

Dear Reader,

DAY OF RETRIBUTION

To start with, a salutation is due for the youthful revolutionary spirit in the Arab world which has surprised everyone with its vitality, courage, organization, speed and greatness of historic achievements.

A great salutation is also due for the souls of this uprising's victims, martyrs and the wounded who have widely opened through their sacrifices the door to remove the perpetrators rulers and their henchmen. The latter have ruled the land and its inhabitants for too long, depicting the most horrible portrait about the shape of an oppressive ruler who takes his people hostage of his ambitions and false aspirations. In our haste, we would like to point out to some doubts and hidden questions which have been raised and to which attention has been drawn by the resounding scenes of the fall of rulers' thrones and their hoodlums that quickly disappeared before the rage, shaking the masses of Arab nations. For so long, these masses have been moaning under the weight of the rulers' oppression and suppression. They suffered a great deal because of the latter's corruption, scandalous thefts and waste of the land's resources under shiny and deceptive slogans and labels. The eruption of suppressed outrage came at the right moment, guaranteeing to turn the scene upside down and draw a humiliating end for these oppressors and their followers so the "day of retribution" may be tougher than the day when the oppressor oppresses, as Imam Ali (P.B.U.H) has said. There are now harbingers of the removal of monumental symbols of oppression and corruption, and there is hope that true change processes will take place for the better and the most sound in the rest of countries that suffer from similar conditions rather than superficial cosmetic operations. Our Arab and Islamic countries deserve responsible rulers and officials who enjoy credibility, competence and integrity, individuals who set out from whatever the believing and ethical nation regards as being taken for granted, people who serve the goals and ambitions of their generations. Such people are the ones who safeguard this nation's resources and riches for the sake of their peoples' progress, development and protection from the interference of the exploiting covetous foreigner.

If the achievement of the removal of corrupt rulers and of holding them accountable for what they have committed, and in order to recover what they had stolen, by itself a greatly appreciated achievement, the supreme task and the greatest challenge remain in finding certain mechanisms, formulas and systems. The latter ensure the rise of new sincere leaderships that do not bear the negativities of their predecessors and keep safeguarding the interests of their peoples and their sacrifices.

This is an important and a great mission which the youths must follow-up together with sincere activities from all groups with full seriousness and keen interest. Here we would like to emphasize the role of the enlightened theologians in supporting and protecting these aspirations due to their message-inspiring position: They are "the custodians of Messengers", as the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H) has said. They are the ones from whom Allah Almighty took a covenant that they "endorse neither an oppressor's hold on power nor the covering of any oppressed person," as Ali (P.B.U.H) has said. It should be nice to point out in this process the massive scene of the Friday congregational prayers in all the meanings and connotations which they express: This has been the distinctive denominator among the courtyards of these victorious uprisings.



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Muslims in the Republic of Austria,

Coexistence with Islam after 1000 Years

Location and Area

Austria is a republic in central Europe that has an area of 83,858 sq km. It is bounded on the north by Germany and the Czech Republic; on the northeast by Slovakia; on the east by Hungary; on the south by Slovenia, Italy, and Switzerland; and on the west by Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

Austria is called Österreich in German, that means the eastern Reich which extends on the territories of eastern Germany.

Population:

Austria has a population of around 8,200,000, most of them hail from the Germanic Bayern tribes, besides the Slavic element. German is the official language of Austria. About 2 percent of the population speak languages other than German, chiefly Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian, Hungarian and Turkish. It is noteworthy that the Austrian German includes Arabic terms that came from Arabic itself or through Turkish, Slavic or Latin.

Religion:

Roman Catholicism is the religion of 78% of the population of Austria. Various Protestant denominations account for 6%, Muslims 4.2%, Eastern Orthodox 2.2% and Jews 0.1%, while those without a religion or whose faith is unknown constitute 12%.

As for Muslims, recent official Austrian censuses state that the percentage of Muslims has risen to 5% of the population, that is around half a million people.

Climate:

Because much of Austria is mountainous, climatic conditions vary greatly. In general, eastern Austria has a continental type of climate, with cold winters and warm summers, while the climate of the valleys of the west and north is influenced by cool, rainy northwest winds from the



Map of Austria.

Atlantic Ocean. Average annual rainfall ranges between 610 and 2,030 mm throughout the country.

Mountains and Rivers:

Sixty percent of the country is made of mountains such as the eastern division of the Alps, and the Tirol (Tyrol); Vorarlberg provinces are famous for their mountains. There are also Hohe Tauern and Niedere Tauern where the limestone Alps are located. Wienerwald or Vienna Woods are located near the city of Vienna. To the north of the Danube is Böhmerwald or Bohemian Forest. In the east, the area of the Danube basin includes Vienna and a plain that extends into Slovakia.

The principal river of Austria is the Danube, the longest in the EU countries. The Danube river basin covers part or all of 19 riparian countries. Approximately 60 of its 300 tributaries are navigable.



Part of Innsbruck city in the laps of mountains and amazing nature.

Austria enjoys abundance and good quality of water; the country's overall annual production of water is up to one billion cubic meters.

Government:

Austria is a democratic republic divided into nine federal provinces and governed according to the constitution of 1920. Executive power is exercised by the president of the republic, who is elected by popular vote every six years, and by the Council of Ministers, or cabinet, which is headed by a chancellor, appointed by the president for a term not exceeding four years. The cabinet may remain in office only so long as it enjoys the confidence

of the Nationalrat (Parliament's Lower House). At the international relations level, Austria, which became part of the EU in 1995, has adopted a policy of neutrality vis-à-vis east and west.

Economy:

The Austrian economy is based on Tourism, mining resources (such as iron and natural gas), chemical and mechanical manufacturing and timber industry. The economic and production pattern in the country attracts a great deal of investment projects.

Education:

The basis of the Austrian educational



View of Potsin Square in the capital Vienna where there are many beautiful historic buildings.

system is the national law that requires school attendance for all youths between the ages of 6 and 14. Austria's long tradition of free education dates from the Educational Reform Act of 1774, instituted by Empress Maria Theresa. This law, which was expanded in 1867 and again in 1962, largely accounts for the fact that virtually all of the adult population is able to read and write.

In many aspects, Austrian schools are among the first anywhere to be marked by a general trend toward progressive education.

