

# OIC

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# Journal



Extraordinary CFM Meeting in Jeddah  
Denounces Judaization of Al-Quds



Intra-OIC Trade:  
25% Target Achieved by Most OIC Countries



51st Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers  
Istanbul – Republic of Türkiye  
21–22 June 2025  
**“The OIC in a Transforming World”**

Istanbul, the largest city in Türkiye, is regarded as the country’s economic, cultural, and historical center. It spans the Bosphorus Strait, and is located in both Europe and Asia. It is a major metropolis, encompassing 39 districts that constitute the Istanbul Province.



# OUR MESSAGE

## Highlights on the 51st Session of the OIC CFM

With the end of the month of April 2025, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has completed the preparatory meetings for the 51st session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), scheduled to be held in the middle of this year in Istanbul, Türkiye.

The OIC held the Senior Officials Meeting on April 27-29, the 53rd Session of the Permanent Finance Committee on April 20-23, and the 47th Session of the Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural and Social Affairs on April 15-17. These meetings, along with other contacts, efforts, and consultations, offer opportunities for OIC Countries to deliberate on the challenges facing the OIC and its Member States. I take this opportunity to express my thanks to the Republic of Cameroon for its efforts as Chair of the 50th CFM session. I also extend my warmest congratulations to the Republic of Türkiye, Chair of the 51st session, wishing it full success in its mandate.

I avail myself of this opportunity to welcome, once again, the reinstatement of Syria as a Member State of our Organization, and to call on OIC Countries to assist Syria in fulfilling the aspirations of the Syrian people for security and stability.

We are facing numerous challenges on various political, economic, cultural, and social levels. Foremost among these is the Palestinian Cause which ranks high among the priorities of OIC Member States, and is being further exacerbated by the ongoing brutal Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and occupied Al-Quds.

This aggression has persisted in a manner unprecedented in recent history. The bombardment and re-occupation of Gaza have been accompanied by the Israeli occupation's closure of all Gaza crossings and vital entry points, in addition to cutting off all means of life for Gaza residents, pushing them into an unprecedented famine. The World Food Programme, UNRWA, and the World Health Organization have issued warnings in this regard.

Israel, the occupying power, has not only prevented humanitarian aid from reaching the Gaza Strip, but has also banned medical supplies, targeted hospitals and medical centers, burned the tents of displaced persons, killed women and children, and left the residents of Gaza without shelter, food, or medical treatment.

This being this situation, we need to pursue our efforts to put an end to the brutal Israeli aggression, and work together – through OIC Member States, relevant OIC Offices and Institutions, the Ministerial Committee Assigned by the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit on Developments in the Gaza Strip, and the international community – towards establishing the independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

On another front, the current situation and the escalating confrontation between Pakistan and India require us to show greater solidarity and intensify efforts to resolve the Jammu and Kashmir issue in accordance with the relevant resolutions endorsed by previous Councils of Foreign Ministers.

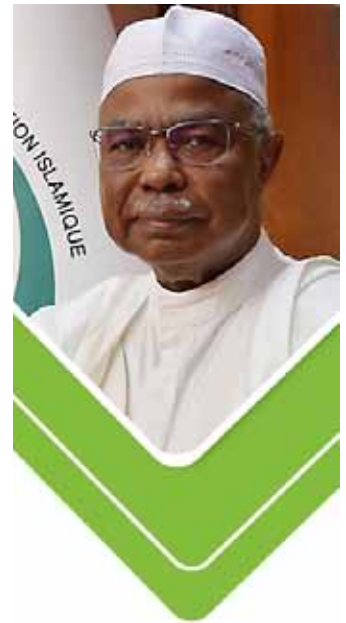
I take this opportunity to express the OIC's full and strong solidarity with Pakistan in the face of India's violent attacks on Pakistani territories. These attacks will in no way serve peace and stability in South Asia. I reaffirm that the diplomatic path and a rational adherence to the logic of peace are the only and optimal solution to the bloody conflict in Jammu and Kashmir.

At the same time, the OIC continues to closely monitor the implementation of the resolutions and recommendations adopted by the Islamic Summit Conference and the Council of Foreign Ministers in support of Muslim communities and minorities in non-OIC Member States. In cooperation with our international partners, we also continue to support efforts aimed at combating terrorism, extremism, and Islamophobia, and promoting interfaith dialogue in pursuit of global peace and harmony.

