoros, Djibouti, Bolivia, Bangladesh, Venezuela, Chile, and Mexico for referring the situation in the State of Palestine to the International Criminal Court. It called on Member States, which are members of the International Criminal Court to refer the crimes committed in Palestine to the Court as soon as possible, and also called on all Member States to provide political, technical, and financial support for the State of Palestine in this regard.

The Resolution emphasized the importance of supporting the OIC Legal Monitoring and Media Monitoring Units, in the implementation of the Resolution issued by the recent Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit, including the two Units within the budget of the General Secretariat, and providing their administrative and financial requirements as soon as possible, so that they can fulfill their tasks in monitoring all violations of international humanitarian law committed by Israel, and thus serve as an essential source in supporting the legal actions to be taken by the State of Palestine.

The Resolution took note, with appreciation, of the Extraordinary Session of the OIC Islamic Conference of Information Ministers, held in Istanbul, Türkiye, on February 24, 2024, under the theme of "The Israeli Occupation Authorities' Disinformation and Hostilities against Journalists and Media Outlets in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", and requested the Member States to implement the Final Communiqué adopted by the Conference.

SOM Preparatory to Extraordinary CFM Condemns “Flour Massacre” in Gaza



The Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) preparatory to the extraordinary session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers to consider the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, was held on March 4, 2024, at the headquarters of the OIC's General Secretariat.

Amb. Samir Bakr, Assistant Secretary-General for Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs, delivered the General Secretariat's statement in which he pointed to the horrific “flour massacre” perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces on February 29th, claiming the lives of hundreds of martyrs while they were waiting to receive food aid. This massacre, he added, is only an example of the war crimes committed by the Israeli occupation army, which necessitates redoubling legal efforts, especially at the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, being legitimate and effective tools for holding the Israeli occupation accountable for its crimes. Amb. Bakr stressed that Israel's persistence in its bloody crimes and massacres against the Palestinian people calls for more effective action with a more profound impact on the international arena. The aim is to stand against this brutal Israeli aggression by all legitimate and possible means, including political, legal, and media efforts, in the

implementation of the Resolution adopted by the Joint Extraordinary Arab and Islamic Summit, held on November 11, 2023, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Amb. Bakr noted that the brutal Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people would not have continued and escalated without the military support and the political and legal protection that the United States provides to the Israeli occupation in international fora, especially through using its veto power several times against the UNSC draft resolutions calling for an end to this Israeli aggression. This has encouraged the occupation to persist in its violations and crimes and enabled it to escape accountability and punishment.

The Resolution adopted by the Extraordinary CFM session condemned the crime of forced disappearance committed by the occupation forces since the beginning of the ongoing aggression against thousands of Palestinian citizens in the West Bank and occupied Al-Quds, specifically in the Gaza Strip, including women, children, and the elderly. This is in addition to the execution, abuse, oppression, torture, and humiliating and degrading treatment to which the Palestinian people are subjected. It called on Member states to put pressure on the

occupation authorities to reveal the fate of the kidnapped Palestinians, work to release them immediately, ensure protection for them, and demand an independent and transparent investigation into the Israeli crimes, including the policy of executing Palestinian detainees in the Israeli occupation's prisons and the repressive and inhumane measures against Palestinian prisoners. It condemned, in this regard, the mass arrest campaigns being conducted by the occupation authorities.

The Resolution called on Member States to work, within the framework of the Human Rights Council, on holding the Israeli occupation accountable for its grave and continuing violations of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and for its refusal to abide by and respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It mandated the Ambassadors of the OIC Group to adopt a draft resolution in this regard.

The Resolution reiterated its call on Member States to support efforts aimed at expanding recognition of the State of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations, as an essential step towards the realization of the two-state solution on the 1967 borders.



OIC Secretary-General Meets with Algeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on March 5, 2024, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, with H.E. Mr. Ahmed Attaf, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

The Secretary-General commended Algeria's active role within the UN Security Council regarding the Palestinian Cause, as well as its participation within the framework of the OIC activities and programs, and its support for joint Islamic action.

For his part, the Minister reaffirmed Algeria's firm support for the OIC and its prime cause, the Cause of Palestine. The meeting also discussed a number of issues of common interest.

Secretary-General Receives the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan

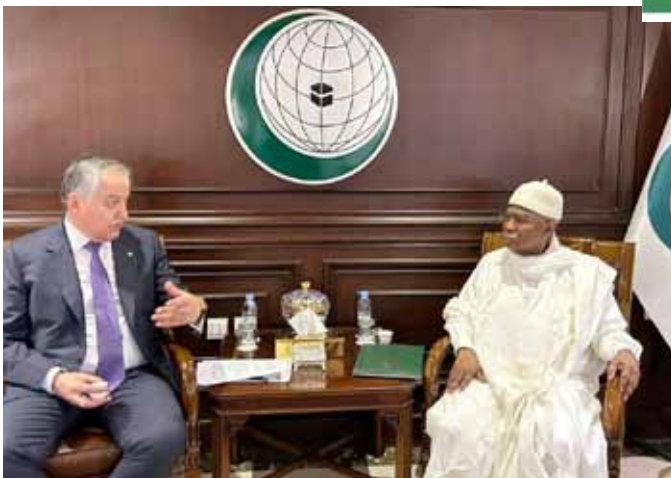
The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on March 4, 2024, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, H.E. Mr. Murat Nurtleu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Murat Nurtleu reiterated Kazakhstan's unwavering support for the Cause of Palestine and briefed the Secretary-General about his country's efforts in providing for the humanitarian needs of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip through UNRWA.

For his part, the Secretary-General expressed appreciation for Kazakhstan's active engagement in Joint Islamic Action, particularly its generous assistance in alleviating the dire plight of the Palestinian people.



OIC Secretary-General Receives the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on March 4, 2024, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, H.E. Mr. Sirojiddin Muhriddin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on a number of priority issues on the OIC Agenda.

The Minister commended the OIC's significant support for the Palestinian Cause and its efforts towards ending the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. He reiterated Tajikistan's strong support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

For his part, the Secretary-General commended Tajikistan's active role in promoting the work of the OIC and in advancing joint Islamic action, including with regard to the Cause of Palestine.

OIC Information Ministers Address Israeli Aggressions against Journalists



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation convened, on February 24, 2024, in Istanbul, Türkiye, an Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers, held under the theme of “The Israeli Occupying Authority’s Disinformation and Hostilities against Journalists and Media Outlets in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”.

The Conference was attended by H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, H.E. Prof. Fahrettin ALTUN, Director of Communication Department of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, and Chair of the session, along with Information Ministers and delegates of the OIC Member States. In his speech at the opening session, the OIC Secretary-General stressed that the horrific massacres taking place in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in Gaza, are an example of organized terrorism and violence, and a crime of genocide perpetrated by the Israeli occupation without any political, religious, humanitarian, or legal deterrent. Hence the need to strengthen efforts and positions to expose these crimes and legally prosecute the Israeli occupation and hold it accountable.

The Secretary-General expressed the OIC’s

appreciation to the government and people of the Republic of Türkiye for convening this special session of the ICIM, commending Türkiye’s significant role in supporting the Palestinian people and their legitimate national rights.

The Secretary-General commended the outcomes of the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit, held in Riyadh on November 11, 2023, to consider the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, including the resolution to establish a Media Monitoring Unit at the OIC General Secretariat, which the General Secretariat has effectively launched, in addition to a Legal Monitoring Unit, with the aim of documenting and exposing the Israeli crimes and violations. This, he added, confirms the special importance that the Leaders of Member States attach to the necessity of standing against the brutal Israeli occupation’s aggressions on the Palestinian people, and its continuing attacks against journalists and media institutions in the Palestinian Territory. These attacks, which claimed the lives of no less than 126 journalists since the beginning of the crime of genocide taking place in the Gaza Strip, are part of the occupation’s policy of confiscating the truth,

silencing voices, covering up its daily crimes, and preventing their exposure to the international public opinion.

The Secretary-General called on all parties in charge of the media file in the Member States to increase support and cooperation in order to develop the role of the OIC Observatory on Israel’s Crimes against Palestinians or the Media Monitoring Unit in the General Secretariat and to partner in sponsoring and organizing media activities to discuss, document, and expose the Israeli violations and crimes. He also called for providing further support to the Palestinian media institutions in terms of facilities and equipment, producing and exchanging media programs and expertise with them, and allocating more media space in the media outlets of Member States to cover all developments related to the Palestinian Cause.

The Secretary-General reaffirmed the OIC’s support to and solidarity with the Palestinian people in the pursuit of their inalienable national rights, including their right to return, to self-determination, and to concrete establishment of their independent State on the Palestinian land occupied since 1967, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

OIC Countries Stress Joint Action to Combat Israeli Media Disinformation



The Information Ministers of OIC Member States condemned the continuing military aggression being waged by Israel against the Palestinian people, as well as its systematic oppression, massacres, and genocide of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, and also in the occupied West Bank including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and called for an unconditional ceasefire to prevent further loss of life. That was part of the Final Communiqué adopted by the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Information Ministers, held on February 24, 2024, in Istanbul, Türkiye, under the theme: "The Israeli Occupying Authority's Disinformation and Hostilities against Journalists and Media Outlets in the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

The Communiqué condemned the Israeli occupation's systematic disinformation campaigns and spreading of false and misleading information and fake news in order to cover up its brutality and genocidal massacres committed in the Gaza Strip. It also condemned the Israeli occupation's deliberate and systematic targeting of Palestinian journalists, stressing that this is part of a campaign to silence the voices of truth-

tellers.

The Communiqué reaffirmed that the only path toward establishing peace and security passes through the realization of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including national independence and safeguarding the sovereignty of the State of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. It thus called upon all States to recognize the sovereign, independent State of Palestine based on the borders of 1967, with East Al-Quds as its capital, being a prerequisite for the peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and for the promotion of peace and security in the region.

The Communiqué expressed the Member States' determination to work collectively and closely at the international level to combat disinformation and to demonstrate a common will to act in solidarity and union in order to expose the indiscriminate attacks targeting Palestinian civilians, including settler terrorism in the West Bank, which aims to forcibly displace the Palestinian people. It also emphasized the Member States' collective determination to counter and expose the Israeli colonial occupation's attempts to cover up the destruction on

the ground, by intimidating journalists with a view to minimizing international reaction and thwarting its efforts to cover up its war crimes and genocide committed in the Gaza Strip.

The Communiqué condemned Israel, the occupying power, for targeting the telecommunication system and maintenance staff in the Gaza Strip, and called on all international news organizations and media outlets to expose the Israeli occupation's human rights violations and its campaigns against journalists.

The Communiqué expressed support for the OIC General Secretariat's efforts in implementing Operative Paragraph 10 of the Resolution issued by the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit to Consider the Israeli Aggression Against the Palestinian People, held in Riyadh on November 11, 2023, which mandated the General Secretariats of the OIC and the Arab League to establish two media monitoring units to document all the Israeli occupation authorities' crimes against the Palestinian people, along with digital media platforms to publish and expose the Israeli illegal and inhuman practices.

Secretary-General Presents Oral Argument At ICJ Exposing Israeli Crimes



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, presented, on February 26, 2024, before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, an oral argument, on behalf of the OIC, in which he exposed the crimes perpetrated by Israel, the occupying power, against the Palestinian people, in particular its war in the Gaza Strip. He stressed that Israel is moving forward in its apartheid policy against the Palestinians. The Secretary-General started by informing the ICJ judges that the OIC is an inter-governmental organization with 57 Member States, and is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It was established in the wake of the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Al-Quds in 1969. According to its Charter, one of the OIC's goals is to support the rights of the Palestinian people to establish their sovereign State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. The Secretary-General underlined that the OIC attaches great importance to the just struggle of the Palestinian people, and is deeply concerned with the ongoing aggression that Israel, the occupying power, is carrying out against the Palestinian people in Gaza, and the serious risks

that Israel's operations are posing to them. He recalled that the OIC had convened an Extraordinary Summit in Riyadh on 11 November 2023 to specifically discuss this issue.

In the pleading made together with a team of legal counsels, the Secretary-General warned against the consequences of the war being waged by the Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip. He voiced the OIC's condemnation of this aggression that claimed tens of thousands of lives paving the way for large-scale war crimes and genocide to be perpetrated.

The Secretary-General expressed his strong condemnation of the crimes committed by Israel and by the settlers in the West Bank and in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, as well as the refusal by Israel, the occupying power, to put an end to its illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territory and to the numerous violations of international law resulting from the continued occupation. He lamented, in this regard, the failure of the Security Council to enforce international law and stop the spiral of violence, and realize justice for the Palestinian people.

The Secretary-General emphasized that a

just, durable, and comprehensive peace on the basis of the two-state solution is the only path toward ensuring security and stability for all the peoples of the region and preventing the cycles of violence and war. He demanded that all States stop exporting weapons and ammunition to the occupation authorities, as they are used by the army and settlers against the Palestinian people.

The Secretary-General appealed to the International Court of Justice to condemn the ever-accelerating settlement activities in East Al-Quds and the Israeli attacks against Muslim and Christian holy sites in Al-Quds. He expressed hope that the legal opinion to be issued by the Court would serve as a reminder of Israel's inevitable duty to end its occupation of the Palestinian Territory.

The Secretary-General gave the floor to the legal counsel of the OIC, Mrs. Chemillier-Gendreau, to present the legal aspects of the OIC's submission on the legal implications arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Al-Quds.

OIC Urges International Community to Stop Israeli Aggression against Gaza



In March 2024, the OIC welcomed the Security Council's adoption of a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire during the month of Ramadan, describing it as an important step by the international community towards assuming its responsibility to stop the crime of the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. The OIC also renewed its call on the international community to put an end to all war crimes, including settlement construction, killing, demolition, forceful displacement, and genocide, perpetrated by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people in the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory. The OIC Group of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations met at the UN Headquarters in New York on 27 March 2024 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Sidi Mohammed Laghdaf, Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the United Nations, to consider the ongoing Israeli aggression in Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip, in the wake of the UNSC's adoption of Resolution 2728 of 25 March 2024.

The Group considered the adoption of this latest Security Council Resolution a historic and significant step aimed at securing a last-

ing ceasefire in Gaza, putting an end to the continuous loss of innocent Palestinian lives, and alleviating the humanitarian disaster endured by the Palestinian people as a result of the barbaric Israeli aggression.

The Group commended the adoption of the UNSC Resolution, and called on the international community, in particular the members of the Security Council, to ensure the prompt implementation of the resolution. The Group also expressed its satisfaction with the increasing cooperation between the Groups of Member States of the OIC, the League of Arab States, and the Non-Aligned Movement, and stressed the decisive role of all Groups in implementing the aforementioned resolution.

The meeting also discussed the modalities for the implementation of the Resolution of the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit, held on 11 November 2023 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to consider the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, as well as the Resolution of the Extraordinary session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held on 5 March 2024 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, with particular reference to the expansion of the international recognition of the State of Palestine as a full member of

the United Nations. The meeting expressed a firm commitment to intensify consultations towards the realization of this objective, including by addressing official communications to relevant members of the international community and the main UN organs. In this regard, the meeting commended the efforts of the Ministerial Committee formed by the Joint Arab and Islamic Summit and chaired by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for the implementation of the Summit's Resolution, especially with regard to granting Palestine full membership in the United Nations in preparation for achieving the two-state solution. The meeting expressed its commitment to working toward achieving these goals as soon as possible.

On the other hand, the OIC condemned the announcement by the President of Argentina of his intention to move his country's embassy to the occupied city of Al-Quds, considering such a step a flagrant violation of international law and relevant UN resolutions, in particular UNSC Resolution 478 calling on States which have established diplomatic missions in Al-Quds to relocate them from the Holy City.