Culture :

Austria has been famous for two civilized aspects of culture: literature and music. The first has been represented by a large number of prominent authors such as Franz Grillparzer, Adalbert Stifter, Johann Nestroy and Karl Heinrichwaggerl,

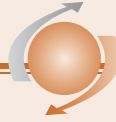
besides writer and playwright Franz Grillparzer who authored some of the most important narrative classics of German literature; and the second by the likes of Joseph Hayden, Wolfgang A. Mozart and Franz Shubert who were among the pioneers of Romanticism.

Among the famous Austrian painters were Ferdinand Waldmüller, Gustav Klimt and Ernst Fuchs.

Cities and Provinces:

Vienna: Vienna or Wien (ancient Vindobona), the capital and largest city of the country (around 415 sq kilometers), is located on both banks of the Danube River, with the foothills of the Eastern Alps on the west and the plains of the Danube basin on the east.

The city is divided into 23 districts. The heart of Vienna, the Innere Stadt (Inner City), is lined with many historic buildings, cultural landmarks and first-class shopping areas. Towards the west is the Hofburg, the medieval former imperial palace and current residence of the Austrian president. There is also the National Library and archaeological



View of modern Vienna.

museums, including the Art History Museum, besides several theaters. The town's landmarks include Schönbrunn, the beautiful rococo Imperial Summer Palace, Stephanplatz Square and the Pedestrian Boulevard.

Vienna has been famous for being an international center of education, literature, music and sciences. The most outstanding of Vienna's many schools and scientific organizations is Vienna University (1365) with its many institutes. During the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries, the city was the musical capital of the world and the home of many famous composers and musicians, including Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert and Bruckner.

Vienna is by far Austria's most important manufacturing, banking, and insurance center. Also important are handicraft industries, producing such goods as porcelain, jewelry, glass items, leather

goods, and musical instruments.

Since the mid-1950s the city has been the site of many international political and economic meetings and conferences.

Graz: Graz lies in southeastern Austria, on the Mur River. The second-largest city in Austria, after Vienna, Graz is the

capital of Steiermark (Styria) Province. With a population of around 280,000 people, the city extends over 12,758 sq km.

The city is known as an educational oasis due to its hosting six universities and over 40,000 students. The oldest educational institution in the city is Graz University (1586).

The old city in Graz is one of the sites that have been preserved most in Central Europe; it has been declared by UNESCO as one of the international heritage sites.

Salzburg: Salzburg, capital of Salzburg Province, is located on the Salzach River. Regarded as the fourth Austrian town in importance, Salzburg has a population of 150,000. It is known for the beauty of its nature due to its closeness to the Alps and having a series of lakes.

Innsbruck: Innsbruck is the capital of Tirol (Tyrol) Province. The name of



Municipal mansion in Vienna and a group of Muslims celebrating in its yard Eidul-Adha.

the city comes from the combination of *brücke* (German for “bridge”) and the name of the local Inn River. Located in western Austria, Innsbruck is at the junction of two important routes of commerce and travel: the Arlberg Pass, connecting western and eastern Europe, and the Brenner Pass, linking Austria with Italy. Besides being an important center of commerce and tourism, Innsbruck is also a well-known skiing and mountain climbing center.

The city’s tourism landmarks include the Goldenes Dachl (the golden roof) which is located in the center of the old city. This building is currently a museum and home to the Permanent Bureau for

Conservation of the Alps. There is also the Triumphforte on Maria Teresa Street which was built in 1765.

The Inn River flows over 254 km; near the town, it passes by Innsbruck University (1669) which has tens of thousands of students and plays a major role in securing the city’s income through the scientific researches in medicine, economy and law conducted in the university which enjoys an international fame.

Steiermark: Steiermark or Styria is a province in southeastern Austria, bordering Slovenia, and lying almost wholly within the Alps. With an area of 16,388 sq km, Steiermark is the second largest province in the country; its capital is Graz.



A building of historic Innsbruck University in Austria.

Braunau am Inn: Braunau am Inn is a city in the Innviertel region of Upper Austria (Oberösterreich), the north-western state of Austria. It lies on the border with the German state of Bavaria. It is well-known as the birthplace of Adolf Hitler.

History of Austria:

The first nucleus of the Austrian state came into being by the late tenth AD century near the Danube in an area to the east of Bavaria. Between 976 and 1246 the Babenberg ruled Austria—first as margraves and later as dukes; they were succeeded by the Habsburgs (1246-1918). In 1804 Austria united with Hungary. When the monarchy fell in 1918, the Austrian Republic came into being as a disorganized and impoverished state in which German Austrians desired union with the new German Republic, but

this was forbidden by the peace treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain. The new constitution (1920) created a federal state. In 1934, a civil strife broke out between the Republicans and the government; the war ended when Austria united with

Germany in 1938.

In 1945, the Allies occupied Austria; the country's independence was declared in the same year, however. Austria proclaimed itself a neutral state in 1955 and became an EU member in 1995.

History of Muslims in Austria:

The first Islamic community in Austria appeared in AH 936 and built the first mosque in the capital Vienna through the efforts of Muslims from the Balkans, Turkey and Iran. The Muslims' presence in Austria was consolidated in AH 1095 when the country became under Islamic Ottoman auspices and numbers of Muslim Tatars and Croats immigrated to the land. Since then the Muslims' presence developed, and their religious and educational institutions grew. Their relations with the natives got stronger,



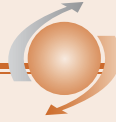
Front of the Shura Mosque in the capital Vienna which is administered by the Islamic Center.

and the Austrian emperor built a grand mosque for them in Vienna in AH 1295. In AH 1400 the Islamic Center and the Islamic Academy were established in the capital in cooperation with Al-Azhar. Islam was officially recognized as a religion in Austria in 1874. The recognition that covered the Hanafi sect paved the way for issuing the Islam Law in the Austro-Hungarian Empire on July 15, 1912. The law included legislations for administrative organization of Islamic religious affairs, endowment and educational matters. By the end of the First World War, schools in Vienna and Sarajevo taught Muslim students Islamic courses such as Sirat Ibn

Hisham, Arabic Words' Dictionary and Arabic Literature.

As for personal law, historic documents state that the governmental printing press in the capital Vienna in 1883 printed a book in German with the title *Islamic Laws of Marriage, Family and Inheritance for Mohammedans according to Hanafi School* to be an assisting reference for Austrian judges when dealing with Austria's Muslims.

Following the disintegration of the Austrian Empire after the First World War, Muslims founded in 1933 the Islamic Cultural League which stopped its activities in the wake of the Nazi Forces invasion of the country in 1939.