We - at the OIC - seek to ensure that the coming period will witness more intensive diplomatic and field efforts to counter Islamophobia, as well as to value and consolidate the legal and human-rights achievements made by the OIC through its Islamic Group at the Human Rights Council in Geneva and the United Nations headquarters in New York.

The OIC also hopes to see greater solidarity with the Sahel and Lake Chad region, in support of efforts to promote peace, security, stability, and development in this important area of the OIC, along with more intensive efforts in support of Somalia which is facing significant security challenges that threaten stability and security across the Horn of Africa.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep thanks and sincere gratitude to the host country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for its generous support for the OIC and its unwavering commitment to promoting joint Islamic action and serving the causes of the Islamic world, under the high 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—may Allah protect them.



**Hissein Brahim Taha**  
Secretary-General of the  
Organization of Islamic  
Cooperation

*Israel, the occupying power, has not only prevented humanitarian aid from reaching the Gaza Strip, but has also banned medical supplies, targeted hospitals and medical centers, burned the tents of displaced persons, killed women and children, and left the residents of Gaza without shelter, food, or medical treatment.*

# OIC Journal

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## 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://wasatyea.net/en>)

OIC Media Forum, Turkiye 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-iphrc.org/>)



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## 4th Extraordinary OIC Meeting on Israel's Aggression Against Palestinians

The OIC Council of Foreign Ministers held an Extraordinary Session to address the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and the schemes for their displacement from their land and annexation thereof. This session, which took place at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on March 7, 2025, marked the fourth emergency meeting held by the OIC in support of Palestine, and the sixth at the level of Foreign Ministers, over the past year and a half.

Addressing the meeting, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, welcomed all participants and expressed appreciation for their presence at this extraordinary meeting. He stressed that their participation reaffirmed the Member States' commitment to support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and stand by their just Cause.

The Secretary-General noted that this extraordinary session was being convened amidst the heavy challenges facing the Palestinian Cause, as a result of the persistence

of Israel, the occupying power, in its occupation, settlement, daily crimes, annexation plans, and forced displacement of the Palestinians from their land, along with its attempts to alter the geographical and demographic features of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and to Judaize the City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and violate its sanctities. This is in addition to the siege, starvation, arbitrary arrests, incursions into Palestinian cities and refugee camps, and destruction of their homes and infrastructures. He stressed that these actions are unacceptable and constitute a violation of international law. In this regard, the Secretary-General called for more intensified efforts to achieve a lasting ceasefire and the complete withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces, as well as for ensuring delivery of humanitarian aid, and helping displaced persons return to their homes. He also called for enabling the Palestinian government to carry out its duties, preserve the unity of the Palestinian land—including Gaza, the West Bank, and East Al-

Quds, and implement the emergency relief, economic recovery, and reconstruction programs, as well as for providing international protection for the Palestinian people.

The Secretary-General underscored the importance of the Gaza Reconstruction Plan adopted by the Arab Summit, while upholding the right of the Palestinian people to remain on their land. He stressed that the Plan represents a shared and realistic vision that requires OIC Member States to mobilize the needed financial and political support for its implementation, as part of an integrated political and economic process conducive to implementing the Two-State Solution.

The Secretary-General warned against the serious implications of Israel's unacceptable actions and attempts to politically and legally liquidate the Palestinian refugee issue, through targeting UNRWA and its vital, indispensable, and irreplaceable role in serving millions of Palestinian refugees.



## OIC Extraordinary CFM Categorically

## Rejects Displacement of Palestinians

The Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, convened at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on March 7, 2025, to address the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and the schemes for their displacement from their land and annexation thereof, stressed that the Council categorically rejects and firmly stands against schemes aimed at displacing the Palestinian people individually or collectively, inside or outside their land, or the forced displacement, exile or deportation in any form, under any circumstance or justification. It considered this a form of ethnic cleansing, a grave violation of international law, a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, an unacceptable encroachment on the sovereignty and stability of states, and a threat to their security and territorial integrity. It also condemned the policies of starvation and scorched earth aimed at forcing the Palestinian people to leave their land, and rejected any Israeli attempts to alter the demographic composition of the Palestinian Territory.

The Resolution adopted by the Extraordinary CFM Session demanded an end to all the policies and measures of annexation,

illegal settlement, house demolition, land confiscation, destruction of infrastructure, Israeli military incursions into Palestinian camps and cities, and attempts to impose the alleged Israeli sovereignty on any parts of the West Bank, including East Al-Quds. It considered that these policies threaten to blow up the entire situation in an unprecedented manner, and to further inflame and complicate the situation in the region, and constitute a flagrant violation of the principles of international law and relevant UN resolutions.