OIC Monitors Israeli Crimes in Weekly Reports

Pursuant to Operative Paragraph 10 of the Final Communiqué issued by the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit, held on November 11, 2023, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which provides for establishing a Media Monitoring Unit in charge of documenting all the crimes of the occupation authorities against the Palestinian people, along with digital media platforms to expose their illegal and inhuman practices, the Information Department of the OIC General Secretariat, jointly with the Department of Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs and the OIC Office in Ramallah, launched a weekly bulletin that exposes the crimes and massacres perpetrated by Israel, the occupying power, against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank cities, and the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

Until the time of preparing the current Issue (No.55) of the OIC Journal, 11 weekly reports were released, including press releases, infographics, graphs, and videos, all

of which have been published on the OIC official website, on the Observatory's website in Arabic, English, and French, as well as on the OIC social media platforms.

The number of Palestinians martyred as a result of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, until the writing of this report, reached about 34518.

According to the OIC Observatory statistics, in the first week since the launch of the Observatory, there were 1348 martyrs and 4217 Israeli violations against the Palestinian people, including acts of killing, wounding, and arresting of Palestinian citizens, along with attacks on places of worship, demolition of property, incursions, closure of crossings, and other violations. In the second week, 847 Palestinians fell as martyrs, and 3331 violations were committed.

During the week from 6 to 12 February, 872 Palestinians were martyred, with nearly 3004 violations throughout the Palestinian territory. The following week (13 to 19

February), there were 757 martyrs and nearly 2747 Israeli crimes and violations.

No less than 698 Palestinians fell as martyrs during the week from 20 to 26 February 2024.

The following week (February 27 to March 4), killings in the Gaza Strip reached a record high, with the "flour massacres" committed by Israel in "Kuwaiti" and "Nabulsi" roundabouts, causing hundreds of martyrs. During this week, there were 765 martyrs and nearly 3593 violations.

The holy month of Ramadan started on March 11, 2024, with the Gaza Strip enduring severe suffering amid an acute shortage of food supplies, amounting to famine in the northern and central regions of the Strip. This is in addition to the restrictions imposed by Israel on the entry of worshipers under the age of forty into Al-Aqsa Mosque to perform the Ishaa and Tarawih prayers, as well as Friday prayers.

Seeing Things with Cold Eyes

A YouTube video posted by the British newspaper, The Guardian, tells the story of the suffering of displaced Palestinian families in the city of Rafah, who fled the northern Gaza Strip due to the relentless Israeli bombing of Palestinian civilian neighborhoods. The video shows how, in the bitter cold of winter, these families found themselves in rainwater pools or worn-out tents.

At the bottom of the video, one can read many comments (we don't know whether they come from human-operated accounts or just "electronic flies") saying that the weather was not that cold...! "The temperature in Mediterranean countries does not usually fall below 13°C...!", one of the comments says. Another adds: "If that is the case, then it is like our summer in Britain." Still another wonder: "What's the problem with sleeping in the open; it's like a picnic...!"

Someone who sees things with cold eyes, just by scrolling up and down his smartphone screen, cannot actually perceive the gravity of the tragedy or realize the impact of the pain. Over time, it becomes a routine, boring practice that causes an inability to judge things properly. With things becoming habitual, our "views" turn into a cold look that does not differ from the abstract number of casualties mentioned in the video.

Comments may not necessarily reflect the reality of winter cold, being written by the "warm" fingers of the smartphone's user who is sitting cozily, "killing" his free time. After all, he was just relaxing, seeking entertainment, nothing more.

Actually, it is a cold look that evokes the logic of a "Zombie", a figure from the American cinematic literature; a compassionless human puppet that does not feel pain. "Zombie" is also called "Nzambi" in the Congolese tradition, meaning "idol", or "Fumbi" in other African cultures, meaning "ghost", or a "corpse" that retains some soul and is capable of moving its limbs, or - as presented by Haitian folklore - a corpse moved by magic threads. All of these come together to mean a person whose soul has died, so that he no longer feels others, nor feels jealous, and hardly feels himself.

The "Zombie" is a fitting expression of the reactions to the images broadcast on a video clip that now turns crises into a measurable "trend", but whose magnitude can only be sensed according to a graphic line that is drawn and published, without its impact being felt in reality.

Yes.. the world has become a small village! A boy in the eastern part of the world can see and hear about what is taking place in the other part; he can write and share comments. But there remains plenty of room for manipulation and mockery; for "dwarfing" the event in the media. After all, seeing is not like hearing! The comments that we referred to earlier sought to belittle the magnitude of the tragedy, and even to abort and wipe it out, and to make of the entire Palestinian tragedy an "excursion" that is not so different, for a British person, from an hour spent in front of a green-covered rocky cliff on the coast of Scotland, or, as it appears in another comment, in Hyde Park in London, the rainy city shrouded in fog.

A comment stating that a temperature of 13°C is nothing compared to a temperature below zero, loses sight of the fact that this displaced family, groaning in the bitter cold in a torn tent in Rafah, might have come from "Jaffa" or "Ramla" 75 years ago seeking refuge, and found itself in Gaza, having lost twenty or thirty of its members, and now crowded into one house fearing bombardment in the winter of 2023. And whoever managed to emerge from under the rubble "in one piece" might not have any energy left to walk dozens of kilometers to the south, retaining in his fresh memory the image of his children who were ripped to pieces, but without carrying on his shoulder a bag containing some "picnic supplies." He might have encountered occupation soldiers, who arrested him, stripped him of his clothes, insulted and beat him, before seizing the remaining cash he had with him, leaving him in the open air with an empty stomach and a wandering mind. He might have arrived in an unknown place where he did not know anyone, waiting for some help from here, or some advice from there, only to return and gather again with his remaining beloved ones in what can be considered a tent hastily made from worn-out rags that could barely protect them from the wind.

He would then withdraw into a corner, with what remained of his body, overwhelmed with distress and sorrow. He would suffer grief over those he lost yesterday. He would suffer pain from the wounds he sustained, from his lost dignity, from his empty stomach. Of course, the mild Mediterranean winter, at that time, will be the least of what a human being could face, but certainly, it won't be a refreshing night on a superb British beach.



Aiman Abboushi

Editor of the OIC Journal

Comments may not necessarily reflect the reality of winter cold, being written by the "warm" fingers of the smartphone's user who is sitting cozily, "killing" his free time. After all, he was just relaxing, seeking entertainment, nothing more.

Bilaterals



OIC Secretary-General Receives Maldives Minister of Islamic Affairs

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on January 7, 2024, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, H.E. Dr. Mohamed Shaheem, Minister of Islamic Affairs of the Republic of Maldives.



OIC Secretary-General Receives Indonesia's Minister of Tourism

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on January 9, 2024, at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, H.E. Mr. Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno.



OIC Secretary-General Receives President of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs of Chad

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on 24 January 2024 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, a delegation led by Sheikh. Dr. Mahamat Khattir Issa, President of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, and President of the Regulatory Body in charge of Hajj and Umrah of the Republic of Chad.



OIC Secretary-General Holds Talks with Saudi Vice Foreign Minister

The Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Eng. Waleed bin Abdulkarim Al-Khereiji, received, on February 1, 2024, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh.

Bilaterals



OIC Secretary-General Receives Secretary-General of Mauritania's Foreign Ministry

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 8, 2024, Ambassador Alia Yahya Menkous, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Mauritanians Abroad of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.



Iraqi Minister of Justice Signs the Statute of the Islamic Court of Justice

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on March 21, 2024, in his office at the General Secretariat headquarters in Jeddah, H.E. Dr. Khaled Shawani, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Iraq.



OIC Secretary-General Discusses Palestinian Issue with UK Minister of State

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on 14 February 2024 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, H.E. Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, UK Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, Commonwealth and the United Nations.



OIC Secretary-General Meets with Deputy Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on 19 March 2024 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Bahram Jan Aliyev.

Bilaterals



Secretary-General Receives Tunisia's Permanent Representative to the OIC



New Permanent Representative of Türkiye Pays Visit to the OIC



OIC Secretary-General Receives Pakistan's Permanent Representative



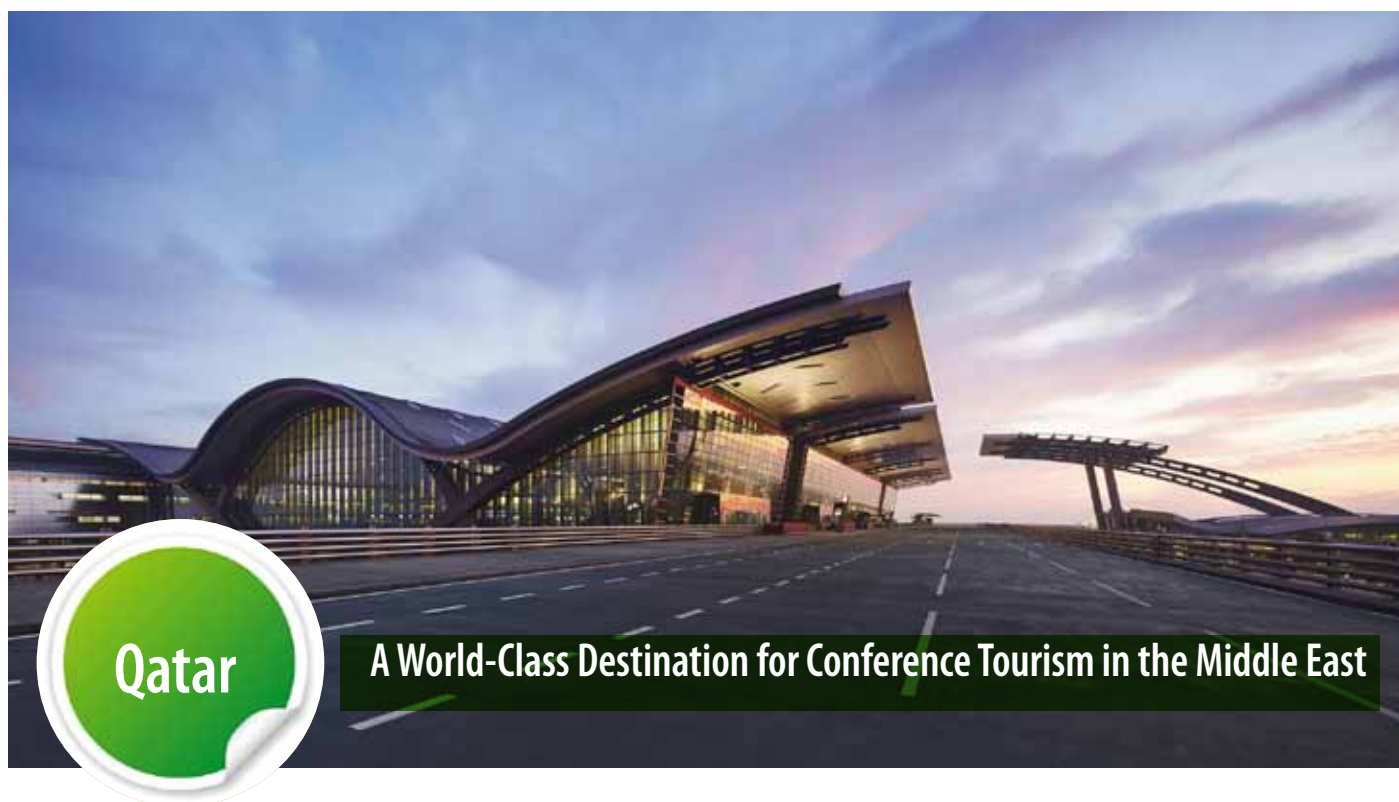
Algeria's Permanent Representative Presents his Letters of Credence



Secretary-General Receives Somalia's Deputy Permanent Representative



OIC Secretary-General Meets Nigeria's Permanent Representative



Qatar

A World-Class Destination for Conference Tourism in the Middle East

Doha (DPA):

The State of Qatar has become a preferred destination for conference tourism and business events at regional and international levels. This is thanks to the availability of the needed infrastructure to host business conferences and forums in various fields, alongside the facilities and initiatives provided by “Qatar Tourism” to support the success of any event convened in Qatar.

Since the beginning of the third millennium, “Qatar Tourism” has heavily invested in developing a unique range of cutting-edge event facilities. The State of Qatar possesses highly advanced infrastructure to host conferences, exhibitions, and meetings, with 128 facilities and an exhibition area of 70 thousand square meters. The most prominent among these facilities are the Qatar National Convention Center (QNCC) and the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC), established in line with the highest international standards to host the largest international conferences and exhibitions. Qatar also enjoys high levels of security and safety, so that it tops the list of the most secure countries in the world. Qatar enjoys a strategic location, boasting an advanced national airline, Qatar Airways, and the best airport in the world, Hamad Inter-

national Airport.

With business events involving essentially senior businessmen, corporate and government officials, and prominent public figures, Qatar offers a world-class hotel infrastructure. As of the end of the first quarter of last year, there were about 38.5 thousand hotel rooms in Qatar, nearly 40% of which were in 5-star hotels, according to data from the real estate consulting firm Cushman & Wakefield.

The State of Qatar has thus become a leading global tourist destination, boasting a track record in hosting major events and offering its visitors unforgettable experiences, thanks to its strategic location, advanced infrastructure, and seamless public transportation network.

At the same time, the conferences held in Qatar cover a wide and diverse range of fields and attract prominent figures and institutions operating in various sectors.

On February 26-29, 2024, Qatar hosted “Web Summit Qatar 2024”, the first web summit in the Middle East, and the world’s largest technology conference that discusses the future of technology and the ways for its empowerment. The Summit, held at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, attracted over 7,500 participants, including

300 investors and 600 startups, providing significant opportunities for startups, experts, technology entrepreneurs, investors, and all those interested in the future of web technology to discuss future prospects.

On April 30 - May 2, 2024, Qatar hosted the second edition of the Social Responsibility Conference and Exhibition, as part of the Qatar Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) National Program. The Conference offered an opportunity for relevant specialists, industry leaders, academics, and other stakeholders from all over the world to meet and discuss ways of promoting CSR practices. It also provided a platform for local and international CSR experts and professionals to discuss ways of integrating economic, social, and environmental goals within corporate work. The Conference brought together experts in business, academia, and law, alongside representatives of governmental and non-governmental institutions from various sectors, with the aim of identifying and discussing the main challenges and possible solutions for integrating CSR into core business operations and strengthening relations between the public and private sectors.

A New UN Resolution Strengthens Global Fight against Islamophobia



The second anniversary of the “International Day to Combat Islamophobia” was commemorated at the United Nations in New York on 15 March 2024, with the adoption of a Follow-up Resolution by the United Nations General Assembly by a majority of 115 votes.

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, welcomed the adoption of the Follow-up Resolution, which will help in combating Islamophobia globally.

Following the adoption of Resolution A/78/L.48 on Measures to Combat Islamophobia, a high-level commemorative event was held under the chairmanship of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Chair of 49th CFM, and Chair of the OIC Group in New York.

During this event, statements were delivered by the President of the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Secretary-General, and the OIC Secretary-General. Other opening statements were made by the High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Statements by the heads of delegation representing the United Nations Member States welcomed the adoption of the new UNGA

Resolution, which, among other things, calls for the appointment of a Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on Combating Islamophobia. They expressed willingness to work with the United Nations to promote the culture of peace and dialogue among religions and cultures, and to combat religious intolerance, negative stereotyping, hatred, and incitement to faith-based violence.