During WWII, Muslims established the Islamic Community's Institution in Vienna. A few years after the end of the war, in 1948, the society was disbanded. In the 1950s the Social Services' Society started its activities with receiving and sponsoring Muslim refugees from Eastern Europe besides supporting the Islamic institutional presence in Austria, especially the efforts to revive the legal recognition of Islam which was accomplished in 1979, the year in which the Islamic Center in Vienna, which was legally recognized as a grand mosque and organizational framework of the Muslims' activities in the country, was founded. The other mosques are registered as buildings affiliated with Islamic and cultural societies. Thus, Austria's Muslims have obtained, since then, clear legal gains that would enable them later to be in a better status and enjoy more stability than their fellow Muslims in other European countries.

Regarding the conditions of Muslims in Austria today, President of the Islamic Religious Board Anas A-Sheqna says they are of two groups: in the first are those who came to the country to study; they graduated from its universities and settled in Austria. These work in Medicine (over 2000 doctors), commerce and free occupations. The second group, which is larger, is represented by the unspecialized laborers who came from Turkey, Bosnia and Kosovo, settled in several Austrian

towns and assimilated into the society.

A Muslim woman enjoys a respectable status in the Austrian society both socially and politically through creating a family that is in harmony with her Islam and the community in which she lives. She, furthermore, plays a distinguished Tableegh role.

The board president adds that contemporary Islam in Austria is regarded as the second religion in the country with around 500 thousand Muslims; a figure that is still growing. Statistics note that Islam is spread amongst the Austrian army as around 1000 Muslims are currently conscripted. These draftees enjoy their rights in the army institutions: they are not served pork; can perform prayers and fast in the month of Ramadan; and can take the Eid days and Fridays as holidays. The Muslim community today is the second largest in Austria after the Catholic Christian. The Turkish laborers make the largest Muslim community in the country, followed by the Yugoslav Muslims, then the Arab Muslims. The community members are spread over the cities of Vienna, Linz, Salzburg and Graz. They have institutions that cooperate with the Islamic Social Services Society. It is noteworthy that Muslims in Austria have been known since their early existence in the Austrian Empire to have culturally resisted the attempts to be living under domination.

According to a study by the Assimilation



Andalus School of the Islamic Center

Council, there are today around half a million Muslims in Austria, 50% of them have Austrian citizenship; 20% of them are Turks, 10% Bosnians, 7% Serbs and the rest are Arabs and from other countries. The study states that Muslims now make 6% of the population. The Demography Institute of the Science Academy predicts that their percentage will be between 14 and 18% in 2051, that is around 1.6 million people.

Austrian Islamic expert Thomas Schmedinger describes the behavior of Muslims in Austria as follows: “The vast majority of Muslims are not extremists ; they have no problem with values such as democracy and human rights.” However, he notes that the Turks

encounter economic and social problems and ascribes that to their low educational levels.

Here it is useful to note that the supervisors of the Islamic bodies in Austria have early noticed the importance of education and learning to the Muslims’ children in Austria and managed to establish typical schools such as Al-Andalus School which has become a famous European educational edifice. In this regard we had the following interview with the school principal Dr Mohammed Mustafa Abu ‘Naja who is of Egyptian origin.

When was the Islamic Andalus School established in Vienna?

The school was inaugurated in 2004; there were at that time only 19 students



Outer view of the Shura Mosque in the capital, Vienna

in the elementary grade and around 50 children in kindergarten. Today we have a total of 300 students, thanks to the efforts by the volunteer teachers.

What was the objective of establishing the school in Vienna?

The numbers of Muslims in Europe are growing. It was imperative to prepare from the second generation academically-qualified cadres that can play their role towards the Austrian society, the family and the Islamic community in a fashion that they do not separate neither from the society in which they live nor from their countries of origin.

How is the Islamic Religion taught parallel to the Austrian curriculum?

We first seek to teach the Islamic Religion to the Muslim students along with the Arabic language. We are committed to a curriculum set by the Granada Institution in France that can be taught to the

children who do not speak Arabic. As for Arabs, we use the Egyptian curriculum since the majority of Arabs hail from Egypt.

Do you have a special policy to assimilate students from various origins?

We try to have students assimilate with each other as much as

possible. Al-Andalus School has become typical as far as the Islamic Board in Austria is concerned. We have made a project with the aim of establishing an Islamic Studies college that would teach in Arabic and German and enable students to get baccalaureates in Information, Arabic Language and Islamic studies.

What is your position among the other schools in Austria? And how are your relations with the educational institutions in this country?

There is a number of Islamic schools in Vienna; four of them, including ours, teach the Austrian curriculum along with Arabic and Islamic courses. Two other schools, the Libyan and the Saudi, teach the Arab curriculum, and these two are treated just like the Christian churches schools, that is the government pays the employees' salaries and promotions.



Shaikh Mahmoud Montazeri leads prayers at Imam Ali (as) Center in Vienna.

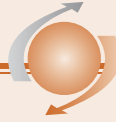
The Growth of Mosques

In spite of the growth of mosques in figures throughout the past decades (200 mosques until now), what draws the observers' attention is their functional growth as well; for they have turned into attraction sites to Muslims in Austria besides other communities of the Austrian society via the joint meetings that aim to introduce the tolerant Islam to the public. In the capital Vienna alone there are 70 mosques and prayer houses. In this city Muslims get respect more than they do in any other European country. Among the mosques that have become forums for introducing Islam:

A-Shura Mosque: is in the second district of Vienna. Its imam is Sheikh Adnan Ibrahim, who is of Palestinian origin and one of the active moderate preachers. The mosque from time to time invites students from German theological colleges with whom various religious and educational dialogues are held. Such meetings and dialogues contribute in clearing the ambiguities felt by any of the two sides towards the other.

Al-Fat'h Mosque: which is located in Vienna is under the supervision of Mr. Abdel-Al Ayyad.

The Albanian Mosque: in Vienna is the place where Muslims of Albanian origin meet to perform daily and Friday prayers



besides holding educational activities on weekends from which children and adolescents benefit.

Al-Hidaiat Mosque: is in Vienna. It is frequented by Muslims of different nationalities. The mosque imamate circulates among preachers from Arab countries.

There are many other mosques spread in Austrian cities including Ayah Sofia Mosque, A-Sahabat Mosque, Dar al-Islam Mosque, A-Salam Mosque, Al-Imam Al-Azam Mosque and the Turkish Mosque.