The Resolution affirmed support for the vision of H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, regarding the importance of achieving Palestinian national unity, based on commitment to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, as well as to its political program, international commitments, and the principle of a single system, a single law, and a single legitimate army. It underscored that the democratic choice and going to the ballot box are the only path toward respecting the will of the Palestinian people in choosing who represents them through general, presidential, and legislative, elections to be

held in the entire Palestinian Territory—Gaza and the West Bank, including East al-Quds. The Resolution welcomed and supported the decision of the Government of the State of Palestine to form, under its umbrella, an administrative committee that includes national competencies from the Gaza Strip for a transitional period, while pursuing work to enable it to assume all its responsibilities, strengthen its ability to fully discharge its duties in maintaining security in Gaza, and implement its plan for relief, recovery, reconstruction and development in the Strip. This is to be carried out within the framework of the geographical and political unity of all the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Al-Quds, while ensuring the permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people over their land and reinforcing their steadfastness therein.

The Resolution held Israel, the occupying power, legally accountable for the significant harm resulting from the war crimes and acts of genocide it perpetrated against the Palestinian people, with the large-scale destruction, substantial fatalities, human suffering, material and economic losses, and devastation of property.



## OIC Extraordinary CFM Welcomes Convening International Gaza Recovery Conference in Cairo

The Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, convened at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on March 7, 2025, to address the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and the schemes for their displacement from their land and annexation thereof, welcomed the convening of an international conference in Cairo, as soon as possible, for the recovery and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, in cooperation with the State of Palestine and the United Nations. It urged the international community to participate in the Conference in order to accelerate the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Gaza following the destruction caused by the Israeli aggression, and to establish a Trust Fund to receive financial pledges from donor countries and funding institutions for the implementation of recovery and reconstruction projects.

The ministerial meeting called for establishing an international fund, in cooperation with the United Nations, to support the orphans of Gaza, victims of the brutal Israeli aggression, who number approximately 40,000 children. It also called for providing assistance and artificial limbs to thousands

of injured individuals, particularly children who have lost their limbs, and urged countries and organizations to launch initiatives in this regard, similar to the Jordanian 'Restoring Hope' initiative to support amputees in the Gaza Strip.

The Resolution adopted by this Extraordinary CFM Session called for strengthening the resilience and steadfastness of the Palestinian people on their land, by providing more humanitarian support and all possible facilities for the economic, industrial, commercial, educational, and health sectors in Palestine. It also called for supporting the budget of the Government of the State of Palestine and for activating the Islamic financial safety net in accordance with mechanisms to be agreed upon, and urged the international community to compel the Israeli occupation to immediately and fully release the withheld Palestinian tax revenue funds.

The Resolution called upon the UN Security Council to assume its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security, and to implement its relevant resolutions, including Resolutions 2735 (2024), 2728 (2024), and 2334 (2016), as well as the UN General

Assembly's Resolution ES 10/24 dated September 18, 2024. It called on all States to consider further actions, including imposing punitive sanctions against Israel, the occupying power, to compel it to immediately end its occupation and illegal settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and to support the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. It endorsed the tangible and appreciated efforts made by Algeria, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, in supporting Islamic causes in general, and the Palestinian Cause in particular.

The meeting condemned all criminal acts, the extremist and racist statements made by ministers in the Israeli occupation government, and the Israeli crimes in the cities, villages, and camps of the West Bank, and warned of the serious escalation of organized terrorism perpetrated by extremist settlers against the Palestinian people, their land, holy sites and properties, supported and armed by the Israeli occupation government, and under the protection of the Israeli forces.

## OIC Countries Reaffirm Support for the Legal and Media Monitoring Units On the Occupation's Crimes



The Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, convened at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on March 7, 2025, to address the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and the schemes for their displacement from their land and annexation thereof, stressed the importance of supporting the Legal and Media Monitoring Units at the OIC General Secretariat, in implementation of the Resolution adopted by the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit. It assigned the Secretary-General to submit a report on their activities aimed at documenting and exposing the Israeli crimes and violations, as well as at contributing to the preparation of legal arguments on all the violations of international law and international humanitarian law committed by Israel, the occupying power, against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Al-Quds.