On the other hand, a high-level delegation led by the OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Ambassador Yousef Al-Dobeay, participated in the International Conference on Islamophobia, held on March 8-9, 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Addressing the meeting on behalf of the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Amb. Al-Dobeay highlighted the significant and constructive efforts and initiatives undertaken by the OIC to address the issue of Islamophobia, at the level of the General Secretariat, the Member States, partner countries, and international and regional organizations. He also highlighted the efforts of the OIC Observatory on Islamophobia in monitoring the phenomenon, its various manifestations, and the challenges associated with it, especially for Muslim communities and minorities in non-member

countries. He touched on the efforts and actions undertaken by OIC and its Member States, which culminated in the UNGA’s proclamation of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

Amb. Al-Dobeay stressed the OIC’s commitment to pursuing efforts to combat the alarming escalation of Islamophobia in the world, and its keenness to constantly raise this issue. He underlined the importance of finding the needed solutions as part of consultations with a number of non-member states as well as international and regional organizations, including the United Nations and the European Union.

Amb. Al-Dobeay affirmed the OIC’s strong determination to pursue and redouble efforts and organize a number of events in world capitals to raise awareness of the necessity of combating Islamophobia and promoting inter-faith dialogue, mutual understanding, tolerance, coexistence, and mutual respect.

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Yalcin Refiev, received Ambassador Al-Dobeay and his accompanying delegation on February 5, 2024, at the Foreign Ministry’s headquarters in Baku.

OIC Celebrates International Day to Combat Islamophobia



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations Office in Geneva co-organized an event in Geneva, at the Palais des Nations, on 15 March 2024, to commemorate the International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

The commemoration was organized as part of implementing the UNGA Resolution 76/254, calling for enhancing international efforts to foster a global dialogue on promoting the culture of tolerance and peace, based on respect for human rights and the diversity of religions and beliefs.

The second edition of the International Day to Combat Islamophobia aimed at encouraging all stakeholders to pursue efforts to combat religious intolerance, notably Islamophobia, by implementing the existing instruments. It called on all relevant stakeholders to strengthen international cooperation in order to address Islamophobia, a form of racism, and adopt action plans to prevent and combat this phenomenon.

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, and the Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva made opening remarks. A keynote address was offered by Mr. Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The event also featured presentations highlighting the many facets of intolerance, religious hatred, and violence, and was an opportunity to exchange views about the best ways to combat these scourges.

In the same context, the OIC joined the international community in commemorating the

International Day to Combat Islamophobia. The OIC Secretary-General said, in his statement on this occasion, "I believe this event is an opportunity to reiterate our solidarity with the victims of Islamophobia as well as

The OIC Secretary-General stressed that this event is most pertinent, since the forces of hatred and intolerance continue to spread and even to grow at an alarming speed.

with the victims of the acts of violence, harassment, and intimidation motivated by religious hatred and intolerance". This event, he added, is of crucial importance, serving as a constant reminder that hatred and in-

tolerance could always turn into disastrous acts of violence, especially when these are religion- or faith-based. Its importance also lies in the fact that it is an opportunity to mobilize political will and launch a global appeal to all stakeholders so that they take concrete actions to deter the forces of evil whose main purpose is to undermine inter-religious harmony and peaceful coexistence. The OIC Secretary-General stressed that this event is most pertinent, since the forces of hatred and intolerance continue to spread and even to grow at an alarming speed. It is sad, he added, that Islamophobia and other forms of xenophobia have unfortunately become a 'normal phenomenon' for some.

The Secretary-General noted that in certain countries, provocative acts continued to take place, often with clear protection from authorities. Prominent figures from certain religions, particularly Islam, were insulted, religious texts and holy books were burned and desecrated, places of worship were attacked, and individuals were targeted only because of their faith or religion. In the past, such incidents took place only every now and then; but today, they have grown more intense, taking place every day in different places of the world.

On behalf of the OIC, the Secretary-General reiterated his profound appreciation to the United Nations for the UNGA's adoption of Resolution 76/254 designating 15 March as International Day to Combat Islamophobia, considering it a crucial and necessary step to combat incitement to faith-based hatred, discrimination, and violence.

OIC Secretary-General Participates in Conference for «Building Bridges between Islamic Schools of Thought and Sects»



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, took part in the Global Conference for "Building Bridges between Islamic Schools of Thought and Sects", organized by the Muslim World League (WML) on 17 March 2024 in Makkah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

During the opening session, the Secretary-General delivered a speech in which he expressed his deep appreciation and gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, for generously sponsoring this important conference. He commended the Kingdom's unequivocal stances towards the issues of the Muslim world, as well as its spiritual leadership and continuous support for all initiatives that promote unity among Muslims. He also conveyed his deep thanks to H.E. Dr. Muhammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa, Secretary-General of the World Muslim League (WML), for organizing this Conference and for the kind invitation extended to him. He commended the League's relentless

efforts and dynamic role in serving Islam and Muslims.

The OIC Secretary-General stressed that the teachings of Islam emphasize the importance of unity, solidarity and rapprochement among Muslims, and insist on strengthening Islamic unity and the common destiny of the Ummah. This, he added, places great responsibilities on the OIC Member States to work toward achieving solidarity and synergy, unifying positions, promoting rapprochement among sects (Madhahib) and Islamic schools of thought, overcoming whatever might weaken their cohesion and strength, and reaching consensus on whatever could strengthen their integration. He pointed out that the Islamic history is replete with examples of adherence to the principles of intellectual openness and acceptance of difference.

The Secretary-General noted that the OIC has been actively working towards the goal of promoting rapprochement among Islamic countries in various political, economic, cultural, and social fields. It has also made significant efforts to enhance rapprochement

among different Islamic sects. To this end, the OIC established in 1981 the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) as its intellectual and jurisprudential (Fiqh) arm, mandated with facilitating collective Ijtihad and promoting consensus on matters related to (Islamic) jurisprudence and doctrine among all Muslims, irrespective of their sectarian affiliation.

The Secretary-General expressed hope that the outcomes and recommendations of the Conference would contribute to the consolidation of (Islamic) jurisprudence, which would help build bridges among sects, combat extremism, fanaticism, and Islamophobia, foster dialogue and communication, and promote a human society where the values of mutual understanding, harmony, and peace reign supreme.

The Secretary-General expressed his solidarity with the Palestinian people in the plight they are suffering, reiterating his call on the international community to assume its responsibilities in this regard.

Grannies Campaign against Far-right Extremists in Germany

Hanover Christina Stitch (DPA)

There are more and more older women showing up at demonstrations taking place throughout Germany against the rise of the far right.

Germany has been rocked by the rise of far-right extremism for months, but when an investigative report by the outlet "Correctiv" revealed that members from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and other parties had attended a meeting where a secret «Masterplan» to deport migrants on a large-scale was discussed, something changed and people began to take to the streets in growing numbers.

The protests have seen people from across the social and political spectrum unite and take a stance against racism and far-right extremism.

Elderly ladies gathered at rallies from Berlin to Munich, Cologne to Hanover as well as in smaller towns and villages. Many hold signs saying «GRANDMAS AGAINST THE

RIGHT,» while others show the slogan on badges, banners, or hats they knitted themselves.

In Germany, the group unites men and women, some of whom grew up during the Second World War and see it as their duty to warn the younger generation to protect democracy from the fascism they witnessed firsthand.

Fears about a retreat of democracy have been growing in Germany again recently, not least because of the rising popularity of the far-right AfD.

Grandmas Against the Right says its aim is to oppose a range of related issues, including racism and misogyny. «We are a civil society, non-partisan initiative,» says the German group's website.

The German branch says it was founded on January 27, 2018. While the name of the group refers to grandmas, the association is made up of men and women alike. It is unclear how many people are part of the

group, which is largely decentralized.

«In the last three weeks, the number of members in the association has more than quadrupled,» says Anna Ohnweiler from Nagold in southern Germany, one of the founders of the movement.

In Germany, many local groups are independent of the association. Ohnweiler estimates that at least 30,000 members come to the demonstrations, while more new groups are still being founded in smaller towns and communities.

In Hanover, Uta Saenger, 70, runs the local Grandmas Against the Right - though there are some middle-aged men and women in the group too.

Saenger considers campaigning against Nazis and misanthropy as a full-time job. «I see it as an obligation for our generation to pass on our experiences and warn people not to repeat what happened in the past,» she says.



OIC Participates in the Meeting of Special Envoys for Afghanistan



The Special Envoy of the OIC Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, participated in the meeting of Special Envoys for Afghanistan, kindly hosted by Qatar on 18-19 February 2024, and chaired by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres.

During his interventions in the meeting, Amb. Bakheet affirmed the OIC's commitment to supporting Afghanistan and engaging in constructive dialogue with the de facto authorities in Afghanistan on issues and topics included in the relevant resolutions of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. He reviewed the OIC's efforts in this regard, including providing humanitarian assistance, dispatching delegations of scholars, and holding a Conference on Women's Rights in Islam, kindly hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Amb. Bakheet stressed that the situation in Afghanistan will be among the priority items on the agenda of the Islamic Summit in The Gambia and the Council of Foreign Ministers in Cameroon.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Amb. Bakheet held several meetings with a number of international Special Envoys for Afghanistan.

On the other hand, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General

for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs, and Special Envoy of the OIC Secretary-General for Afghanistan, was received on 9 February 2024, at the headquarters of the Foreign Ministry in Dushanbe, by H.E.

The OIC General Secretariat urged the de facto authorities in Kabul to step up efforts in order to stand against any terrorist groups still operating on the Afghan soil

Mr. Sirojiddin MUHRIDDIN, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan.

After delivering a written message from the Secretary-General to the Uzbek Minister, the two parties discussed the efforts of the OIC and Tajikistan to support the Afghan people, in light of the resolutions ad-

opted by the Council of Foreign Ministers in this regard. They also exchanged views on issues of mutual interest, especially in relation to humanitarian, cultural, and social affairs. They agreed to keep the momentum resulting from their fruitful mutual cooperation, while highlighting the commitment of Tajikistan to support the OIC goals, as well as its active role in hosting multiple OIC events and activities.

In a different context, the OIC General Secretariat condemned in the strongest terms the two bomb attacks that took place on 22 March 2024 in Kandahar city in southern Afghanistan and in the capital city of Kabul. The devastating suicide bomb attack in Kandahar left many casualties, with tens of injured. There have been no reports yet about the casualties resulting from the Kabul bombing.

The abominable twin terror attacks were perpetrated in the blessed month of Ramadan, causing carnage among civilian Afghans at a time supposed to be one dedicated to spiritual devotion and piety.

While recognizing that the security situation across Afghanistan has improved recently, the OIC General Secretariat urged the de facto authorities in Kabul to step up efforts in order to stand against any terrorist groups still operating on the Afghan soil.

OIC Secretary-General Holds Talks with Russian Officials



The OIC Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on March 6, 2024, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, H.E. Mr. Azat Kadyrov, First Deputy Minister of Sports of the Russian Federation, and his accompanying delegation.

The meeting discussed ways of strengthening cooperation and coordination between the Russian Federation and the OIC General Secretariat in the areas of youth empowerment and sports development, including the Russian Federation's two projects: the Kazan Islamic Youth Games in 2025 and the Kazan Global Youth Summit in August 2024.

The Secretary-General expressed appreciation for the two projects, and commended the Russian Federation's active role and close cooperation, as an Observer Member of the OIC, in achieving the goals and objectives spelled out in the OIC Charter, as well as in promoting agendas of common interest.

The Secretary-General congratulated the Deputy Minister on the successful organization of the Second Kazan Global Youth Summit in 2023, wishing success for the Islamic Youth Games Championship, scheduled for 2025. He indicated that the General Secretariat stands ready to cooperate in order to ensure the success of these events, in coordination with the relevant OIC bod-

ies and institutions, and in cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the Fifth Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers.

The Secretary-General stressed that youth and sports issues rank high on the OIC agenda, proceeding from the Organization's firm belief that global peace, security, and prosperity in the world will remain at stake unless the challenges faced by young people are addressed, by engaging them, working with them, defending their rights, and involving them in the decision-making process.

On January 8, 2024, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received Mr. Iliyas Umakhanov, a Member of the Senate of the Russian Federation, Commissioner for Hajj Affairs in the Government of the Russian Federation.

The meeting discussed ways of enhancing cooperation between the Islamic world and the Russian Federation at all political, economic, social, and cultural levels, as well as in the science and technology fields.

Both parties emphasized the importance of pursuing joint efforts to further enhance these relations in ways that benefit their people and promote security, stability, and sustainable development.

On March 19, 2024, the OIC Secretary-Gen-

eral, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received His Eminence the Grand Mufti of the Chechen Republic, Salah-Haji Mezhev.

During the meeting, the Mufti informed the Secretary-General about the state of Muslims in Chechnya, and Russia's efforts to promote religious tolerance and coexistence.

His Eminence conveyed the greetings of Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov to the Secretary-General and extended to him an invitation to visit Chechnya to see first-hand the country's development and progress, and the security and peace prevailing in it.

For his part, the Secretary-General commended the Chechen leadership's efforts to promote the image of contemporary Islam and to strengthen security, stability, and peaceful coexistence among the followers of different religions. He indicated that the OIC is keen to support efforts aimed at promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue, being part of the high ideals of Islam. On January 2, 2024, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, H.E. Ambassador Turko Daudov who presented his Letter of Credence as Permanent Observer of the Russian Federation to the OIC.

OIC Hosts “Kashmir Solidarity Day”

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, spoke at a Photo Exhibition held at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on 5 February 2024, featuring the gross human rights violations in the Indian illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

The Secretary-General expressed the OIC’s delight in hosting this event organized by the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the OIC, on the occasion of “Kashmir Solidarity Day”.

He stressed that the OIC has consistently called for a just and peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions. He reiterated his call for the full implementation of the relevant UN resolutions, which emphasize the right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir.

The Secretary-General recalled that the 49th Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Nouakchott in March 2023, had urged India to reverse all the illegal and unilateral measures taken since 5 August 2019, to put



an end to the gross, systematic, and widespread human rights abuses in occupied Jammu and Kashmir; and to allow unrestricted access to the IIOJK for UN institutions, international media, and independent

observers. He recalled, in this regard, the visit paid by his Special Envoy for Jammu and Kashmir, Amb. Yousef Al-Dobeay, to Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

OIC Observes Elections in Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Comoros and Russia

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, congratulated, in a phone conversation on 10 February 2024, H.E. President Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on his re-election as President of Azerbaijan. He affirmed that his re-election testifies to the confidence placed in him by the Azerbaijani people to continue his high mission of consolidating peace and stability and ensuring the continued development and prosperity of Azerbaijan.

The Secretary-General reiterated to President Ilham Aliyev and his Government the OIC’s congratulations for the efforts undertaken for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the territories liberated following the conflict with the Republic of Armenia. For his part, President Ilham Aliyev expressed Azerbaijan’s gratitude for the OIC’s constant support to his country.

At the invitation of the Government of Azerbaijan, a high-level delegation of observers from the OIC General Secretariat had been dispatched to observe the early presidential elections held in Azerbaijan on 7 February 2024. The OIC team monitored

the three stages of the election process: pre-voting preparations, election day, and vote counting.

On January 13, 2024, H.E. Mr. Azali Assoumani, President of the Union of Comoros,

*President of the Union
of Comoros, received a
delegation from the OIC
General Secretariat*

received a delegation from the OIC General Secretariat to observe the presidential and governors’ elections for the three islands, held on January 14, 2024. The delegation was dispatched at the invitation of the Comoros Foreign Minister.

The mission conveyed the greetings of H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, to the President of the Comoros, and commended the efforts made by the Comorian government to provide favorable conditions for holding the elections.

The OIC General Secretariat dispatched an Election Observation Mission to observe the Presidential Elections in the Republic of Indonesia, held on February 14, 2024. The Mission noted with satisfaction that the voting was conducted in an open, peaceful, and orderly manner in conformity with the Indonesian electoral law and internationally accepted norms.