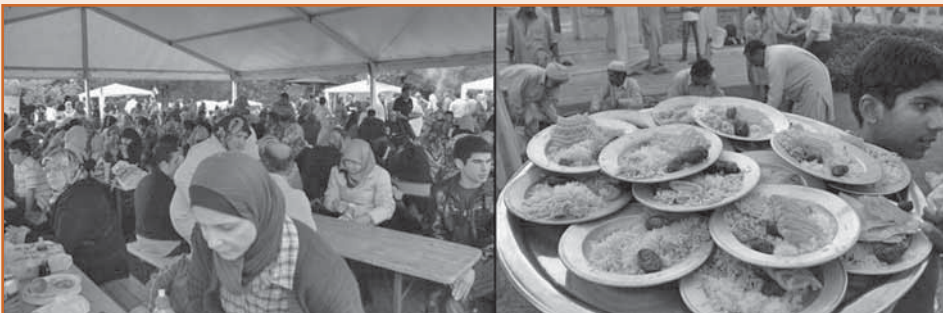
Nevertheless, this relaxed condition of mosque activities in Austria sometimes encounters extremist stances from the racist right such as the statements by Kärnten (Carinthia) governor, Jörg Haider, who had set a plan to ban building mosques and minarets under the pretext that they were in contrast with the architectural character of the province, ignoring that “the Islamic religion has been officially recognized in the country since 1912,” according to Vienna MP Omar a-Rawi.

Islamic Societies and Institutions:

The Islamic Religious Board: which is based in Vienna is the main representative of Muslims in Austria. The board was founded in 1979 and is now headed by Mr. Anas Hassan a-Shaqna who hails from Syria. The board has the ambition that Austria recognizes the Islamic occasions as holidays and appoints Muslim counselors in the Austrian army. It seeks, moreover, to make non-Muslims know about Islam and to present the faith in a way different from what is being aired in western media.

The Austrian Muslim Young Men’s Association: that was founded in 1996 engages in continuous efforts to link high school, university and working young men to each other and to strengthen their relation to Islam through organizing cultural, educational and entertainment activities besides tourism journeys.

The General Islamic Center: which is located in district 21 in the capital was



A Ramadan Iftar held by Islamic community in Austria.



Salzburg Mosque in Austria, one of the grandest and greatest mosques of Europe.

inaugurated in 1979 under the auspices of the Muslim World League in Mecca with participation from most Islamic and Arab countries such as Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. This center continuously contributes in meeting the needs of Austria's Muslims besides qualifying them scientifically and vocationally.

The Austrian Islamic Council for Education and Culture: that was established in 2002 in the capital Vienna is an Islamic Azhari institute presided by Dr Abdel-Fatah Bahria who has been developing the institute's religious and scientific courses and curriculum.

The Muslim Students Union: started its activities in early 2000 when Muslims sensed that their growing sons and daughters of the second generation needed a framework that could bring them together in the Austrian universities.

As its activities developed, this union started to include within its students' board members of different Muslim and Arab nationalities. The union plays a major role in following up the Muslims students' affairs and assisting them when it comes to enrolling in universities and choosing academic

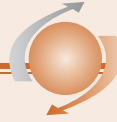
majors.

Imam Ali (AS) Center:

which is located in the capital's District 5 is the largest Islamic center affiliated with the Muslims who are followers of Ahlul-Bait (AS). The current imam of the center that is run by the Islamic Republic of Iran is Sheikh Mahmoud Muntazari. It is frequented by Iranians, Afghanis, Turks and Iraqis who seek to benefit from its educational, scientific and vocational courses.

Ahlul-Bait (AS) Islamic Cultural

Center: is based in Vienna's District 17. The cultural, religious and educational activities of the center are under the supervision of Dr Sayyed Amer al-Helou who told us in a report he made for our magazine that "the Islamic centers in Austria are in constant growth as they seek to develop their methods and work styles in advancing the Muslims of Austria and



Europe as a whole. Ahlul-Bait's (AS) Islamic Cultural Center makes a modest, but persistent and serious, contribution in this regard along with its sister societies and centers in the country.

Sada Nahda Al-Islamia Center: which lies in the capital Vienna's District 20 was founded and is administered since 1993 by Mr. Mahmoud Lancel, an Austrian young man who works as a teacher in public institutes in Vienna. Lancel has embraced Islam, along with his wife, according to Ahlul-Bait's (AS) teachings. The center's imam is Sheikh Mohammed Faldman, who is Austrian as well. The two men's continuous efforts have resulted in the embracing of Islam according to Ahlul-Bait's School by scores of Austrians, including Mr. Mohammed Aki Hoffman and Mr. Anas. The center has a religious educational board that handles the reception of Muslims who frequent the center to perform the daily prayers or attend ethics lectures. The board members are also active in the scientific and social circles in Austria, for they hold religious and cultural symposiums with the aim of introducing the values of Islam to the Austrian society. The center started in the past decade the project of building an elementary school for the Muslim children in Vienna. The school is undergoing enlargement and equipping to take larger numbers of students.

The Turkish Mahdi Center: is located in the capital's District 16. The center's

imam is Sheikh Mazloumi. It is frequented by Shia Turks who seek to discuss their religious and social affairs and maintain communication and solidarity amongst themselves besides protecting their families in a society overwhelmed with materialism.

The Pakistani Muslims Center: is located in District 20. The newly-founded center restricts its activities to hosting the Vienna Pakistani community members who are interested in education and religious Tableegh with the aim of setting an educational plan for the sons and daughters of the Pakistani families to enable them to positively participate in the socioeconomic life in Austria. The center has branches in Salzburg and Lenz. Those concerned in the Religious Board of Muslims in Austria note that Muslims outside the capital have important activity as well: In the city of Lenz the project of establishing the largest Islamic cultural center in Austria began two years ago. The actual initiative of establishing the center, which will include a mosque, library, children playgrounds, and entertainment yards for families, came from the mayor of Lenz. The project will stand on 6000 sq meters that can be expanded to 11 thousand to be able to receive the Muslims of the Upper Austria region who are now over 60 thousand, according to the project director Said Othman, who hails from Egypt. The project was licensed with the name of Al-Andalus Cultural Society.



Hallstatt Moques in Austria.

Austria Muslims' Achievements and Challenges:

The prevalent impression about Muslims in Austria is that they are a model to be followed in Europe due to their success in coexistence with the Austrian society that has got in the past century to the conviction that Muslims have become part of its cultural structure as the official recognition of the Islamic faith in Austria peaked when the religion was allowed to be taught in Austrian public schools, besides the spread of Islamic institutions and societies throughout the country; this is why one can notice the Austrian President Dr Heinz Fischer's keenness on receiving the heads and representatives of the Islamic bodies on every religious occasion of theirs in the historic imperial palace of Hofburg to congratulate them

and reassure them that Austria will persevere in embracing the Muslims who have settled in the country. This interest is the fruit of the dialogue and tolerance culture which has been adopted by Vienna away from racism and hatred.