The meeting emphasized the importance of accountability and legal prosecution for all those responsible for the grave violations and crimes committed against the Palestinian people, through international and national justice mechanisms. It urged all States to commit to implementing the two Advisory Opinions of the International Court of

Justice, and called on the International Criminal Court to complete investigations into the war crimes and crimes against humanity continuously committed by officials of the Israeli colonial occupation government against the defenseless Palestinian people, and to quickly bring the criminals to international justice. It urged all States to impose sanctions on Israel, the occupying power, to deter it and compel it to comply with international law.

The meeting stressed that the perpetration of the genocide in Gaza and the ongoing and indiscriminate military attacks targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure are closely linked to the provision of military support, weapons, ammunition, and related equipment to Israel, the occupying power. It, therefore, called on all countries that supply weapons and ammunition to Israel to reconsider this policy and ban the export or transfer of weapons and ammunition to Israel. It decided to follow up on the joint letter initiative put forward by the Republic of Türkiye and the Core Group made up of 18 countries in the United Nations, which was signed by 52 countries, the OIC, and the League of Arab States, to halt provision of weapons to Israel.

The Resolution adopted by this Extraordinary

session reaffirmed rejection of and opposition to all the Israeli measures, including the racist and illegitimate laws targeting the existence of UNRWA and all attempts to diminish or abolish its irreplaceable role in its five areas of operation, particularly in the West Bank, East Al-Quds, and the Gaza Strip, which represents a top political and humanitarian priority and serves as a stabilizing factor in the region. It further rejected all attempts to liquidate the issue of the refugees and their right to return and compensation, and urged all States to provide increased political, legal, and financial support to UNRWA.

The Resolution assigned the Islamic Group in New York to pursue efforts to mobilize international support for freezing Israel's participation in the UN General Assembly and its affiliated entities, in preparation for submitting a joint draft resolution to the General Assembly – 10th Extraordinary Session (Uniting for Peace), on the basis of its violations of the UN Charter, its threat to international peace and security, and its failure to fulfill the obligations of its membership in the UN, and based on the ICJ Advisory Opinion issued on July 19, 2024.

## Extraordinary CFM Meeting Denounces Judaization of Al-Quds

The Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, convened at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on March 7, 2025, to address the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian People and the Schemes for their Displacement from their Land and Annexation thereof, strongly condemned all the Israeli occupation's policies aimed at Judaizing the occupied city of Al-Quds and changing its Arab identity, and called for allowing worshippers to access the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, practice their religious rituals freely and safely, and preserve the legal and historical status of Islamic and Christian holy sites, especially the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, Al-Haram Al-Sharif, with its entire area of 144,000 dunums, as an exclusive place of worship for Muslims only. The Resolution adopted by the Extraordinary Session called on all States and all international institutions and organizations to adhere to the resolutions of the international legitimacy regarding the occupied city of Al-Quds as an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967 and as the capital of the State of Palestine. It also emphasized the necessity of respecting the role of the Jordanian "Directorate of Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jeru-

salem Affairs" which has exclusive authority to manage all affairs of Al-Aqsa Mosque, as part of the historical Hashemite custodianship over the Holy Sites, and stressed the role of Al-Quds Committee and Bayt Mal Al-Quds Al-Sharif Agency.

The Resolution condemned the grave Israeli practices and violations against the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron and other religious sites, and called on the international community and international organizations, especially UNESCO which in 2017 recognized the Ibrahimi Mosque as a World Heritage Site in Danger, to intervene in order to immediately put an end to these violations and provocative practices.

The meeting stressed the need to provide international protection for the Palestinian people in accordance with international standards, in implementation of the UN resolutions, and in line with the resolutions of Islamic summits, and called for the deployment of international protection and peacekeeping forces, in the context of the effective implementation of a comprehensive vision with a timetable, aimed at building the institutional capacity of the State of Palestine and realizing

its sovereignty over the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967.

The meeting recalled the UNGA Resolution ES-10/24 of 18 September 2024, which called for convening the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, with regard to enforcing the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Al-Quds, and ensuring respect thereof in accordance with Common Article 1 of the Four Geneva Conventions, within six months. It regretted that the Conference announced to be held in Geneva on 7 March 2025 could not take place and deliver on its mandate, and called for enhancing global efforts to uphold International Humanitarian Law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The meeting expressed support for the efforts of the International Coalition for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, chaired by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as Chair of the Joint Arab-Islamic Committee on Gaza, as well as the European Union and Norway.