The OIC General Secretariat dispatched an Election Observation Mission to observe the Presidential Elections in the Russian Federation, held in March 2024. The OIC team observed the electoral process in several polling stations in Moscow and its outskirts, and held meetings with Russian officials and representatives of the Election Commission. The OIC team was briefed about the organization of the electoral process and the measures taken to ensure its success.



Marrakesh

City of the «Seven Patrons», Culture Capital in the Islamic World for 2024

The opening ceremony for the “Marrakesh, Culture Capital in the Islamic World 2024” event was organized on January 27, 2024 in the Red City, under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI.

In celebration of this event, Marrakesh plays host to a series of cultural, intellectual, and artistic activities that highlight various aspects of the Islamic civilization.

This celebration offers a significant opportunity to highlight the richness of the city, which, thanks to its centuries-old civilization and cultural and intellectual standing, has a special charm, with its Andalusian architecture, mosques, and gardens, alongside its diverse oral heritage, all bearing witness to the richness and uniqueness of the city's tangible and intangible heritage.

Marrakesh, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1985, is witnessing continuous urban development thanks to the Royal program: “Marrakesh, City of Permanent Renewal”.

The official kick-off ceremony, held at Meydene Theater in Marrakesh, was attended by Mr. Mohammed Mehdi Bensaid, Minister of Youth, Culture and Communication, Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, Director-General of ICESCO, Mr. Enaam Mayara, President of the House of Councilors, Mr. Farid Chourak,

Wali of the Marrakech-Safi region, Governor of Marrakech prefecture, and Mr. Mohamed Idrissi, First Deputy Mayor of the Communal Council of Marrakech, along with a number of Ambassadors of Arab and Islamic countries and prominent figures from the world of thought and culture.

A video was screened during this ceremony, showcasing the main landmarks and features of the historic and ancient city of Marrakech, the city of the “Seven Patrons”, which embodies the values of coexistence, tolerance, pluralism, joy, and the art of living.

In his address on this occasion, Dr. AlMalik, Director-General of ICESCO, highlighted the Red City's historical monuments, lofty walls, luxurious palaces, green gardens, and crowded streets, making it a city of inspiration. He noted that the choice of the city of Marrakesh as the Capital of Culture in the Islamic World for 2024 is not by chance, being a city of ancient history, uniqueness, art, and cultural creativity in all its forms. He commended the high patronage granted by His Majesty King Mohammed VI to this event. “Wherever you go in the city of Marrakesh”, he said, “you come across footprints of past history, while the present and future skillfully takes you to a world of mag-

ic, joy, beauty and charm.”

For his part, Mr. Bensaid pointed out that the choice of Marrakesh as Culture Capital in the Islamic world for 2024 is a token of recognition for the Red City's cultural dynamism and progress in all fields. He underlined the worldwide reputation enjoyed by the city of Marrakesh, indicating that this celebration offers a precious opportunity to better publicize the heritage of Marrakesh, and of Morocco in general, by organizing a series of cultural events and activities.

The Ministry, he added, will spare no effort, in partnership with ICESCO and the City's Communal Council, to make sure the activities held as part of this event meet the aspirations and expectations of the residents, and all lovers, of Marrakesh.

The opening ceremony of this event, organized by ICESCO over a full year, featured a wonderful performance by the “Fnaïre” Group and Artist Nabyla Maân, author of the event's official song. The audience also enjoyed the musical rhythms and dances performed by Artist Yassine Lachheb, along with the “Gnaoua show” and a performance by Unity Dance Group, directed by choreographer Zakaria Bennane.

Symposium on “Ramadan: A Collective Rite for Muslims”



The OIC General Secretariat and the Gulf Research Centre in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia held, on 27 March 2024 at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, a cultural symposium titled: “Ramadan: A Collective Rite for Muslims”. The Symposium was attended by H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, and H.E. Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, President of the Gulf Research Center.

In his speech on his occasion, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, indicated that the Symposium highlights the central importance of cultural work as a means of bridging gaps, strengthening ties among peoples, disseminating the eternal Islamic values, and enhancing the diversity of the Islamic cultural heritage. This, he added, would enrich the cultural scene and highlight cultural diversity as an added value for Islamic countries within the OIC, which constitutes the overarching framework for the Islamic Ummah.

The Secretary-General insisted that all parties, be they States, institutions, or individuals, are called on to work for spreading the Islamic culture, renewing its contents, revitalizing its message, and celebrating its cultural and civilizational glories in all fields of sciences and knowledge, in addition to promoting dialogue among cultures and

civilizations, and spreading the values of co-existence and mutual understanding among peoples; thereby reflecting the true image of the Islamic civilization within which all races coexist and which constitutes a meeting point between continents and peoples. The Secretary-General stressed that there is nothing better than the rituals and blessings of the holy month of Ramadan in promoting cohesion and strengthening ties among all members of society. He indicated that the OIC has placed the development of thought and culture at the forefront of its priorities. Cultural work is one of the main focus areas of the programs undertaken by the OIC and its organs and institutions, the aim being to draw up a cultural map of the Islamic world, from Machreq to Maghreb, showcasing to the world its wealth of diversity and multiplicity.

The Secretary-General expressed his deepest thanks and gratitude to all participants, commending the significant role undertaken by the Gulf Research Center in enriching Islamic cultural and intellectual work, and for the great efforts deployed for the organization of this important symposium that came out with valuable recommendations on ways to take best advantage of the holy month of Ramadan and all the ethical, humanitarian, and social values associated with it.

The Secretary-General expressed his delight to be present at this important cultural sym-

posium and in the blessed month of Ramadan, the month of the Qur’an, the month of fasting and piety, the month of forgiveness, the month of generosity, charity, and giving. He stressed that the Symposium lays the ground for a fruitful cooperation between the OIC and the Gulf Research Centre to serve the interests of Muslim peoples and Member States.

The Symposium was attended by a number of ambassadors, guests of honor, and prominent personalities, intellectuals, and scholars from all over the Muslim world. It addressed several themes reflecting the cultural and social dimensions of the holy month of Ramadan in the OIC countries. These include: “Ramadan: a universal diplomatic ritual”; “Ramadan in the Life of Islamic Peoples”; and “The Cultural and social dimension of Ramadan: diverse experiences”.

A Memorandum of Cooperation between the OIC and the Gulf Research Centre was signed during the Symposium, with Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs signing on behalf of the OIC, and Dr. Abdulaziz Sager on behalf of the Gulf Research Centre. The Memorandum serves as a framework for joint action between the two parties for sharing expertise and organizing joint events.

S.G. Congratulates the Islamic World on the Advent of Ramadan



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, hosted, on 18 March 2024 in Jeddah, a Ramadan event featuring an Iftar (fast-breaking) dinner that brought together Permanent Representatives of OIC Member States, Consuls General, and diplomats from non-OIC Member States, as well as heads of Jeddah-based OIC organs, subsidiary, specialized and affiliated institutions. Also in attendance were Assistant Secretaries-General and staff members of the OIC General Secretariat, guests of honor representing various sectors in Saudi Arabia, journalists, and intellectuals. The event offered a significant opportunity to further strengthen ties between the OIC and its host environment in Jeddah, and to forge contacts and cooperation with various institutions based in this old coastal city.

At the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, HH Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, participated in the Iftar ceremony held by the Saudi Foreign Ministry for heads of diplomatic missions, regional bodies and offices, and international organizations accredited to Saudi Arabia. The ceremony was held on March 21, 2024, at the headquarters of the Saudi Foreign in Riyadh, and was attended by the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Eng. Waleed bin Abdulkarim Al-

Khereiji, on behalf of HH Prince Faisal bin Farhan. The OIC Secretary-General extended his congratulations to the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan.

The OIC Secretary-General, Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, had extended warm congratulations to the Muslim Ummah on the advent of the blessed month of Ramadan 1445AH. He congratulated the OIC host country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and Crown Prince and Prime Minister HRH Prince Mohamed Bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, as well as all Leaders of the OIC Member States, and all Muslim peoples. He prayed to the almighty Allah to send forth, in this holy month, His blessings and security on the Muslim Ummah, in order to see an end to crises and conflicts in all parts of the Muslim world. He stressed, on this occasion, the OIC's grave concern over the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip languishing under starvation, blockade, and bombardment by the Israeli occupation forces, which has caused disastrous conditions for women, children, and the elderly.

The Secretary-General expressed his wish that Allah would grant victory and support to the Palestinian people and liberate Al-Aqsa Mosque from the clutches of

the Israeli occupation; that Ramadan would bring hope for a ceasefire and a definitive end to the war waged against the Palestinian people; that stability would return to Sudan; and that security and harmony would prevail in Muslim communities in non-OIC Member States, which would help strengthen the foundations of societal peace and global security.

The OIC General Secretariat also took part in the annual Iftar ceremony held by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, H.E. Hun Manet, on March 21, 2024, in the capital, Phnom Penh, with the participation of 6,000 persons from various parts of the country. The ceremony was also attended by prominent political and religious figures from Cambodia and Southeastern Asian countries, and members of the diplomatic corps. In his statement on this occasion, delivered on his behalf by Mr. Habib Boran, Director of Muslim Communities and Minorities in Non-Member States at the Department of Political Affairs, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, expressed his gratitude to the leadership of the Kingdom of Cambodia for hosting this annual event. He stressed that this celebration reflects Cambodia's respect for the values of diversity, tolerance, and mutual understanding, noting that its commitment to promoting peaceful integration.

Ramadan and the Awakening Project

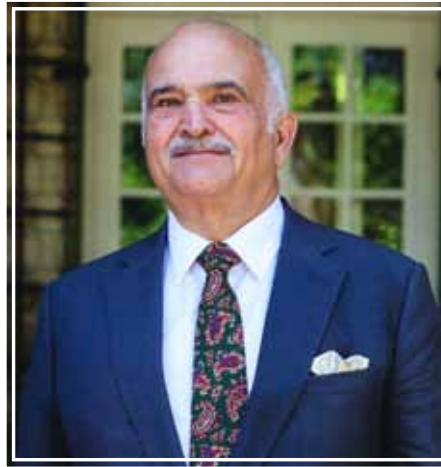
His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal Ramadan, the month of mercy, blessings, and worship is upon us. Inspired by its spirit, we are driven, in view of the harsh conditions facing our Arab and Islamic Ummah and the entire world, to contemplate our priorities as a Ummah with a noble mission: spreading the values of goodness, virtue, and love among the nations and peoples of the Earth. In that way, the holy month will serve as a period for reflection and soul-searching through which we aim to put our own house in order.

The teachings and commands of Islam encompass immense potentials, opening up avenues for Man to explore the latent possibilities within his individual existence and his social and cosmic scope. Among these is fasting, which gives Man the opportunity to rediscover his individual will and direct it towards the spiritual and social goals to achieve the common good in all its forms and manifestations.

Delving into the spiritual depth of fasting is an entry point to discovering the true essence of Islam, which many people have overlooked in our current era in which Western material globalization has culturally and digitally dominated the minds of many in our societies in the global South. The declared purpose of fasting is piety, and piety encompasses all forms of goodness at all levels: individual, societal, and cosmic.

If the true essence of fasting is abstinence from the daily patterns of living that we are accustomed to, then such an act of worship enhances our ability to break the shackles of bondage to needs, to liberate ourselves from the yoke of all things material, and to empathize with our brothers in Gaza, Sudan, and elsewhere who are suffering from famine, hardships, food and medicine shortages, contamination of drinking water, and other forms of starvation, oppression, and deprivation. Clearly, all these violations are of an arbitrary and criminal nature.

In the face of all this, emotional solidarity, extremely important though it is, is no longer sufficient, especially in light of these aggressive behaviors that run counter to religious directives, international norms, and rational judgments. We, therefore, need to move to earnest action in an endeavor to alleviate the suffering inflicted upon our brothers by the tyranny of oppressors, and invaders.



His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal

The time has come to think of a mechanism of global human solidarity in the face of tyranny and propensity for invasion and occupation, and in the face of extremists, whatever their backgrounds. It is time to break down the walls and lines of separation between East and West and between human races, which have become more rigid than the Maginot Line.

The killing, starvation, and destruction perpetrated against the people of Palestine in Gaza Hashem, where Sheikh Al-Hawashim, Hashem bin Abd Manaf, rests, and in Al Quds where Sharif Hussein bin Ali is buried, and throughout the entire occupied territories, along with all this distress and deprivation that we see on the screens and read and hear about, should bring us out of a state of pity and sympathy, into a practical reality in which we extend a helping hand to those who are afflicted, displaced and marginalized. Alongside providing them with food aid, we should offer them the needed medical and psychological care to alleviate the horror of what they have lived through, because treating their wounds is the beginning of the healing process and the mending of the deep rifts caused by the crises. All those living in similar circumstances, and all those affected by political crises that run counter to humanitarian principles, should stand together in this endeavor.

Fasting is thus a "voluntary poverty" through which people are brought face to face with what social justice means to them. For the economic disparities existing among individuals may lead them to lose the sense of

equality and cause many of the rich to ignore the poor and their suffering. Fasting, in fact, helps achieve this equality by rebuilding the sense of unity and reducing class differences among people.

Ramadan reminds us of the close relationship between worship and work. Work is the fruit of faith and an act of obedience that Allah loves and for which Man is rewarded. From this standpoint, the holy month should serve as an incentive to enhance productivity and increase achievements. This is attested to by history, which tells us that many victories were won and many glorious feats occurred in this holy month. Fasting is not about passivity, laziness, or shirking responsibilities. Rather, it is an act of spiritual worship that drives us to work and dedication.

If Islam constantly calls upon Muslims to progress toward a better state, in all fields of life, then we can say that the message of Islam is linked to the concept of Awakening. From the perspective of Islam, awakening begins when the free will that drives Man to change his reality springs up in his heart. The emergence of this free will requires a qualitative leap from Man's awareness of his own inadequacy to awareness of his dignity, reason, and ability to transcend the intellectual patterns prevailing in his social environment. In this context, the process of advancement becomes a comprehensive civilizational project that does not depend on a stage where society feels wronged or weak, but rather extends to serve as a renewed goal that encompasses the entire course of human history.

Finally, Ramadan reminds us of our direct relationship with the Creator, and the greatness of supplication and invocation ("And when My servants ask you about Me, I am indeed near most. I respond to the call of the supplicant when he calls upon me. So let them respond to Me and believe in Me, so that they may fare rightly"). It also reminds us not to forget the kindness and benevolence among us ("and do good as Allah has done good to you"). May Allah, the Most Merciful, make the month of Ramadan the month in which we see an end to the bloodshed in beloved Palestine. May Allah bless you in the month of Ramadan and accept your obedience.

An article from Al-Ahram newspaper (March 13, 2024)

Ramadan Fanoos Originated in Souk Ash-Shamma'in



Cairo – Hajjaj Salama (DPA)

Cairo's historic souks (markets) attracted Arab travelers and historians, as well as orientalist artists and writers. Dozens of Arab and foreign sources described those ancient markets that spread so extensively that the Egyptian capital almost became the "city of markets", according to researchers who enriched the Arab library with many edited works on the history of these markets over the past centuries and provided an accurate description of them.

As travelers pointed out, the shopping frenzy in Cairo's ancient souks during Ramadan was all the more interesting and exciting as people used to buy their cooked food from the souks, a situation that continued until the beginning of the French campaign in the late 18th century. This was due to the scarcity and expensiveness of the fuel needed for home cooking. The Iftar (breaking the fast) time was preceded by the hustle and bustle that extended until Suhoor (pre-fast-meal) time.

One of the food oddities that used to be sold at the marketplace during Ramadan was sugar-baked chicken, known as "Fus-toqiyya" when served with pistachios, or "Jawziyya" when served with walnuts. In the 8th and 9th centuries AH, the holy

month of Ramadan used to bring a hectic flurry of activity to Souk Ash-Shamma'in (candle-seller market), to which the Ramadan "Fanoos" (lantern) owed its appearance, according to historical sources. As with Souk Ash-Shamma'in, Ramadan was a busy month for the markets and shops that used to sell various types of dried fruits.