Having obtained these gains and confidence, those concerned with the Muslims' affairs in Austria call for maintaining this achievement and repaying the good with the

better through participating, along with the society members in official and non-official institutions, in the economic and developmental revival of the country, in addition to safeguarding the most prominent achievements by Austria's Muslims such as the Islamic education schools for 45 thousand Muslim students, taking care of Muslim patients in hospitals and developing the banking projects such as the Baraka Islamic Fund for Financial Investment.

Among the important achievements by Austria's Muslims is the publication of the first Islamic newspaper in German under the auspices of the Islamic Religious Board in Austria.

The success of assimilation into this society is dependent on the respect of the laws of the country which has taken major steps regarding the recognition of Islam as a faith.

Mental and Emotional Distraction

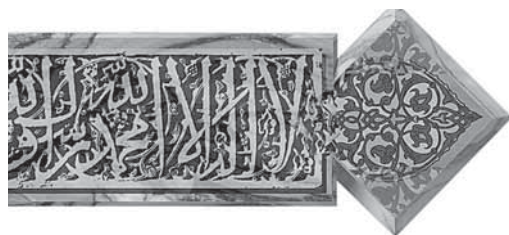
By Sheikh Habib al-Kadhimi

Many people suffer nowadays from mental distraction, the inability to focus on what requires our concentration. The individual finds that so many of his thoughts and concerns dominate him and occupy a large area of his mind by force. This is one of the forms of psychological suffering that obsessive people live with. Which one of us does not have his own thoughts and concerns that stick to him, whether they are remnants of the past or worries about the future? Gaining control over the body is a simple matter of using the muscles to control it. But controlling the mind and the imagination is not as simple, for thought comes from the inner world. If the individual does not find the means to control his inner world, his physical ability will not be sufficient to control the imagination that swings to and fro: it frightens us with imaginary enemies, tempts us with images of unattainable delight, or imprisons us in dusty memories. The individual needs to live in the present and plan for his future without being prisoner to a past that is gone forever. One form of emotional

distraction is obsessive love, even when the person is not convinced of the value of this love. He acts obsessively towards various things or people even though he is not convinced of the value of this strong inclination. We can see this kind of person rejecting every custom and law, exposing himself to the anger of others, all for the sake of these exaggerated imaginary forms living in his mind. These forms, though imaginary, affect the behavior of the individual. This problem reaches its peak when it brings him to a miserable end as we can see with those obsessed with romantic love these days. One of the causes of mental distraction is sending and receiving too much verbal nonsense. It could be sloshing through things that have nothing to do with us, or it could be listening to things that don't benefit the one who knows them or harm the one who doesn't. This mass of widespread, cheap information that fills up the stores of human thought creates a mind-jam that distracts us from the vital matters we should be concentrating on. This is what we often see when the individual

stands in prayer before his Lord, but he is preoccupied with what he was doing before the prayer. He is praying in a purely external way, but inwardly, it is as if he is wandering about the markets or reviewing films of forbidden pictures while he is in the most sacred moment. There is an expression related by the Masumeen (a) that lays down the rule one has to follow whenever he wants to direct his attention towards anything. It is related that Imam Jawad (a) said, "Whoever pays attention to a speaker, he has worshipped him. If someone is speaking for God, then the listener has worshipped God. But if the speaker is speaking for the Devil, then the listener has worshipped the Devil." Isn't this expression sufficient to warn us when we want to open our minds and hearts to what others have to say in any of the media we have today? Listening to frivolous music is one of the things that ruin the soul's uprightness and seriousness in life. The entertaining nature and provocative content of this music causes the individual to hope for what is imaginary and love what is transient, things which have no real existence except in one's daydreams. How can the souls that are pleased with the devil's trumpets be pleased with the signs of the Most Merciful God, the highest realities that can't be touched except by the purified hearts? Muslims lose their intellectual principles by blindly following the unbelievers in every tradition and custom.

Every year they commemorate the birth of Christ (a) by doing all the things Christ kept far away from! At Christmastime the rates of misdeed and crime rise to levels we don't see the rest of the year! Where are the blessings and joy in that?! If a Muslim truly wants to commemorate the birth of Christ then he should spread what the Holy Qur'an has to say about him (a), one of the greatest images of divine worship. Likewise, he should mention the marvelous words of Christ given to us by the Masumeen (a). We can direct our thought by unifying our concerns, and centering our heart on the issues we were created for. It is well known that our thoughts follow whatever rises in our hearts, whether love or anger, and that the intellect is constantly occupied with whatever the heart loves. In light of that, we can appreciate what Imam Ali (a) said when he described the Believer: "He rids himself of every concern but one concern which he devotes himself to, so he departs the state of blindness and leaves the company of the people of desire. He becomes a key to the doors of guidance and a lock on the doors of misguidance. He sees his road and he travels his path. He recognizes his guiding light and cuts through his hardships. He takes hold of the firmest of handholds, and the surest of ropes, and his certainty is like the light of the Sun." Have we ever thought about that sole concern?



- “Every newborn is given birth to according to the human nature; its parents turn him into a Jew, a Christian or a Magian.” And today’s tale is only a testimony to the truth in this sacred *hadith*. Christopher and his brother Phillip were born to Catholic parents, and their mother decided from the beginning to leave them to choose their religion distantly from any family or social influences.

“I want to become a photographer in order to convey the accurate picture about Muslims.” With these words, 16-year old Sayyid, formerly Christopher, started his talk in which he dealt with how Allah guided him to Islam and the reasons why he embraced the true faith.

Sayyid went on to say, “I approached Islam with a pleased soul and full conviction. I can only thank my mother for her role in lighting the path for me. And I repeat my thanks because she let me choose and did not force me any day to determine my religious identity.”

Sayyid added saying, “My mother embraced Islam almost two and a half years ago after she got married to an Egyptian Muslim, and Allah guided her

through him after she had been introduced to Islam through her readings as guided by her husband. The interest in Islam shifted from my mother to myself and to Phillip, my brother, so we together decided to follow in our mother’s footsteps and embrace Islam. This we achieved when we declared our acceptance of Islam a year and a half ago before our small family which is comprised of my mother and her husband. As for now, we are with you here at the Islamic Center to celebrate the Eid and to declare before you that we have accepted Islam before this crowd of our Muslim brethren on a Day when we celebrate the end of the glorious month of Ramadan.”