## Reinstatement of Syria's Membership in the OIC

The 20th Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, convened at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on March 7, 2025, to address the Ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian People and the Schemes for their Displacement from their Land and Annexation thereof, announced the reinstatement of the membership of the Syrian Arab Republic in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

The relevant Resolution stated that the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, convened in its 20th Extraordinary Session in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on March 7, 2025, referring to the Final Communiqué of the Fourth Extraordinary Islamic Summit held in Makkah al-Mukarramah, Saudi Arabia, on August 14–15, 2012; referring to the request of the Syrian Arab Republic to take the necessary measures to reinstate its membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation; and pursuant to the powers of the Council of Foreign Ministers set forth in Article 10 of the OIC Charter; decided the reinstatement of the Syrian Arab Republic's membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and assigned the OIC

Secretary-General to undertake the necessary measures to implement this Resolution and submit a report thereon to the next CFM session.

The Resolution issued by the 20th Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, convened at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on March 7, 2025, to address the Ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian People and the Schemes for their Displacement from their Land and Annexation thereof, condemned the Israeli attacks on Syria and the incursion into its territory, which constitute a flagrant violation of international law, an aggression on Syria's sovereignty, and a serious escalation that fuels tension and conflict.

The Resolution called on the international community and the Security Council to take immediate action to enforce international law and compel Israel to stop its aggression and withdraw from the Syrian territories it has occupied in clear violation of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement. It reaffirmed that the Golan Heights is an occupied Syrian territory, and rejected the decision of Israel, the occupying power, to

annex it and impose its sovereignty over it. It assigned the Secretary-General to follow up on the execution of this Resolution and to submit a report thereon to the forthcoming CFM meeting.

The Extraordinary Session emphasized the need to implement the ceasefire agreement in Lebanon in all its clauses, to abide by the UNSC Resolution 1701 indivisibly, to condemn the Israel violations thereof, and to compel Israel, the occupying power, to implement its part of this Resolution. It rejected any Israeli attempt to impose a new reality by remaining in Lebanese border points or establishing a new border strip, and demanded that Israel fully withdraw from Lebanon to the internationally recognized borders in accordance with the provisions of the Armistice Agreement between Lebanon and Israel of 1949, and hand over the prisoners captured during the recent war. It emphasized support for Lebanon in its diplomatic efforts aimed at liberating all its territories and preserving its sovereignty, security, and stability, and condemned any Israeli violations of the Lebanese sovereignty.



## OIC Observatory: Israel Resumes Aggression on Gaza with more Ferocity

During the first quarter of 2025 (January – March 2025), the OIC Media Observatory on Israeli Crimes Against Palestinians documented the Israeli occupation forces' breach of the ceasefire agreement, and the resumption of the Israeli attacks on civilians in the Gaza Strip in an even more atrocious manner. The bombings have targeted the tents of displaced people, after the occupation forces destroyed most Palestinian facilities and infrastructures, and completely shut the door to the entry of humanitarian aid for civilians and displaced Palestinians who make up the majority of the population in the Strip.

In March 2025, the occupation forces started to gradually breach the ceasefire. The period from March 11 to 17, 2025, one day before the Israeli occupation forces ended the ceasefire agreement, witnessed numerous violations that set the stage for this reversal. The most notable incident was the targeting of a charity in Beit Lahia. The Observatory has monitored this period before the resumption of the Israeli aggression on Gaza with more ferocity.

The Israeli occupation forces bombed a medical clinic and a school for displaced people, and targeted journalists, ambulances, civil defense vehicles, and "soup kitchens" in Gaza in just a few days. During the period from April 1 to 7, 2025, the Observatory documented the perpetration of 2,725 Israeli crimes against Palestinians, the most heinous of which being the murdering of 31 Palestinians, most of them women and children, in the bombing of "Dar Al-Arqam" school for displaced people in Al-Tuffah neighborhood, which also suffered the destruction of a water desalination plant.

In what can be considered the worst situation in Gaza since the beginning of the Israeli aggression, the forced displacement of Palestinians in the Strip has continued. During the period from April 8 to 14, 2025, the Observatory documented a deliberate Israeli behavior aimed at exhausting Palestinians through their continuous displacement from one area to another. Occupation forces repeatedly warned civilians residing in several neighborhoods to evacuate their

homes and tents before an Israeli ground offensive. These warnings came after a massacre in the Shuja'iyya neighborhood, which claimed the lives of 50 Palestinians, most of them women and children, amid relentless bombardment of cities and camps in the Strip.