In Ramadan, the intense activity of Souk Ash-Shamma'in was matched only by the bustle of the markets and shops, which used to sell different types of dried fruits and Qamaruddin (apricot fruit leather). Possibly the best known of these markets was Souk Al-Sukariyya, in Bab Zuwayla, where dried fruits and Qamaruddin would be displayed near the shop doors and sold at a cheap price, much to the delight of both rich and poor. These delicacies would also be offered to guests and distributed as sweet treats to the local children who would go from house to house with their lit lanterns to greet their residents.

Sources indicate that "Islamic Egypt" during the rule of the Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk dynasties witnessed a period of cultural and economic prosperity, whose most obvious manifestations were Cairo's markets, which were active in the Fatimid period, de-

veloped in the Ayyubid period, and reached the peak of opulence and prosperity in the Mamluk period. These markets were at their respective times a hub of global trade, and they continued to be popular among the Arab and Islamic markets throughout antiquity.

The interest that Arab and Orientalist travelers and historians showed for the study and chronicling of Cairo's souks was ignited thanks both to the place that those markets occupied in the past, and also to the fact that they were a source for understanding much about economic, social, and political life in Egypt.

In his book "Cairo Markets from the Fatimid Period to the End of the Mamluk Period", issued by the Egyptian General Book Authority, Sheikh Al-Amin Muhammad Awadallah included a list of dozens of references and sources, including manuscripts and books, that chronicled the expansion, development, and proliferation of Cairo's markets in those periods. According to the author, there existed markets for food, drink, and clothing; others for animals and birds; still others for gold, silver, and copper, in addition to other specialized markets that the Egyptian capital knew in the past.

OIC and KSGAAL Celebrate World Arabic Language Day



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language (KSGAAL) jointly held a celebration event to mark the World Arabic Language Day, observed on December 18th of each year. Under the patronage of HH Prince Bandar bin Abdullah bin Farhan, Saudi Minister of Culture, and Chair of the KSGAAL Board of Trustees, the event was held at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on January 14, 2024, under the theme "Arabic: The Language of Poetry and Arts". In his opening speech, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha stated: "I am honored to welcome you all to the new headquarters of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the occasion of the celebration of World Arabic Language Day, observed on December 18th of each year, the day on which the United Nations General Assembly issued, in 1973, its decision to include the Arabic language among the official languages of the United Nations. I avail myself of this opportunity to extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the OIC host country, for its great efforts in supporting the Organization and serving the goals for which it was founded."

The Secretary-General highlighted the significance of Arabic, the language of the

Holy Quran, as a key component of the performance of worship and prayer in Islam. Arabic, he added, is one of the oldest, most spoken, utilized, and widespread languages worldwide, having significantly contributed throughout history to enriching human civilization.

The Secretary-General recalled that the OIC, keen on giving the Arabic language the due attention it deserves, and in cooperation with, and by initiative of, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, adopted a resolution (No. 13/49) at the 49th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held in March 2023 in Nouakchott, Mauritania, regarding the celebration of the World Arabic Language Day, in an endeavor to enhance its presence in human thought as well as its use in regional and international fora.

The Secretary-General expressed hope that cooperation with KSGAAL will be expanded to encompass other activities designed to enhance the presence of the Arabic language, build the capacities of the relevant institutions in the Member States, and organize world-class cultural events in pursuit of shared goals. He concluded by expressing his deep thanks and appreciation to KSGAAL for its valuable cooperation, looking forward to further cooperation with all relevant actors, in Saudi Arabia and in other

Member States, sharing the OIC's goals and objectives.

For his part, H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Saleh Al-Washmi, Secretary-General of KSGAAL, expressed his gratitude to the OIC Secretary-General and the staff of the General Secretariat for their cooperation in the organization of this event at the OIC headquarters.

The Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the OIC, H.E. Dr. Saleh bin Hamad Al-Suhaibani, highlighted the importance of the diverse cultural heritage of the Arabic language, pointing out that Arabic is not only the first language of Muslims but also a key contributor to their rich culture.

H.E. Shahin Abdullayev, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, highlighted the history of the Arabic language in Azerbaijan, and stressed his country's efforts to provide attention to Arabic and promote its teaching.

The event featured two-panel sessions, a poetry session with the participation of poets from Member States, and an exhibition of Arabic poetry. Emphasis was laid, in all these activities, on the significance of the Arabic language and its rich contribution to building the human civilization.

Empowering the Deaf and the Mute: The Indonesian Experience

Reflecting on the contributions of certain Indonesian individuals and students who lived and studied in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, particularly in Tunisia and Libya, highlights the innovative efforts led by Brother Muhammad Fawwaz Yasser. His creative idea to empower and serve the Deaf and Mute Community through the introduction of the Electronic Masdar (EM) on a digital platform is noteworthy.

This EM platform was facilitated and presented by the Indonesian Mission at the Congress on Arab International Languages during the Commemoration of Arabic International Day, held from December 18-20, 2021, in Tripoli, Libya. Indonesia's participation was significant, given its status as a large Muslim country and a founding member of the Organization of Islamic Countries, now known as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The Congress, attended by prominent figures and scholars of the Arabic language, focused on exploring the extensive research on Arabic and its contribution to national and international development. Participants delved into the technical and substantive aspects of learning and studying the Holy Qur'an, which is written in Arabic. The Qur'an, the Revelation of God Almighty Allah to His Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) through the Angel Jibril, was codified by the Prophet's companions.

As a gathering focused on science and religious-oriented discussions, participants were reminded of the universal values of the Qur'an, which are integral to the Arabic language. These values are accessible to all, aiding understanding, translation, and the management of the universal signs of creation for the benefit of life both in this world and the hereafter. To understand the greatness of the Universe, one must comprehend the miraculous words of Revelation in the Qur'an.

In this context, the Indonesian participants presented the Electronic Masdar (EM) at the International Congress, emphasizing its objective to fulfill the commitment to "Education for All," ensuring that no one, especially the Deaf and Mute communities, is left behind. It was acknowledged that the EM was a preliminary reference that should be upgraded in the future. The digital introduction of the EM is available at the following link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/15_mxm83_gAD0lgj4ynXteN-7EkXDLgnU/view?usp=drivesdk. While references for reading the Mushaf for the Deaf and Mute are scarce, the digital EM publication was a breakthrough achieved through the collaboration of grassroots communities (Indonesian society abroad and the Indonesian Deaf and Mute Community/MTTI). This initiative was appreciated by the Grand Imam of Istiqlal Mosque and the Chief Education Centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who recognized the EM publication as unusual due to its integration of language comprehension and sign language expertise. This initial EM publication has become a tool for national empowerment and international cooperation.

Moreover, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, in collaboration with experts in sign language and linguistic scholars, published the first hybrid (hard and digital) Mushaf Al-Qur'an for the Deaf and Mute, launched in October 2023: <https://quran.kemenag.go.id/>.

The Committee of Lajnah Pentashih Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ) provided clear guidelines for stakeholders and users, enhancing opportunities for national and international collaboration to support the active participation of the Deaf and Mute Community in public life.

Many researchers and intellectuals assert that the development of science has been inspired by the contents of the Qur'an. Studying the Qur'an has fostered communication and cooperation among countries and communities globally. The Indonesian Mushaf Al-Qur'an for the Deaf and Mute enriches global references for those requiring special assistance. While the world has religious books and Mushafs in Braille for the Blind, publications for the Deaf and Mute are rare. Indonesia now possesses a valuable asset to support national and potentially global needs.

This achievement underscores Indonesia's progress in literacy. Since gaining independence, Indonesia has remarkably improved its literacy rate to over 90% by 2022. Indonesia is now focusing on communities with special needs, despite limited resources, and is open to collaborating with national and international stakeholders to develop further. This aligns with the constitutional commitment to "Education for All."

The publication of the EM and the Mushaf for the Deaf and Mute demonstrates that Indonesian intellectual grassroots and the State are committed to inclusive development. May Allah Azza wa Jalla guide all Indonesians. Aamiin Ya Robbal 'Aalamiin.



**Mohammad
Amar Ma'ruf,**

*a Career Diplomat of the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of
the Republic of Indonesia*

*While references
for reading the Mu-
shaf for the Deaf and
Mute are scarce, the
digital EM publica-
tion was a break-
through achieved
through the collabo-
ration of grassroots
communities.*



OIC and KSRelief Inaugurate Humanitarian Projects in Somalia

The Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, H.E. Mr. Hamza Abdi Barre, inaugurated the humanitarian projects funded by King Salman Humanitarian Aid & Relief Centre (KSRelief) via the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The event took place in Mogadishu on January 28, 2024, in the presence of Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs, representing H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, and H.E. Dr. Abdullah Al Rabeeah, Adviser to the Royal Court and Supervisor General of KSRelief.

In his statement on this occasion, delivered on his behalf by the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs, the OIC Secretary-General pointed out that the OIC has been a long-standing supporter of Somalia, providing aid and support to this founding Member State throughout the years, especially during the war period and in the post-conflict peace-building phase.

During his participation in the project inauguration and handover ceremony organized by the Center in Mogadishu,

Amb. Bakheet commended the strategic partnership between the OIC and KSRelief, which has had a profound impact on the Somali people thanks to the implementation of tens of KSRelief-funded projects, especially in the fields of health, education, and urgent relief. He recalled that since 2011, the OIC has implemented numerous humanitarian and development projects, with generous support from Saudi Arabia, extended through KSRelief as part of an enhanced and fruitful partnership between the OIC and KSRelief. He expressed his thanks and gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, for the generous humanitarian support offered by Saudi Arabia which continuously provides aid and relief to all those in need wherever they are.

Over the past few years, KSRelief has allocated funding to various projects involving, in particular, the construction, restoration, and equipping of educational and health facilities. KSRelief has entirely constructed 15 schools and refurbished 18 others, in ad-

dition to restoring and operating a number of health facilities. Currently, the Organization operates two health centers in "Abudwak" and "Bir Jdid", with funding from KSRelief.

Amb. Bakheet underlined the significant and vital role played by KSRelief in humanitarian work, and its contributions to combating multidimensional poverty in Somalia, through its continuous support to various sectors. He expressed deep appreciation for the strategic partnership between the OIC and KSRelief, affirming the OIC's commitment to further strengthening this relationship in a manner that serves the noble goals and mandates of the Organization and the Center. He also commended KSRelief for supporting the Somali Ministry of Health by providing 15 ambulances, which will be critical in addressing the country's humanitarian and security challenges. These ambulances were officially delivered to the Somali Ministry of Health during the event.

On the sidelines of this event, Dr. Al-Rabeeah met with Amb. Bakheet, in the presence of the Director-General of the OIC Regional Mission in Somalia.

37th Session of the ICIC Addresses Gaza Tragedy

The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) participated in the 37th session of the Islamic Committee of the International Crescent (ICIC), held virtually in Amman, Jordan on 16 April 2024. The OIC delegation was led by Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs.

On behalf of the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Amb. Bakheet expressed deep gratitude and appreciation to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the kind initiative to host this session, and for all the arrangements made to ensure its success. He added that the holding of the 37th session of the ICIC in Amman is further evidence of the support provided by Jordan to the OIC and its institutions, and its keenness to strengthen joint Islamic action and inter-Islamic solidarity.

Amb. Bakheet noted that the session took place at a time when Israel continues to escalate its acts of genocide against the defenseless people of Palestine in Gaza, in

plain disregard for international law, human values, and divine laws, with the occupation forces continuing to impede the arrival of aid to the people of Gaza. He called for concerted efforts and initiatives across the Red Crescent societies in the Muslim world to contain the fallout of the grave humanitarian tragedy in the Gaza Strip whose people are in need of most basic necessities of life. International humanitarian values and international law are being subjected to horrific violations, while the UN Security Council, supposed to be the guardian of international peace and security, seems to be ineffective and powerless to stop the ongoing humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip.

Amb. Bakheet also pointed out that this session was being held in the midst of serious humanitarian challenges facing the Muslim world, including natural disasters and other humanitarian crises caused by conflicts and wars, which requires intensifying effective efforts to mitigate their various impacts, developing humanitarian action mechanisms to confront these challenges, and establish-

ing further partnerships with the humanitarian community.

Amb. Bakheet commended the humanitarian activities undertaken by the ICIC in serving those affected by conflicts, being a specialized OIC body concerned with providing humanitarian services to victims of crises and disasters. He took this opportunity to call on all Member States to support the ICIC's budget so that it can fulfill its urgent obligations in providing humanitarian services to those affected by humanitarian disasters.

Amb. Bakheet concluded by affirming his confidence that the participants in the 37th session of the ICIC would extensively discuss all humanitarian issues of concern to the Islamic world, and would come up with recommendations involving concrete actions to strengthen joint efforts and enhance performance in the face of urgent humanitarian challenges.

The session, which ran over two days, reviewed the activities undertaken by the Islamic Committee of the International Crescent in various humanitarian fields.





On International Women's Day and in the Presence of WDO Executive Director: Secretary-General Honors Female Staff Members of the OIC General Secretariat

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, held a celebration event, on March 10, 2024, in honor of the female staff members of the General Secretariat, in appreciation of their efforts and active engagement in pursuit of the OIC goals and mandate. The event took place at the OIC's headquarters in Jeddah, and was attended by Dr. Afnan Al-Shuaibi, Executive Director of the Women Development Organization (WDO).

In his statement on this occasion, the Secretary-General expressed his thanks and appreciation to the female staff members of the General Secretariat, as well as to their female colleagues working in the offices of the OIC's external missions, for their excellent work and high sense of professional-

ism. This, he added, reflects their keen interest in achieving success and contributing to the implementation of the OIC goals in the service of Member States. He emphasized his interest in providing a work environment that promotes diversity and equality between male and female staff members in the OIC General Secretariat in pursuit of proficiency and professionalism. The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received Dr. Afnan Al-Shuaibi, Executive Director of the Women Development Organization (WDO). He commended the WDO's efforts in empowering women, building and enhancing their capabilities, and guaranteeing their rights and participation in the country's development. He reaffirmed the General Secretariat's commitment to providing all forms of support

to the WDO so that it can best achieve its goals in serving women's issues in the Member States. He reiterated his call on Member States that have not yet joined the WDO to promptly complete the procedures for signing and ratifying the WDO's Statute, in order to support its efforts in the implementation of its goals.

The Secretary-General affirmed the OIC's solidarity with Palestinian women suffering under the yoke of the Israeli aggression. He reiterated his call on the international community to assume its responsibilities in immediately putting an end to this massacre and unconditionally allowing the delivery of humanitarian aid to all those affected and to the families of the victims.

OIC and Tajikistan Discuss Social Issues

The Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, Social, and Family Affairs, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, met, on February 9, 2024, with the Chair of the Committee for Women and Family Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Mrs. Bunafsha Fayziddinzoda.

Both sides discussed the follow-up to the OIC

resolutions related to promoting the rights of women and children and consolidating the institution of the family, being the most valuable asset in society. They expressed their satisfaction with the outcomes of the International Conference on Women in Islam, recently hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in which an official delegation from Tajikistan

took part.

Both parties agreed on the necessity to share best practices in promoting the welfare of families, women and children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities in the OIC countries, through organizing focused joint events and launching sustainable and constructive discussions on these issues among Member States.