Sayyid, who and whose family live

in Krames town in the Lower Austria Province, says that he maintains his relationship with his family although it rejected the idea of his embracing Islam as he had personally expected. His acceptance of Islam and that of his brother, Phillip, has been denounced by the family members. The director of the Islamic Center of Vienna had announced after the Eid prayers yesterday that both youths, Christopher (Sayyid) and Phillip, wanted to declare their acceptance of Islam before the worshippers. Having pronounced the Shahada amidst clamoring Takbir shouts by the worshippers, the director accompanied the family for a tour in the center's courtyard where he gave them presents.

In an interview with both Muslim youths, I asked Sayyid, "What attracted you to Islam? Why did you choose Islam rather than any other faith?" The young Muslim man kept silent for a moment then answered, "I do not know... All I can say is that I have read about it, and the more I read the more I loved it... But what attracted me the most to Islam is that I felt that the Muslims worship God in the most perfect way. They continue to be in touch with Him all day long, day and night, which is proven by the prayers obligation which we perform five times during the day and the night... As regarding the way followers of other religions worship, it is confined to certain days of the week, if they perform it at all."



"Did you fast during the month of Ramadan?" Sayyid's answer came very quickly as if he was waiting to be asked. He smiled and said, "Yes, Praise to Allah! I fasted the entire month of Ramadan except for one day during which I was sick and I had a school examination that day. It is the first time that I fasted, and it was hard especially the first days." Then he said, "My mother challenged me that I would not be able to fast, but I fasted, and nobody believed it." As for Phillip, his 12-year old brother, he wished to be able to fast the next month of Ramadan completely after having been through the experience of fasting for one day this year.

Sayyid expressed his hope to be able to learn Arabic and memorize the Holy Qur'an especially since "Allah has blessed me and my brother with memorizing Surat al-Fatiha and some short Suras, and this enabled us to perform the five obligatory prayers," according to him.

As regarding his future plans, Sayyid

said, “I want to become a photographer in order to convey the accurate picture about Muslims and Islam. I have seen many films which distort Muslims’ image, and I have seen many good films about Islam made by individuals whom I regard as my supreme models and who have embraced Islam. I will study Islam at Vienna University, for I have come to know that they have a good Islamic studies program.”

As soon as the noontime call for prayers (*athan*) was pronounced, Sayyid and Phillip looked at us and said, “Do you permit us to go?” They stood up, greeted us then went at the time when tears filled our eyes!

The director of the Islamic Center of Vienna says that hundreds of Austrians have declared their acceptance of Islam inside the Islamic Center during the years of its existence in Vienna. Since the Center was established, 1,100 persons accepted Islam, and 700 Austrians accepted Islam during the past ten years; most of them are youths.

The director went on to say, “Certainly there are special programs to absorb the Muslim converts and to assess the extent of their true desire to embrace Islam. These programs include meetings which are held 4 times a week for three months. First, we are interested in the Muslim convert articulating both Shahadas so he would be a follower of the Islamic faith if Allah decrees for him to die [so he may die

as a Muslim]. Then he joins orientation programs which give him an idea about the religion and its basic tenets without going into details which may confuse him. We acquaint the Muslim convert with the tolerance of the Islamic faith and with its logic, for there is wisdom behind each ruling in Islam. We are keen about explaining to him the wisdom behind the prayers and fast obligations and support it with brief booklets in German.”

The director explains saying, “There are some who come to us to declare their acceptance of Islam, but they retract during the orientation period. Some of them wish to apply for a job which preconditions the applicant to be a Muslim, and there may be one who wishes to marry a Muslim woman, so he accepts Islam in order to marry her.”

The Islamic Center receives more than 30,000 Austrian citizens per year who wish to become familiar with Islam without an intermediary, and most of these individuals are university and school students. The center sets the suitable appointments for receiving them. The Center will also organize this coming March an open mosque week during which guests will be welcomed by the Center amidst an Islamic atmosphere in which they get to know how Muslims pray. There will also be tours inside the Center and a place for the prayers under leadership of cadres who are qualified in their language and religion.

THE MEANING OF KARBALA AND BEYOND*

By Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

The form of our gathering tonight is to show allegiance to the message and the conduct of the Ahl ul-Bayt. In every aspect of life there is an outer form and an inner meaning. Form and meaning are always connected, but not always in the right balance. We are gathered, as many others around the world are gathered, to remember the meaning of Imam Husayn's martyrdom at Karbala.

If we do not join the form of our commemoration with the meaning of Karbala, then we have disrupted the balance in existence. If we do not live what we teach, that teaching will become barren. If we do not adhere to the message of Islam in every way, that message will be distorted, and will end up being yet another religion far removed from the source. I would like to quote from the Qur'an to share with you the responsibility that is on our shoulders:

“Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who establish the prayer, give zakat and bow down (in prayer).” (Surat ul-Ma'idah: 55)

Many of you know the historical event about which this ayah was revealed in Medina. The event occurred in the Prophet's mosque during the time of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali. It was while Amir 'Ali, peace be upon him, was in prayer, in ruku', that a man began to ask for sadaqa (charity). While still in ruku', Amir 'Ali lifted his hand on which he wore a ring and held it toward the beggar. What measure of man, so deeply absorbed in prayer, could, at the same time, be aware of the presence of a beggar seeking physical, material sustenance?

Many commentaries have been made on this ayah. Many have expounded on its overall meaning concerning how the

* Taken from Nuradeen Vol 5 #3, Fall 1985



two qualities of the inner and outer states were combined in Amir al-Mu'minin, the greatest of the believers in prayer, yet aware of what existed around him.