The most atrocious attack during this period was the Israeli bombing of Al-Ahli Hospital in central Gaza, which undermined the hospital's ability to receive emergency cases. Additionally, a UNRWA flour distribution point in eastern Khan Younis was bombed, as part of the continued policy of starving Palestinians in Gaza, which amounts to a war crime.

The aggression on Gaza, following the breach of the ceasefire agreement, seemed as if it were a war against the ruins, through which Israel, the occupying power, crossed the lines of the massacre to a level beyond the deadly situation that has befallen the Palestinians in Gaza.

The Observatory recorded at that time 979 martyrs who fell in the period between March 18 and 24, 2025.

## “Numbers, and Disparity”: Key Challenges Facing the Observatory

More than a year has passed since the OIC Media Observatory on Israeli Crimes Against Palestinians launched its work on January 23, 2024. The Observatory has managed to document and expose tens of thousands of Israeli occupation crimes against the Palestinian people, especially in Gaza, from October 7, 2023, up to the time of writing this article. The number of documented crimes has exceeded 250,000, and the Observatory’s releases have been accessed by tens of millions of followers on Social Media platforms. The success of the Observatory acquires more significance, especially in view of the ongoing and persistent challenges it has to cope with, which are inherent in the nature of the work it performs, and the critical area within which it operates.

Given the nature of weekly monitoring, one of the main challenges lies in the need to move beyond presenting Palestinian victims as mere numbers to telling the stories of real people who have been suffering, and continue to suffer, from killing, starvation, siege, and forced displacement. While the Observatory’s work involves counting the number of martyrs, injured people, and detainees, as well as highlighting the scale of destruction and losses, these horrifying statistics remain just numbers. They may not necessarily stir the conscience, though they do serve to document the scale and scope of the crimes, enabling comparisons to demonstrate their gravity and present them as a historical precedent, or what could be referred to as “the crime of the era”.

While numbers are a critical element in the monitoring and documentation process, they strip the tragedy of its “flesh and blood”, reducing it to a soulless mathematical operation. For that reason, this counting process should have been accompanied by voices, images, and portrayals of the daily suffering experienced on screens and on relevant media pages.

This brings us to the second challenge encountered by the Observatory: the problem of ‘habituation’ that affects the audience. This is especially true given that the same image, in its details, keeps repeating the same crime over and over again, amidst massive media coverage that keeps presenting the same news, which can lead to an implicit sense of routine and monotony vis-à-vis a crime that occurs for the thousandth time. This, in itself, is the greatest risk to the mandate of the Observatory and to the goals for which it was established.

The Israeli crimes in the Palestinian territory are unfortunately varied, filled with so many details, countless tragic stories, and various manifestations of Israeli brutality. These crimes continue to escalate day after day, creating new stories that can be documented and presented in ways that draw attention to their cumulative dangers and expansionist intent, as they not only target people and property, but also aim to seize the land and expel its inhabitants.

Disparity in the nature of the crimes perpetrated by the occupation is also an important factor in assessing their scale. In fact, the atrocities committed in Gaza, including massacres, targeting of health facilities, starvation, destruction, occupation, and reoccupation, might overshadow other crimes that seem to be less severe, but with time they turn out to be of equal magnitude, such as those committed by settlers who invade towns and villages across the West Bank. Those despicable criminal acts reveal the vulnerability and defenselessness of Palestinian cities, which are exposed to recurrent violations under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces. These forces not only provide protection for the herds of settlers but also arrest anyone who attempts to defend himself, his family, and his properties. Such incidents are, in fact, fragments of a larger picture that the viewer sees unfolding all at once in the disaster-stricken Gaza Strip. In reality, the Media Observatory for Israeli Crimes does not necessarily focus on comparisons, but rather seeks to present the full picture, with its disparities, simultaneity, and cumulateness, while taking into consideration its geopolitical dimensions and its ultimate goal, which is expelling Palestinians from their land, whether in Gaza, occupied Al-Quds, or the West Bank. The crime is, therefore, one and the same; the act of killing is the same; and the seizure of land is also the same, but occurs through multiple, direct and indirect, methods.