OIC Celebrates Muslim Women's Achievements in Science and Technology

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation celebrated the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, an annual UN event held on February 11th of each year to celebrate the achievements and contributions of women and girls in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and to highlight the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the scientific community. The OIC stressed, on this occasion, that it attaches special attention to the promotion and empowerment of women in Member States, as well as to highlighting their contributions in various fields, including science and technology. This is reflected specifically in the resolution on the promotion of women's education in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, adopted by the 8th Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in Development in OIC Member States, held in Cairo, Egypt, in 2021, as well as in other relevant resolutions adopted by previous OIC Ministerial Conferences on Women. This resolution called on Member States to commemorate the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. On this special occasion, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, called on Member States and relevant OIC institutions to intensify efforts for promoting the full integration and recognition of all women and girls active in science and technology, and to highlight the significant role they play in ensuring sustainable development in OIC Member States. The International Conference on Women in Islam, co-organized by the Ministry of For-

eign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the OIC General Secretariat, on November 6-8, 2023, in Jeddah, adopted the "Jeddah Document of Women's Rights in Islam". This document covers all women's rights in

The International Women's Day was celebrated this year under the slogan: "Investing in Women to Accelerating Progress."

Islam, among which is their right to quality education and job opportunities in all fields, including in science and technology. The Conference also recognized the role of women and girls in science as a driver of change and as instrumental in accelerating

progress toward the achievement of SDGs and the development of their societies.

On the other hand, on the occasion of International Women's Day, observed on March 8th of each year, the OIC Secretary-General sent a message in which he stressed that the OIC joins the international community in celebrating the achievements of women around the world as well as the resilience and strength they have demonstrated. This Day, he added, "is not only an opportunity to highlight the progress achieved by women, but also to launch a call for action towards a more inclusive and equitable future."

The International Women's Day was celebrated this year under the slogan: "Investing in Women to Accelerating Progress." This slogan falls in line with the OIC's commitment to promoting diversity, inclusiveness, and the empowerment of women and girls in Member States and beyond. On this occasion, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of building fair and prosperous economies to guarantee the rights of women and girls in all fields of life, through increasing investment and gender-sensitive financing in order to ensure a bright future for the coming generations.

The Secretary-General underlined, in this regard, the significance of the Jeddah Document on Women's Rights in Islam, adopted by the International Conference on Women in Islam, held on November 6-8, 2023 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

An International Event Addresses Women's Status and Family Empowerment

In cooperation with the Arab Republic of Egypt, Chair of the 8th OIC Ministerial Conference on Women, the OIC General Secretariat held an event on 11 March 2024, at the UN Headquarters in New York, on the sidelines of the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), entitled "Empowering Families for Sustainable Development: Best Practices in Upholding Women's and Girls' Human Rights".

The event was primarily designed to promote a deeper understanding of the role that families play in enhancing gender equality and achieving sustainable development goals. Through an interactive panel involving prominent personalities, ministers and experts, it aimed at exploring strategies, policies, and best practices that empower families and contribute to the advancement of women and girls.

The opening session featured welcoming remarks by Dr. Maya Morsy, President of the National Council for Women of Egypt, Chair of the 8th session of the OIC Ministerial Conference on Women, and Chair of



the WDO Ministerial Council, followed by a statement by H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, delivered on his behalf by Dr. Amina Alhajiri, Director-General of Cultural, Social and Family Affairs at the OIC General Secretariat. The session also featured a statement by Mrs. Sharon Slater, the President of Family Watch International

Organization in the US.

In his statement on this occasion, delivered on his behalf by Dr. Amina Alhajiri, the OIC Secretary General stressed that empowering and enhancing women's and girls' human rights and building the capacities of families are among the OIC's top priorities.

OIC Orphan Day: Renewed Calls to Support and Promote Orphans' Rights

Ramadan 15th marks Orphan Day in the Islamic World, as proclaimed by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This event is celebrated to increase awareness and promote a sense of responsibility within society toward orphans, and to emphasize the need for concerted efforts to protect them and meet their needs.

On this occasion, the OIC General Secretariat recalled the resolution adopted by the 40th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), held in Conakry, Guinea, on December 9-11, 2013, to observe a day every year as "Orphan Day" with the aim of raising awareness of the situation of orphans in the Islamic world.

The OIC underlined the necessity to adopt a different approach towards ensuring comprehensive care and sponsorship for orphans, especially amid the challenges posed by conflicts and disasters in some Member States. It emphasized the need for promoting the rights of orphans by all possible means, within the framework of Islamic and



humanitarian cohesion, in order to achieve the community's vision in this regard.

It is noteworthy that the Islamic religion, as expounded in the Noble Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah, places great emphasis on proper treatment and care for orphans in all aspects, as well as on the importance of providing care for vulnerable groups and

promoting justice and social welfare.

In this context, the OIC called attention to the increasingly dire situation endured by Palestinian refugees, mainly orphaned children, amid the ongoing repression by the occupation forces that has resulted in thousands of martyrs and injuries among the defenseless Palestinian population.

Too Much Screen Time Can Cause Speech Delays for Kids



Sydney - Carola Frentzen - (DPA):

Kids copy everything we do, including our relationships with our devices.

While doomscrolling on a smartphone certainly isn't the healthiest way for an adult to spend their spare time, for young children screen time means missing out on many vital moments to develop their language skills, researchers in Australia warn.

Nearly half of all children 8 and under have their own tablet device and spend an average of about 2.25 hours a day on digital screens, says the American nonprofit organization "Common Sense Media", the leading source of entertainment and technology recommendations for families.

During time spent in front of the tablet or console, kids interact less with adults, taking in fewer words from their parents, scientists say in an article published in the JAMA Pediatrics Journal.

According to new guidelines issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2019, children under five should spend less time watching screens, get better quality sleep, and have more time for active play if they are to grow up healthy.

Several studies have shown that it is key for a child's language acquisition and socio-

Even in families adhering to the screen time recommendations issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) - not more than an hour per day for a three-year-old - kids might miss out on as much as 400 adult words per day

emotional development to talk to parents and interact with them a lot at home, researchers say. However, many of those studies have focused on the impact of the par-

ents' screen time and not the child's.

For their study, the team led by Mary Brushe from Australia's University of Adelaide looked at data from 220 families recorded every six months from January 2018 to December 2021 using speech recognition technology. The recordings included both the screen time and the general language environment at home of 12 to 36-month-old children during an average 16-hour day. The researchers found that every increase in screen time translates to a decrease in parent-child conversations. The biggest impact of screen time in that regard was observed at the age of 36 months.

Even in families adhering to the screen time recommendations issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) - not more than an hour per day for a three-year-old - kids might miss out on as much as 400 adult words per day. However, according to estimates, the actual average screen time for many children is much higher.

The 3-year-olds observed for the study spent an average of some 172 minutes in front of a screen every day, meaning they lose out on an average of some 1,000 words directed towards them by an adult, researchers said.

OIC Holds First Coordination Meeting of its Five Affiliated and Subsidiary Universities



The inaugural coordination meeting for Islamic universities and subsidiary, specialized, and affiliated institutions of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was held at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, on January 16, 2024.

The OIC has five affiliated and subsidiary universities in five Member States, namely: the Islamic University of Technology (Bangladesh), the International Islamic University (Malaysia), the Islamic University (Uganda), the Islamic University of Niger (Niger), and King Faisal University (Chad). These universities are the mainstay of OIC's activities in the field of higher education.

Addressing the meeting, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, underlined the pivotal role that universities play in building youth and developing societies, through their effective contributions to progress and advancement in the fields of education and scientific research. He pointed out that the participation of the Presidents of Universities has conferred a meaningful and effective dimension to this first meeting between the Islamic universities and the OIC subsidiary, specialized and affiliated institutions.

The Secretary-General expressed his pride in the achievements made by Islamic universities in various fields, including in natural, social,

and human sciences as well as in technology fields. These institutions have demonstrated high quality in terms of education, research, and knowledge transfer. They are also playing a key role in promoting a positive and constructive spirit that contributes to serving society and raising the level of knowledge within the OIC Countries.

The Secretary-General expressed the OIC's firm support for Islamic universities. He also reiterated the OIC's commitment to strengthening the role of these institutions, noting that the active participation in the events and initiatives organized by Islamic universities is indicative of the willingness to foster constructive interaction between the OIC and the higher education sector. He stressed, in this regard, the OIC's belief in the value that this cooperation adds to Islamic societies and for future generations.

The Secretary-General expressed his appreciation to the OIC affiliated, subsidiary, and specialized institutions for their strong commitment to promoting education and youth development in the OIC Member States, noting that their keenness to develop the quality of education and create opportunities to enhance youth skills bear testimony to their determination to have a positive impact on future generations.

The Secretary-General emphasized that the

Islamic world is currently going through a crucial moment, indicating that fruitful cooperation can yield exceptional ideas and create new opportunities for youth in the Islamic world.

The Secretary-General highlighted the significant challenges facing the education sector in the OIC Member States, and stressed the necessity for intensive cooperation and shared vision in order to meet these challenges. Poverty, climate change, keeping pace with technological advances, adapting to labor-market conditions, and prioritizing education, particularly girls' education, are among the most pressing priorities. He emphasized the need to enhance cooperation and synergy among the OIC's institutions, especially universities, in the face of these challenges.

The first coordination meeting, attended by the Presidents of the Islamic Universities, served as a crucial platform for dialogue and the sharing of views and experiences in the academic and administrative spheres. It also offered a valuable opportunity for further coordination, cooperation, and linkage between Islamic universities and OIC institutions having a particular interest and promising programs in the fields of youth, education, and cooperation with universities.

OIC General Secretariat Signs MoU with University of Management and Technology - Lahore



The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, officially signed, on January 16, 2024, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah.

The MoU was signed, on the OIC side, by H.E. Ambassador Askar Mussinov, Assistant Secretary-General for Science and Technology Affairs (who passed away on February 10, 2024), and, on the UMT side, by H.E. Vice Marshal (Rtd), Dr. Asif Raza, Rector.

H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the OIC, and H.E. Mr. Mohammed Fawad Sher, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OIC, attended the signing ceremony.

The MoU determines the scholarships granted by the UMT to students from OIC Member States. More than that, it establishes a comprehensive framework for long-term collaboration, which encompasses student and faculty exchanges, joint research projects, conferences, and joint publications with universities across the OIC Member States. It thus sets the stage for a sustained and impactful partnership between UMT and the OIC General Secretariat.

This partnership aims to strengthen ties between the OIC and UMT, paving the way for innovative initiatives that contribute to advancing education and cultural understanding amongst the OIC Member States on an international scale.

Saudi Food and Drug Authority Holds a Training Workshop on Food Regulation

The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA), in collaboration with the OIC General Secretariat, held another highly impactful virtual training workshop on food regulation. Titled "Advancing Food Safety: Insights into the Rapid Alert System and Regulatory Framework for Pesticides Evaluation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," the workshop brought together 40 food regulation experts representing 11 OIC Member States and key OIC institutions including COMSTECH, IOFS, SMIIC, and SESRIC.

Participating Member States included: Jordan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Qatar, Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda, Senegal, Maldives, Yemen, and Oman.

The workshop sought to familiarize participants with the regulatory food safety framework in Saudi Arabia, along with the particulars of the Kingdom's rapid alert system for food and risk evaluation of pesticides and their safe use.

The workshop, split into three consecutive sessions, was led by SFDA senior experts who provided extensive information on the



items included in the meeting agenda.

Participants expressed profound gratitude to the Saudi Food and Drug Authority and the OIC General Secretariat for their concerted efforts to offer this valuable knowledge-sharing opportunity. The sessions provided

an enriching platform for participants to get insights from the Saudi experience in ensuring high standards of food safety as well as in fostering collaboration and enhancing regulatory practices across OIC Member States.

Islamic Countries Intensify Action for Youth Empowerment and Advancement



The OIC General Secretariat organized a Virtual Coordination Meeting of the Focal Points in Ministries in charge of Youth and Sports issues in the OIC Member States. The meeting was held on March 13, 2024, in cooperation with the Ministry of Sports of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the 15th session of the Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers (ICYSM), held in Jeddah in September 2022.

Addressing the meeting, the Assistant Secretary-General of Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet asserted that the OIC attaches great importance to youth and sports issues, as enshrined in the OIC Charter, the OIC-2025: Programme of Action, the OIC Youth Strategy, and the OIC Plan of Action for the Development of Sports. He indicated that the meeting would provide an opportunity for participants to learn more about OIC's policies and programs in the field of youth empowerment, as well as the opportunities and technical assistance that OIC Institutions, especially IsDB Group, and SESRIC, could provide to OIC Member States

in this regard. This, he added, would help explore ways of more effectively involving Focal Points in implementing these policies. Amb. Bakheet noted that the presence of Focal Points in the Coordination Meeting demonstrates the OIC Member States' commitment to youth and sports issues. He expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its tireless efforts to follow up, jointly with the General Secretariat, on the implementation of the outcomes of the 5th session of the ICYSM, held in Jeddah in September 2022. Amb. Bakheet called on participants to actively engage in discussions, share their countries' experiences, highlight the challenges faced by their countries in the field of youth empowerment, propose practical solutions, and explore ways in which the OIC and its institutions can support them. He congratulated, on this occasion, the designated Focal Points for the confidence placed in them by their respective countries to coordinate with the OIC General Secretariat in implementing OIC policies in terms of youth capacity-building and sports development.

Amb. Bakheet stressed that the OIC General Secretariat, through the Youth and Sports Department recently established by the 49th CFM session in Nouakchott, stands fully ready to closely cooperate with the participants and their countries' relevant institutions to follow up the implementation of the OIC policies and programs in the fields of youth and sports, in coordination with Saudi Arabia, Chair of the 5th session of the ICYSM, as well as with relevant OIC organs and institutions, and with partners. He took this opportunity to thank the OIC organs and institutions, especially IsDB and SESRIC, for their participation in this meeting and their cooperation with the OIC General Secretariat in this field.

It is worth recalling the 5th ICYSM called on Member States to appoint Focal Points in Ministries in charge of Youth and Sports, with the aim of ensuring effective coordination with the OIC General Secretariat in the implementation of the OIC Youth Strategy and the OIC Plan of Action for the Development of Sports.

Italian Entrepreneur Prefers to Hire the Over-60s to Young People



Zanè (Italy) Robert Messer (DPA):

"Some believe that you have nothing more to say at 60. Or even that you just want to retire at this age. That's not true. Today's 60s are the new 40s," says Roberto Brazzale, President of an Italian dairy company. When launching a new project to market more specialized gourmet butter products, Brazzale was looking to set up a dedicated team. But the handful of 30 persons who came for a trial period all turned out to lack drive and energy, he says.

Brazzale who, together with his two brothers, runs one of the oldest dairy plants in the country, located in the municipality of Zanè in the northern Italian region of Veneto, known for mozzarella and parmesan cheese, has recently made headlines by taking what some would consider unusual HR decisions. So he ended up giving the jobs to a couple of friends – all of whom are over 60 years old, creating a new team that he now describes as a gold mine. "To me, they are all young in a way, because age counts for nothing compared to the energy and enthusiasm you can still have when you're over 60," he says. Brazzale never regretted the decision. On the

Just like many Western European countries, the homeland of pizza and pasta is struggling with an aging population and declining birth rates.

contrary, his new employees brought everything a boss could hope for, he says, namely lots of energy, enthusiasm, and, above all, experience.

"They have a completely different level of experience compared to the young people," Brazzale says. "They have understood how important the work is. When you're young, you don't understand that – you only understand that later," says the dairy boss, himself in his early 60s.

His new hires are mostly old acquaintances and friends. Most of them know each other

from their school days or – as you would expect in a rural Italian community of 6,000 – from hanging out on Zanè's central piazza. "We are all friends and know each other well," he stresses. "That's why the team spirit is much stronger."

Today, his team of oldies - but "goldies" - is responsible for marketing specialty butter. Ugo drives a food truck, while Sonia, who like Brazzale once liked to skip school, takes care of the administration.