Amir 'Ali, peace be upon him, was a man of tawhid. He was in this world, but not of it, and was utterly cognizant of its totality. It was he who said: "You think you are a small universe, and in you is folded up the entire cosmos." Amir 'Ali was simultaneously in a state of prayer, yet aware of who was in front of him and who was not. This is the state of a man who is in total abandonment, and therefore in pure consciousness, unified with the entire creational reality. It is about Amir 'Ali that it is said: "It is he who gives drink and drinks, and is not distracted by his drunkenness. His joy in that state does

not distract him from his companion, or from his Beloved, nor is he distracted by the cup." Nor was he distracted, like most of us are, by our lives, our troubles, our mission, or our good works. His drunkenness, or his joyfulness obeyed him - he was a fully awakened being. He was in the state of completeness. He is the man whom we try to emulate, to imitate, and to follow in the dust of his footsteps. The culture of the Ahl ul-Bayt heralds for us the meaning of Islamic life. It is a complete model of reality. If we want to know aspects of reality, then we have no other option than to take on the path of those who have achieved it. This is the only step that anyone with sense and respect for himself will take. As charity begins at home, so each individual must

begin with himself, to enter the party and join the caravan, to be as though he is amongst the Ahl- ul-Bayt; to be in taqwa, in fearful awareness; to be aware of death at all times; to be willing to face the next life, joyfully, by the fact that he has done his best, and there is nothing left but to see the face of Allah.

The affliction of Imam Husayn, peace be upon him, is the same as our affliction. With us, however, because our dedication to the path of Allah is not as complete as his, the affliction is not seen as sharply as in the case of Karbala. Nevertheless, we are at all times confronted by test and trial.

“Do men think that they will be left alone by saying we believe, and not be tried?” (Surat Ankabut:2)

The fitna (affliction) upon us is in order that we may sort out those lower aspects of the nafs (self) which must be left behind, so that the desired higher aspects become our habit, our tradition, and our way of life. Our affliction in this life is a positive situation in order that we may evolve toward that realm which will ultimately lead us to the final point of tawhid, seeing nothing other than the blessedness that comes to us from the One and Only Creator. The man of true Islam, a man of submission, sees only goodness in this life that comes to him from his Creator. If he dislikes anything, he sees it as coming from himself, from his ignorance. Thus, at all

times, he is content with his knowledge, and he acts outwardly as courteously as possible. Fitna is for the benefit of our evolution, our upbringing. If it occurs in a revolutionary manner, then our evolution comes about more rapidly. If it occurs as Karbala did, with every door and option closed, then the sincerity of our dependence on Allah is fully tested. At that time we should be in hamd (praise) and shukr (gratitude). It is only then that we are given the opportunity to say and truly mean, la hawla wa la quwwata illa billahi 1-'Ali-l'Azim (no strength and no power but by Allah, the Exalted, the Great), because we cannot turn anywhere. We cannot depend on our neighbor, on our friends, or on anybody else, as was the case with Imam Husayn and the Ahl ul-Bayt. We are constantly given opportunities to reach a point within us, experientially, that we may transcend the physical event of the moment. Not that every day, or every moment is Karbala, but we must go beyond Karbala itself; to be with the eternal martyr, he who took the name of destruction and turned it into the everlasting, whose death became the fruit of the perfect example for us to follow, to taste, in order to transcend to that realm which is the station of true abandonment.

We are aware of the conditions which led up to the events at Karbala. Karbala was a result of man's apathy, of the complacency and indifference of the

Muslims of that time- They had reverted, after establishing Islam in their lives, to the habits of their old way of life. To know the state of the Muslims then, one needs only to look at the state of many of those in different parts of the Muslim world today.

What the din (life transaction) of Muhammad did was to transform that fibre of human behavior into a much higher level, the ultimate and only way that it is possible to exist, and that befits man in this life. In the din, one is given the opportunity to worship, moving into a state of adoration toward a higher state of tawhid, until one does not recognize that he is in constant jihad (striving, struggle). At that point, one is living his jihad; he is constantly in a state of inner revolt, and therefore is constantly evolving. His heart is turning - his heart is not attached. He is free, and yet constrained by his Creator. He is tethered, but that tether gives him his freedom: the freedom of no-choice. He has no choice in his abandonment. He does not have to ponder, or to think, before he acts. His is not a process of thought in time which is electromagnetically and biologically constricted.

His actions are spontaneous, fitri (innate). His actions are by Allah, for Allah, to Allah, because he is a man who has moved into the station of the Khalifah of Allah. Imam Hussein, peace be upon him, was born not on the third of Sha'ban when Islam was at its pinnacle, but on the

tenth of Muharram in the 61st year of the Hijrah.

The martyrdom of Imam Husayn was the occasion of his true birth, for it signified his life and his destiny. His martyrdom clearly revealed a man faced with no option as the events in the final days of his life unfolded. Yet, a mortal like all of us, Imam Husayn had to go through the form, with the possibility that something could strike compassion in the hearts of the enemy - the sight of a child dying of thirst, or of the helpless being attacked. Imam Husayn lived through every moment; he followed the entire model in its fullness until he realized the truth of the prophecy and the inevitability of his destiny. He continued on until he recognized that the deen of Muhammad was not going to be put back onto the straight path except through the blood that would be shed at Karbala. Then the ever-blossoming tree of Islam would begin to grow again. On the last day of his life Imam Husayn addressed his small group of followers: "Glory be to Allah, He Who created the world and made it a home that will pass away."

Everything in this world will pass away, nothing in this world will last. Imam Husayn spoke of the path and the true meaning of man's life, imploring his followers to submit to Allah. With his death only hours away, he tried to bring the message of truth through to them. There is only Allah; Allah was at the

beginning, He will be at the end, and He is with us now if only we could see.

“I see you have embarked on an affair by which you have already brought the wrath of Allah upon you. He has turned His glorious face from you.”

By this, Imam Husayn meant that they were already in the Fire.

“Allah has brought upon you His niqma (vengeance), and He has taken away from you His rahma (compassion).”

It is up to us to seek the rahma of Allah, and to enter into the bounty and abundance of His mercy by truly abandoning ourselves. “Glory be to the Lord, the Sustainer. You have professed your obedience and trust to the Prophet Muhammad, but now you rise. I see you have said one thing and you are acting upon another.”

That is, they had professed allegiance to the Prophet, but now they are about to slaughter his family.

“Shaytan (that energy that can lead everyone to destruction) has taken over your hearts, and has made you forget the remembrance of Allah.”

These are people who deny the truth, deny the absolute mercy of Allah after they have expressed or professed their trust and their iman (belief). Therefore, how far away they are by their injustice. We are all enjoined to follow the injunction of the Prophet, who said:

“People will still be well if they enjoin upon each other goodness and avoid that which is evil, and if they cooperate on any

good deed, and be fearful of transgressing the bounds. If they do not follow this injunction, the baraka (blessing) will leave them; the mercy, the conducive life will leave them. Some will end up controlling others and there will be no victory for them, either in this world or the next.”