What might sound like a lucky, and slightly nepotistic, solution to one Italian entrepreneur's problem signals a wider serious issue plaguing Italian society.

Just like many Western European countries, the homeland of pizza and pasta is struggling with an aging population and declining birth rates. The latest data from the statistics authority shows that the number of births has fallen below the 400,000 mark for the first time since records began in the 19th century, at just under 393,000 in 2022.

Brazzale can't stop raving about his new senior staff, and never tires of praising their efforts which, according to him, are unmatched by most young teams.

OIC Secretary-General Calls on OIC Institutions to Support the Palestinian People



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, delivered a speech on the occasion of the 7th Annual Coordination Meeting of OIC Institutions (ACMOI), held in Jeddah on January 17-18, 2024.

The Secretary-General expressed his satisfaction with the progress achieved by ACMOI since its launch in 2015 as a mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of OIC decisions and resolutions in the political, economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian fields. He underlined the priority given by the OIC to the Palestinian Cause, which ranks high on the OIC agenda, and denounced the

ongoing brutal Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, resulting in tens of thousands of casualties, millions of displaced persons, and enormous destruction, damage, and human suffering.

The Secretary-General called on OIC institutions to pursue collective action and take effective measures in order to strengthen the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and address the humanitarian consequences they are enduring, particularly in the Gaza Strip. He also highlighted the common challenges facing the Islamic world, especially in relation to Islamophobia, food insecurity, education,

and technology, being major priorities of the OIC as stipulated by CFM resolutions.

The Secretary-General commended the coordination efforts between the various OIC institutions for the effective implementation of the OIC resolutions on various issues of common interest to the Islamic world. He congratulated the OIC family on the launch of three new institutions, namely the OIC Labor Centre, the Islamic Forum of Halal Accreditation Bodies, and King Faisal University in Chad, which will strengthen capacity and cooperation in the fields of labor, education, and halal products development.

OIC Secretary-General Receives IUMS Secretary-General



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on 29 January 2024 at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, Dr. Zuhair Ghoneim, Secretary-General of the International Union of Muslim Scouts (IUMS). The visit was an opportunity for the IUMS Secretary-General to review the Union's current activities and future programs, including organizing a youth forum on dialogue and moderation.

The Secretary-General commended the IUMS efforts and activities, especially in terms of promoting the culture of tolerance, strengthening the intellectual capacity to confront extremist ideology conducive to terrorism, and engaging youth in the development process in the OIC Member States. He called for enhancing coordination between the IUMS and the General Secretariat, especially with the Department of Youth and Sports.

ISF Occupies a Prominent Place among Humanitarian Relief Institutions

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, inaugurated the 67th session of the Permanent Council of the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) on February 14, 2024, at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat. In his speech on this occasion, he expressed thanks and gratitude to all Member States that donate to the ISF, especially to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for their generous, continuous, and voluntary annual donations to support the resources of the ISF and its Waqf. He highlighted, in this regard, the significant role of the ISF, which now occupies a prominent place among global institutions concerned with humanitarian action. The establishment of the ISF in 1974, he noted, was a practical step in entrenching the notion of solidarity among Muslims in all parts of the world. He called on Member States to support the ISF financially with voluntary donations, the ISF being a key humanitarian and financial arm of the OIC.

The Secretary-General stressed the importance for the ISF to continue its support for the projects in Al-Quds, alongside the health and educational projects in the State of Palestine, in a way that strengthens the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in the face of the fierce aggression and unjust siege of the Zionist occupation.



On January 3, 2024, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, Mr. Muhammad Suleiman Aba Al-Khail, Executive-Director of the Islamic Solidarity Fund.

During the meeting, the Secretary-General commended the ISF's efforts in providing humanitarian support to Member States affected by disasters and conflicts.

The meeting discussed preparations for the upcoming 67th session of the ISF Permanent

Council, and the great importance attached by the OIC to the ISF, being the humanitarian relief arm of the Organization and one of the main Islamic charitable institutions. The meeting also underlined the need to support the Fund so that it can carry out its responsibilities in implementing development projects for those in need across the Islamic world.

Both sides discussed the Fund's sustainable projects and emergency contributions to Member States in various fields.

ISSF Secretary-General Discusses Ways to Enhance Coordination with the OIC



The Youth and Sports Department at the OIC General Secretariat held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Nasser Al-Majali, Secretary-General of the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF), at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, on February 4, 2024. The meeting was attended by Dr. Amina Al Hajri, Director-General of Cultural Affairs,

and Dr. Maiga Boubakari, Head of the OIC Youth and Sports Department.

Mr. Al-Majali reviewed the ISSF Ten-Year Plan (2023-2033), and the efforts exerted to achieve the OIC goals and follow up on the implementation of the Resolutions issued by the Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers, especially with Saudi Arabia host-

ing the 6th edition of the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, in November-December 2025, which will constitute a starting point for the effective implementation of the Plan. Al-Majali stressed the OIC's significant role and the ISSF's keen interest in strengthening coordination with the Organization for the implementation of the Ten-Year Plan, the OIC being the umbrella for all its institutions and bodies.

For her part, Dr. Al-Hajri commended the ISSF's efforts to implement the Ten-Year Plan, and the major role it plays in promoting the sublime values of Islam through the organization of sports games, and in instilling these values among youth, in line with the OIC objectives. She stressed that the OIC will pursue its cooperation and increase coordination with the Federation to meet the aspirations of both sides.

“A Ramadan Journey” at ICESCO Headquarters



The headquarters of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) in Rabat hosted, on 22 March 2024, the third meeting of the Scientific Forum, “A Ramadan Journey into the Depths of the Human Soul.” The Forum was organized by ICESCO in cooperation with the Group of Spouses of Arab Ambassadors and Heads of International Organizations accredited to the Kingdom of Morocco.

Dr. Khadija Abouzid, Professor of Higher Education at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Mohammed V University in Rabat, delivered a lecture on “Human Relations: Pathway of Good Deeds.” The Lecture was attended by Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, ICESCO Director-General, a number of ambassadors accredited to Morocco, members of the Group of Spouses, and a large audience from the general public.

The meeting kicked off with a general introduction by Dr. Yusra bint Hussain Al-Jazairy, a member of the Group of Spouses, who noted that the lecture is a continuation of previous meetings during this blessed month of Ramadan. Dr. Al-Jazairy presented several Qur’anic verses and Hadiths on the significance of wisdom in Islam and its association

with the purification of souls. She stressed that soul purification fosters wisdom, and that ethics are the pathway to wisdom, which is not limited to the day-to-day dealings of people but rather an identifying mark of every community.

Dr. Al-Jazairy emphasized the importance of implementing behavioral psychology practices in work environments that cater to teamwork and effective communication between employees and managers, stressing the need to focus on the psychological aspect in work environments to enhance productivity and ensure business sustainability.

The floor was then given to Dr. Khadija Abouzid who began her lecture by affirming that Islamic jurisprudence covers two aspects: the acts of worship and the dealings among people. She highlighted the central importance of marital relationships as a foundation for human relations and the first step in building a balanced individual within the family.

Dr. Abouzid highlighted the importance of prayer in purifying the human soul and taming its desires, stressing the necessity of introducing children to prayer from an early age given its crucial role in human develop-

ment and in instilling the sense of commitment, responsibility, and disciplined behavior.

She then highlighted the foundations of human relations in Islam, particularly the virtue of mercy, and stressed the power of words in maintaining relationships with grace and beauty. She concluded by stating that human relations are of many types, mainly gracious forgiveness, gracious patience, and gracious quitting.

Following the lecture, a discussion session was opened, during which Dr. Abouzid responded to several questions.

During this year’s month of Ramadan (1445 A.H/2024), ICESCO launched, for the fifth year running, its two series, “Ramadan Whiffs” and “Intellectual Sparks,” as part of the “ICESCO Digital Home” initiative. The video series was broadcast on the Organization’s official social media platforms.

This year’s event saw the participation of prominent intellectual, cultural, and religious personalities from the Islamic world and beyond, who presented their thoughts and insights on key contemporary intellectual and religious issues.

Human Rights Violations and the Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

**"The nightmare in Gaza is more than a humanitarian crisis.
It is a crisis of humanity" (United Nations Secretary-General).**

Humanity is today at a crossroads, and the way the international community responds to the tragedy in Gaza will determine the future paths of coexistence among the coming generations in this world of ours. While Gaza has remained an "open prison" for more than two decades, the war waged against it since October 7, 2023 amounts to a second 'Nakba'. The disastrous events will certainly remain alive in the memory of the Palestinian people and the entire world, which is horrified by the human rights atrocities and the impunity of their perpetrators. This tragedy unfolded while the international community was celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At the same time, the world has been witnessing the deplorable increase in human losses in Gaza.

Human rights and other humanitarian organizations have documented, through various testimonies, the many indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks perpetrated by the Israeli forces against Gaza, in flagrant violation of the principles of international humanitarian law. No doubt, all these acts constitute war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In this regard, it is worth referring to the recent historic decision issued by the International Court of Justice, which found that Israel's unlawful actions plausibly amount to a crime of genocide, and ordered six provisional measures.

In this context, it is important to recall that the concept of Islamophobia is usually defined as a state of excessive fear of Islam and Muslims, which may develop into hostile behavior, such as verbal and physical abuse.

In my humble opinion, the incidents we see in various parts of the world bear no relation to the clash of civilizations and religions. They should rather be addressed from a broader perspective, taking into account the rising Islamophobia trends as a result of the negative portrayal and stereotyping practices in the media, the rise of extremist right-wing policies, the increasing waves of migration, and the failure of integration policies to absorb migrants.

Nevertheless, I can still say that the picture is not all gloomy. Despite the ongoing tragedy and destruction in Gaza, this fact paradoxically provides an opportunity to unite the world's efforts to address one of the most pressing humanitarian and geopolitical challenges of our modern era. This is all the more relevant when we know that the Israeli forces' brutal aggression against Gaza and the genocidal intent expressed through the statements of the Israeli political leadership have sparked waves of condemnation by many of the world's people who stood in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza. This will undoubtedly open the way for increased global sympathy for the Palestinians, as we have witnessed, and thus help unite Muslim and non-Muslim efforts against the Israeli occupation.

There are certainly some isolated incidents of anti-Palestinian racism, but at the same time, there is a great public outcry over the Israeli war crimes, as reflected through the protest marches organized in several Western capitals, and the extensive discussions on social media and traditional media, criticizing the Israeli military operation. This is in addition to the pooling of efforts of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the United Nations General Assembly in New York, and the OIC in Jeddah.

The filing of the case against Israel in the International Court of Justice by South Africa, which was later joined by other non-Muslim countries, is also indicative of a moral awakening and redress.

In reality, crises may create opportunities for bold, innovative, and previously unthinkable solutions and initiatives. They push us to reconsider our traditional approaches and explore new avenues for cooperation. The tragic situation in Gaza can create a sense of urgency to undertake relentless diplomatic efforts and energize dialogue and negotiation in order to reach sustainable solutions to the root issues that fuel the conflict.

It is time for dialogue and solidarity, for bridging divisions and differences. The international community should address the root causes of Islamophobia. It is important, in this context, to take into consideration the following steps : (1) the adoption of a legally binding international instrument to prevent acts of religious intolerance; (2) the criminalization of certain manifestations of hate speech as stipulated in Paragraph 5(f) of the HRC Resolution 16/18, (3) the creation of an observatory at the OHCHR; (4) the intensification of efforts to produce a civilizational Islamic discourse capable of correcting misunderstandings and misconceptions about Islam.

In the midst of this suffering and this turbulent life that has become part of the painful reality of the people of Gaza, there is still this thread of common humanity that we share, and that transcends borders, ideologies, and political affiliations. We have to seize this opportunity to bridge gaps and build confidence. With unified goals, we can actually turn the suffering into a beacon of hope for future generations.



**Prof. Dr. Noura bint
Zaid Al-Rashoud,**
Executive Director of
OIC-IPHRC

Despite the ongoing tragedy and destruction in Gaza, this fact paradoxically provides an opportunity to unite the world's efforts to address one of the most pressing humanitarian and geopolitical challenges of our modern era.

Morocco: Arabic Calligraphy and Holy Qur'an Exhibition



In celebration of the blessed month of Ramadan, the Arts City Culture Center in Safi, Morocco, hosted the first edition of the Arabic Calligraphy and Holy Qur'an Exhibition, on March 29, 2024. The event was organized by the Moroccan Club of Manuscripts, Coins, and Stamps, in cooperation with the Regional Directorate of Culture in Safi, and with support from the city's Regional Council, under the slogan "The Holy Qur'an: from Manuscript to Print."

The exhibition featured numerous copies of the Holy Qur'an dating back over five centuries, highlighting the deep-rooted traditions of Moroccans in the production, veneration, and preservation of Al-Mus'haf Al-Sahrif. Tracking the journey of writing the Noble Qur'an through various stages in history was the aim of this exhibition held in northwestern Morocco.

The exhibition shed light on Morocco's cultural heritage, which boasts a rich collection of manuscripts and Arabic calligraphy. Also on display were sheets and panels written and decorated in Arabic calligraphy, in addition to pottery pieces and some Arabic artifacts associated with the art of Arabic calligraphy, whose historical development was highlighted by the exhibition. The event also spotlighted the most gifted Moroccan scribes

and calligraphers, showcasing their works to visitors.

The exhibition was intended primarily to highlight the contributions of Moroccans who have left their imprints on architecture, decoration, arts, and manuscripts, drawing inspiration, in this regard, from Quranic verses. It also aimed to illustrate the connection between the Holy Qur'an and Arabic calligraphy, the latter being the optimal means of preserving the Holy Qur'an, and the pillar for its preservation in written form since the time of the Prophet (PBUH) up to the age of printing.

As one of the fine arts that refine and perfect aesthetic taste, Arabic calligraphy reflects the richness of Islamic civilization and the science and culture associated with it. Concurrently with this outstanding and unique exhibition, a scientific seminar was held under the title: "The People of Safi's Care for the Holy Qur'an", attended by the Chairman of the Mohammedan Holy Qur'an Committee in Morocco, a member of the Academic Council of the Muhammadiyah Association of Scholars, the learned scholar Sheikh Sidi Abd al-Hadi Hamito, as well as by Sidi Abdel Salam Kadi, artist, and member of the Committee.

Items on display date back to the Andalusian

period and the Ottoman period, till the 8th century. The president of the Moroccan Club of Manuscripts, Coins, and Stamps in Safi, Said Al-Jediyani, was particularly proud of one piece in the exhibit. "We have a small copy of the Quran", he said, "the smallest Quran with a length of 20 millimeters, a width of 17 millimeters, and a height of 12 millimeters, covered with gold water and written with gum Arabic".

"This copy of the Qur'an," he added, "cannot be read with the naked eye, only with a microscope. Also, one of the most important antiques in this exhibition is an astronomical painting on deer skin which shows that the heart of the globe is Mecca."

Al-Jediyani, who has his collection, said that each item has a story behind it, noting that "my collection includes items that I bought when I traveled to some cities, some I acquired at auctions, and others were gifted to me by friends from outside Morocco."

"We see a serious deterioration in the art of calligraphy," he said, "Perhaps it is on its way toward going completely extinct. Most of the prominent calligraphers and those who still practice this profession are suffering in silence without getting any support, even though they still hold on to this ancient art. The reasons are related to globalization."

The World after October 7

The history of the world is replete with key, pivotal events that emerge and reverse the course of global affairs, with significant impact on world developments, be they political or economic. In fact, the agricultural revolution created human civilization, while the commercial revolution created contemporary civilization. In most cases, however, these historical events take on a political and unfortunately bloody character, as if humanity is doomed to pay the price for any effort toward security and peace with its own blood.

History tells us, in this context, that the 1944 Pearl Harbor attack, the Normandy Landings, the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt, the First and Second Gulf Wars, and the September 11 attacks were all events that changed the course of politics and its balances at the regional level, extending their impact to the international level by imposing new balances of power and innovative rules of politics. As stated earlier, most of these crucial events were associated with war and bloodshed, fully confirming Mussolini's statement: "Blood alone moves the wheels of history".

No doubt, the events of October 7, 2023, are among those pivotal global events in terms of their impact on the balance of power in the Middle East and around the world. This finds its illustration in the following points:

- * The October 7th events have revealed that military, technical, and political power cannot shake peoples' belief in their right to land and life, and that persisting in marginalizing the Palestinian Cause and singling out the Palestinians can in no way "kill" this Cause and make it sink into oblivion.

- * The October 7th events have shaken up the doctrine of deterrence and the logic of superiority that Israel has sought to perpetuate over the past seven decades. Despite receiving substantial aerial support with weapons, Israel has failed to achieve any of its goals set at the beginning of the aggression, marking a deep strategic defeat that will certainly have adverse consequences on the Israeli institutions.

- * The October 7th events have brought the Palestinian Cause back to the forefront of the international community's priority agenda. They have also revived the Two-State Solution, which Israel has sought to bury, both on a de facto basis through settlement expansion, and politically by thwarting the "final-status negotiations" process and going back on the outcomes of the Oslo Accords. The Two-State Solution has thus regained prominence in international organizations' deliberations and in the current global political consultations. It has even become, according to the American perception, an exit solution for Israel from its profound existential crisis.

- * The October 7th events have shaken the global powers' deep belief in the Zionist settlement project and its ability to sustain itself without direct support from them, after 74 years of expansion and oppression. They have deepened the feelings of apprehension about the future of the Entity and the extent of its ability to continue to exist.

Israel's frenzied reaction to the October 7th events has revealed that pre-World War II values are still alive, and that decades of international peace have done nothing to eradicate the thirst of people and countries for wars and bloodshed. It has also shown that all post-World War II laws and regulations are wholly deficient in the face of this thirst.

Israel's blatant aggression on Gaza has opened the eyes and stirred the consciences of the world to the true nature of the Zionist project, and to the scale of violence and hatred driving it. It has exposed its reactionary and fascist discourse despite its technological and modernist façade.

The Israeli aggression has disrupted the calm of Western universities, which had settled into academic life and scientific competition, and brought them back to the forefront of political events, as was the case in the 1960s amid the intensive political polarization between the left and the right. This movement has shaken people's faith in the democratic systems the West boasts about, which could not even tolerate protests demanding a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the bloodshed of innocents. The scale of police violence in university campuses will only deepen the crisis in Western democracies, with short- and long-term repercussions.

The scale of the Israeli aggression and bloodshed has challenged the centrality of the Holocaust in the Israeli narrative, bringing Israel closer to, and even beyond, the point where the memory of the Holocaust no longer prevents the world from seeing Israel as it truly is.

The October 7th events have revealed the deep political and ideological rift within the Israeli Entity, and how an extremist right-wing minority representing no more than 17% of the parliament controls the fate of an Entity for the sake of which billions have been spent and rivers of blood have flowed. They have also shown that the factors of erosion and attrition in Israeli society are exacerbating the ideological, religious, political, and ethnic divergences, rather than building a homogenous society, similar to other societies.

All these transformations are visible and tangible outcomes of the October 7th events, with greater unseen consequences yet to emerge.



Dr. Tarek Ladjal

*Professional Officer at
the Cabinet of Secretary-
General*

*Persisting in
marginalizing the
Palestinian Cause
and singling out the
Palestinians can in
no way "kill" this
Cause and make it
sink into oblivion.*

An Attempt to Maintain Continuity of Education in Gaza Despite Starvation, Displacement and Killing

Gaza - Imad Abdel Jawad - (DPA):

Inside a small room made of tin, Intisar Rizk al-Arabid, a Palestinian woman aged 45, meets with rows of children, offering them lessons in the Palestinian curriculum. She launched this initiative as children found themselves out of school as a result of the continued Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023.

Intisar spends long hours teaching her students, despite the dire living conditions she is experiencing after she and her family were displaced from the Jabalia camp, north of the Gaza Strip, to the city of Rafah, and was injured in her leg. This Palestinian woman, who lost about 20 kilograms of weight due to lack of food, is making tremendous efforts to offer free lessons to children at Al-Quds School in the city of Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, with the aim of mitigating the learning loss suffered by children due to the harsh conditions resulting from the war. The lessons cover basic subjects, including Arabic, English, and mathematics, in addi-

tion to Qur'an memorization and understanding.

Intisar's initiative received a broad and positive response on the part of the displaced families. "I was displaced with my family from the Jabalia camp in northern Gaza to the city of Rafah," she said. "During our stay in Al-Quds School in Rafah, I noticed that children in Rafah and in IDP camps were under stress, being unable to go to school. So I launched an initiative to offer them lessons, including Quran memorization." "This effort," she added, is an attempt to help mitigate the effects of the war on children. These lessons are offered for free."

With education interrupted since the beginning of the war, Intisar feels a sincere desire on the part of the displaced families to have their children attend these lessons. "This initiative," she explained, "conveys the message that though Israel has demolished schools and mosques, we will still work to maintain continuity of education, given its importance in building an educated Pales-

tinian child."

Once Intisar's initiative launched, Samiha Salama, a 14-year-old displaced girl from Gaza, was among the first to join the lessons. "I very much miss my school, my friends, my school assignments which I used to do in a timely manner," she said.

"Our lives were turned upside down, and we were forced to flee our homes. I lost many of my school friends who were killed during Israeli raids, and I have no means to contact my other classmates... I am very afraid that we will have to spend the rest of our lives in this war that spares no one, children, young people, women, and elderly persons," she added.

According to UN reports, nearly 1.9 million Gazans have been internally displaced, including those displaced several times. About 1.4 million of them are registered in 155 UNRWA facilities across Gaza, including over 1.2 million IDPs in 98 shelters in the central and southern areas of the Strip.



Turkmenistan

Capital: Ashgabat
Total Area: 491,210sq.km
Official language: Turkmen
National currency: Manat



The Republic of Turkmenistan, a Member State of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), is located in Central Asia, bordered by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the southeast, the Islamic Republic of Iran to the south and southwest, the Republic of Uzbekistan to the east and northeast, the Republic of Kazakhstan to the north and northwest, and the Caspian Sea to the west, the only sea overlooked by Turkmenistan.

Turkmenistan has been at the crossroads of civilizations for centuries. Merv was one of the oldest cities in Central Asia. In medieval times, it was one of the great cities of the Islamic world and an important stop on the Silk Road.

Turkmenistan was one of the constituent republics of the Soviet Union, and it was known as the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic. It became independent upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Turkmenistan has an area of 488,100 sq. km. Its GDP growth rate was 6.1% in 2009, ranking 16th in the world.

The name "Turkmenistan" can be divided into two parts: the ethnonym "Turkmen" and the Persian suffix "-stan", which means "place" or "country". Muslim chroniclers, such as Ibn Kathir, suggested

that the etymology of "Turkmenistan" came from the words "Turk" and "Iman" (Faith, belief), in reference to the massive conversion to Islam of two hundred thousand families in the year 971.

The Turkmen lands consist of a plateau that extends from the southeast to the northwest, sloping down to the KaraKum Desert (meaning "black sand") which is a vast sandy plain covered with sand dunes. In the northern part, it extends from the western foothills of the Koytendag Mountains, where it borders Iran.

Turkmenistan is traversed by a section of the Amu Darya River (known as «Jeyhun» in Turkmen), with other rivers descending from Afghanistan and Iran, such as the Hari River and the Murghab River.

Turkmenistan has an extreme desert climate, cold in winter, with temperatures sometimes below zero, and hot in summer. However, temperatures in highland areas are moderate in summer. Rainfall is sparse but relatively better compared to the desert regions or those in the central and northern parts of the country.

Oil, natural gas, iron, and textiles are the main industries in the country. The gross domestic product was \$45.11 billion

(2006), and its annual growth rate reached 13%. Inflation stood at 11% (2006). The country's workforce reached 2.32 million (2004).

Turkmenistan has the world's fourth-largest reserve of natural gas resources, with gas reserves, estimated at about 23 trillion cubic meters (2004). Turkmenistan exports gas to Russia, Iran, and China. It is self-sufficient in oil and gas, with oil reserves estimated at about 600 million barrels.

Agriculture represents 24.4% of the total domestic income, and cotton is one of the most important agricultural crops in the country. Areas cultivated mainly with cereals and wheat tripled after the Soviet era. The KaraKum Desert covers most of the country. The industry represents 33.9% of the total domestic income. The main industries are fuel processing, cotton-based fabric weaving, food, machinery, and metal forming. The completion of an iron and steel plant led to an increase in crude steel production. Services also account for 41.7% of the total domestic income. The banking sector includes 12 national banks under the supervision of the Central Bank.



OIC Launches a Media Monitoring Unit to Expose Israeli Crimes

The "OIC Media Monitoring Unit to document the crimes of the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinian people" effectively started its work on January 30, 2024. I can say, with near certainty, that this Unit is among the most prominent practical media initiatives launched by the OIC since its inception. The Leaders of the OIC Member States called for launching two media monitoring units to expose the Israeli crimes, with a view to prosecuting the occupation and holding it accountable for these crimes. They also called on the OIC and the League of Arab States to create digital media platforms that expose the illegal and inhumane practices of the occupation, which is persisting in its crimes and its ongoing genocidal war against the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip.

The Resolution adopted by the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit, held on November 11, 2023, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, mandated, in Operative Paragraph 10, the OIC and the Arab League to establish two media monitoring units to document the crimes of the Israeli occupation.

Immediately after the Extraordinary Summit, the OIC General Secretariat, represented by the Department of Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs and the Information Department, under the directives of H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, and under the supervision of the Department of Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs, actively engaged in setting out a plan for launching the Media Monitoring Unit and the digital platform, in cooperation with the Information Technology Department, so that the Unit would be made a reality within a few days. After extensive consultations among all these departments, a vision was drawn up for the launch and operation of the Media Monitoring Unit.

This Unit began its work by producing media materials in continuous coordination with the Department of Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs. A weekly media report is issued, providing information on the numbers of martyrs, injured, and detainees, as well as on settler attacks, massacres, and incursions into the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and all other forms of violations. The weekly report is available in the three official languages of the OIC (Arabic, English, and French).

Illustrative infographics and videos are also prepared and published in the three languages to facilitate understanding of the statistics and information included in the weekly report. The Information Department prepares the media materials about the Israeli crimes and violations against the Palestinian people, and publishes them every Tuesday on the OIC website, on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, X, and WhatsApp Channel), as well as on the digital platform of the Media Monitoring Unit launched on the Internet: <https://palestine.oic-oci.org/>.

Alongside documenting the Israeli occupation's crimes, the OIC Media Monitoring Unit seeks to influence global public opinion, and thus engage the responsibility of States and international organizations to stand in solidarity with the usurped rights of the Palestinian people, condemn the endless Israeli crimes, and put pressure on global decision-makers so that they act to put an end to these crimes and seriously consider supporting the demands of the Palestinian people to regain their land and all their rights guaranteed by all international conventions and legal instruments.

The weekly reports contribute to keeping Member States, non-member States, and international political and human rights organizations constantly abreast of the latest developments in terms of the numbers and severity of the Israeli crimes. The aim is to keep the Palestinian Cause high on the priority agenda of global decision-makers, as well as to exert pressure on them so that they revisit and gradually change their positions in favor of the oppressed Palestinian people. The fact that Israel, the occupying power, is still persisting in its brutal aggression against the Palestinian people is clear evidence of its aggressive and oppressive character.

If more financial and human resources are made available with the support of Member States, the Observatory will work to organize media forums and workshops, in cooperation with joint Islamic media work institutions, especially in Europe and America, with the participation of media professionals, jurists, and media outlets, in order to shed light on the Israeli occupation's crimes and lay bare the atrocious violations committed against the Palestinian people.

The personnel in charge of the Media Monitoring Unit will make every possible effort to overcome the challenges facing the work of the Unit, established out of awareness of the central importance of the Palestinian Cause and the need to expose the Israeli occupation's crimes against the Palestinian people. This is a meritorious effort in support of the Cause of Palestine, the Cause for the sake of which the OIC was created a few weeks following the arson attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque on August 21, 1969.



Dr. Abdelhamid Salhi
Editor-in-Chief of OIC
Journal,
Acting Director of Information
Department

Alongside documenting the Israeli occupation's crimes, the OIC Media Monitoring Unit seeks to influence global public opinion, and thus engage the responsibility of States and international organizations to stand in solidarity with the usurped rights of the Palestinian people.

About OIC

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents. The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

The Organization was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on 12th Rajab 1389 Hijra (25 September 1969) following the criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem. In 1970 the first ever meeting of Islamic Conference of Foreign Minister (ICFM) was held in Jeddah which decided to establish a permanent secretariat in Jeddah headed by the organization's secretary general. H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha is the 12th Secretary General of the Organization. He assumed the position in November 2021.

The first OIC Charter was adopted by the 3rd ICFM Session held in 1972. The Charter laid down the objectives and principles of the organization and fundamental purposes to strengthen the solidarity and cooperation among the Member States. Over the last 40 years, the membership has grown from its founding members of 30 to 57 states. The Charter was amended to keep pace with the developments that have unraveled across the world. The present Charter of the OIC was adopted by the Eleventh Islamic Summit held in Dakar on 13-14 March 2008 to become the pillar of the OIC future Islamic action in line with the requirements of the 21st century.

The Organization has the singular honor to galvanize the Ummah into a unified body and have actively represented the Muslims by espousing all causes close to the hearts of over 1.5 billion Muslims of the world. The Organization has consultative and cooperative relations with the UN and other inter-governmental organizations to protect the vital interests of the Muslims and to work for the settlement of conflicts and disputes involving Member States. In safeguarding the true values of Islam and the Muslims, the organization has taken various steps to remove misperceptions and have strongly advocated elimination of discrimination against the Muslims in all forms and manifestations.

The Member States of the OIC face many challenges in the 21st century and to address those challenges, the third extraordinary session of the Islamic Summit held in Makkah in December 2005, laid down the blue print called the Ten-Year Program of Action. It has successfully concluded with the close of 2015. A successor programme for the next decade (2016-2025) has been adopted.

The new programme OIC-2025 is anchored in the provisions of the OIC Charter and focuses on 18 priority areas with 107 goals. The priority areas include issues of Peace and Security, Palestine and Al-Quds, Poverty Alleviation, Counter-terrorism, Investment and Finance, Food Security, Science and Technology, Climate Change and Sustainability, Moderation, Culture and Interfaith Harmony, Empowerment of Women, Joint Islamic Humanitarian Action, Human Rights and Good Governance, among others.

Among the OIC's key bodies: the Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), the General Secretariat, in addition to the Al-Quds Committee and three permanent committees concerned with science and technology, economy and trade, and information and culture. There are also specialized organs under the banner of the OIC including the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as subsidiary and affiliate organs that play a vital role in boosting cooperation in various fields among the OIC member states.

For more details, visit the OIC website at
www.oic-oci.org



المنظمة الإسلامية للتعاون
OIC - OCI

Augmenting Islamic cultures • Combating poverty
 Protecting the rights of Muslim minorities • Promoting science and technology
 Preserving Islamic heritage • Joint Islamic solidarity
 Strengthening International relations • Achieving economic and trade development
 Combating terrorism • Encouraging dialogue among cultures and religions
 Boosting Economic and Trade cooperation



منظمة التعاون الإسلامي
 OIC - OCI