To follow this injunction we must truly live it; otherwise, it is hypocrisy. This world is a prison for the one who trusts in Allah and the life hereafter, and it is the garden for the one who denies Allah and the hereafter. The denier knows his time is limited and thus runs rampant, creating more sensation, more sensuality, more excitement, arrogance and show of power, because these are what he is investing in. The man of Allah recognizes that he is constricted and has only come to this life to die. What then is the point of accumulating anything? Imam ‘Ali shows us the garden of the believer and the Ahl ul-Bayt when he says:

“Leave covertness of this world, and in your life do not harbor greed and do not accumulate wealth, for you do not know for whom it is you are collecting.”

Imam Husayn exemplified by his life and sacrifice, as does the true believer, contentment with the decree of Allah. The true believer is content that he has done his utmost. There is nothing more for him to do but await the blessed face of his Creator.



Britain: record numbers embrace Muslim faith

The number of Britons choosing to become Muslims has nearly doubled in the past decade, according to one of the most comprehensive attempts to estimate how many people have embraced Islam.

Following the global spread of violent Islamism, British Muslims have faced more scrutiny, criticism and analysis than any other religious community. Yet, despite the often negative portrayal of Islam, thousands of Britons are adopting the religion every year.

Estimating the number of converts living in Britain has always been difficult because census data does not differentiate between whether a religious person has adopted a new faith or was born into it. Previous estimates have placed the number of Muslim converts in the UK at between 14,000 and 25,000.

But a new study by the inter-faith think-tank Faith Matters suggests the real figure could be as high as 100,000, with as many as 5,000 new conversions nationwide each year.

Muharram rituals: Not by Muslims but Hindus

Chennai: An interesting case of Hindus observing the mourning rituals of Muharram has come to light in a small village, Muthuvanthidal in Sivaganga district in Tamil Nadu.

The village consisting of 400 families from the majority community, does not have a single Muslim family; but the rituals of Muharram, such as walking on naked coal fire, which although is a familiar sight among Hindus, is maintained in this village each Muharram.

Early on Friday morning, 25 Hindu men walked over burning coal, the pit for which was dug about five days prior to Muharram. A Moulvi, Kader Basha, a former resident of the village who now lives in Thirupuvanam in Sivaganga district, initiated the rituals. As women do not walk over fire, they carry a basket of burning coal on their heads which they cover with a muslin cloth.

“God is above all and will never discriminate among people, so why should we discriminate among religions,” says Karnan, a resident of the village.

It’s of great importance to note these rituals are totally desolate and devoid of thickly populated Muslim regions such as Vellore, Ambur, Visharam, Pernampet, Vaniyambadi, Thirupathur, Trichy, Eruvadi (Tirunelveli Dist) and many more places to name in Tamil Nadu.



Marie Le Pen under fire for comparing Muslims praying in the streets to the Nazi occupation

The daughter of French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen has been under fire for comparing Muslims praying in the streets outside overcrowded mosques in France to the Nazi occupation.

Marine Le Pen said at a rally of the anti-immigrant National Front that there were “ten to fifteen” places in France where Muslims worshipped in the streets outside mosques when these were full.

“For those who want to talk a lot about World War II, if it’s about occupation, then we could also talk about it (Muslim prayers in the streets), because that is occupation of territory,” she said at the gathering in Lyon.

“It is an occupation of sections of the territory, of districts in which religious laws apply. It’s an occupation,” she said at the rally that was part of her bid to take the party leadership when her father steps down soon.

“There are of course no tanks, there are no soldiers but it is nevertheless an occupation and it weighs heavily on local residents,” the 42-year-old noted.

The comments sparked condemnation from politicians from President Nicolas Sarkozy’s ruling UMP party and from the opposition Socialists and the Greens.

“This is the true face of the far right which has not changed in the slightest, and Marine Le Pen is just as dangerous as Jean-Marie Le Pen,” Socialist Party spokesman Benoit Hamon said.

Jean-Marie Le Pen, who has several convictions for racism and “anti-Semitism”, shocked Europe in 2002 by coming in second in the French presidential elections.

The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) said that Marine Le Pen’s comments were “insulting towards the Muslims of France” and were an “incitement to hatred and violence against them.”

An anti-racist group said it planned to file a civil lawsuit against her.

“Comparing Muslims to an army of occupation is humiliating. To be treated like invaders, like fascists, that is just not possible,” said Mouloud Aounit, head of the Movement Against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples (MRAP).

Police in June banned a “pork sausage and wine” street party planned by extremist groups to combat what they saw as the “Islamization” of the neighborhood.



Lebanese Top Shia VP urges Indonesia to organize Islamic conference

Vice President of the Higher Shiite Islamic Council Sheikh Abdel-Amir Qabalan has called on Indonesia to organize an Islamic conference in order to safeguard Muslim unity.

“Islam calls for unity, openness and cooperation for the sake of the humanity as a whole and condemns all kinds of terror against innocent civilians,” said Qabalan following talks with Indonesian Ambassador to Lebanon Dimas Samodra Rum.

Qabalan also urged influential Muslim countries to support the oppressed Muslims around the world, especially the Palestinians in their struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Russians to get a better understanding of Shia Muslims

A prominent Islamic Research Center in Dagestan, Russia has kicked off publishing online articles in a move to introduce the Ahul Bayt (pbut), the household of the holy prophet, to the world community.

The articles which have been published on Wikipedia website are aimed at introducing Shia to the Russian people.

The center has recently published two articles on Shiism and Shia fiqh (jurisprudence) on Wikipedia. The center is expected to post an article weekly online on the subject. Shia population is growing in Russia. According to PEW Research Center’s report in 2009, Russia is home to some 16.482.000 Muslims, 165.000 of which are Shia.



Around the World

Munich Revives Historic Islamic Art Exhibition after 100 Years

Inspired by a groundbreaking exhibition that was held in Munich 100 years ago, The Future of Tradition, Munich's major exhibition of Islamic art and artifacts combines contemporary works by Islamic artists with some of the items from the original collection.

One hundred years ago, Munich hosted a pioneering show that has influenced the reception of Islamic art in the West ever since. Under the motto "Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst" (Masterworks of Muhammadan Art), the exhibition comprised more than 3,600 exhibits on display in 80 showrooms. This impressive collection aimed at a broad representation of contemporary artists and the three-volume catalogue of the exhibition still serves as a reference book for art historians. It was -- and still is -- the largest Islamic Art exhibition ever shown. That exhibition, attended by over 100,00 people, gave the western observer a comprehensive historical view of the arts in countries influenced by Islam.

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