Media reports, such as that released by BBC, indicate a 77% drop in engagement with posts from news pages in the Palestinian territories since the start of the aggression on the Gaza Strip. The BBC website reported that Meta had admitted to making changes to its Instagram algorithm, despite denying that it intentionally silenced Palestinian voices. These facts, along with the Observatory’s experience of having its content banned without valid justification, show that media work on Social Media platforms to expose the Israeli occupation’s crimes involves immense challenges.



**Aiman Abboushi**  
Editor of the OIC Journal

*The Observatory’s mission is actually to monitor and transmit these tragedies in media formats that are easy for audiences to grasp and analyze, as well as to present them to decision-makers, by “deconstructing” the crimes and “reconstructing” them in a way that offers a comprehensive picture of the serious situation in the Palestinian territory.*



## Senior Officials Meeting Preparatory for 51st Istanbul CFM Addresses Challenges Facing OIC

The OIC held the Senior Officials Meeting preparatory for the 51st session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, on April 27-29, 2025, at its headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

In the opening session, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, welcomed all participants to the meeting, which was attended by H.E. Mr. Nuh Yilmaz, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, and H.E. Amb. Iya Tidjani, Ambassador of the Republic of Cameroon to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Permanent Representative of his country to the OIC, as well as the delegates representing the OIC Member States.

The Secretary-General stressed that the OIC is confronted with several challenges, foremost among which is the Palestinian Cause, which is going through an ever-deteriorating situation due to the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and other Palestinian territories. He highlighted the need to pursue efforts to end the aggression and realize the establishment of the independent

Palestinian State.

The Secretary-General touched on other challenges that also require increased solidarity and commitment. He indicated, in this regard, that the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Jammu and Kashmir, Amb. Yousef Al Dobeay, has made great efforts during his recent visit to the region. With regard to Afghanistan, he highlighted the ongoing efforts made by his Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, who visited Kabul and met with members of the de facto government to whom he conveyed the OIC's message.

On another note, the Secretary-General stressed that the OIC is closely monitoring the implementation of the resolution and recommendations issued by the Islamic Summit Conference and the Council of Foreign Ministers in support of Muslim groups and communities in non-OIC Member States. He indicated that the OIC continues, in collaboration with its international partners, to support efforts geared toward combating terrorism, extremism, and Islamopho-

bia, and promoting interfaith dialogue. He called, in this context, for increasing solidarity with the Sahel and Lake Chad region and supporting efforts to lay the foundations for peace, security, stability, and development in this important OIC region.

In the legal field, the Secretary-General urged Member States to complete the procedures for signing and ratifying the legal instruments of the OIC in order to strengthen inter-OIC cooperation and enable the institutions established by the Organization—particularly the Islamic Court of Justice—to launch their work.

At the beginning of his speech, the Secretary-General had welcomed the Syrian Delegation taking part in this meeting, calling on Member States to support Syria so that it can meet its people's aspirations. He also expressed his sincere thanks and gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its generous support to the OIC, as well as its commitment to promoting joint Islamic action and serving the causes of the Islamic world.



## Secretary-General: 25% Intra-OIC Trade Target Achieved by Most OIC Countries

The 47th session of the Islamic Commission for Economic, Cultural, and Social Affairs was held at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on April 15-17, 2025.

Addressing the opening session, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, stated that the successful implementation of the OIC's activities for the next year rests upon the guidance and support provided by this meeting. He noted that since the 50th CFM meeting held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 29-30 August 2024, the OIC has continued to accord priority attention to the execution of its resolutions in various fields, including economy, science & technology, culture, social & family affairs, youth and sports, among others.

In terms of economic cooperation, the Secretary-General expressed his pleasure to announce that the intra-OIC trade share in the overall foreign trade of Member States went up from 19.16% in 2023 to 20.36% in 2024, adding that thirty (30) OIC Countries have now attained the target of 25% intra-OIC trade. He stressed that cooperation efforts among the OIC Member States in the field of agriculture and food security

have received a significant boost through the development of the Strategic Plan for Food Security in the OIC Member States, aimed at contributing more effectively to enhancing agricultural productivity, rural development, and food security in OIC countries, as well as strengthening intra-OIC cooperation in these areas.

The Secretary-General underlined the importance of advancing science & technology, higher education, health, environment, and water resources across OIC Member States. To that end, he indicated that the OIC General Secretariat, in collaboration with COM-STECH, is working on developing the OIC's AI Vision, which will provide a strategic framework for Member States in formulating national AI policies.

In the field of health, the Secretary-General pointed out that the OIC General Secretariat has been actively pursuing various initiatives aimed at preventing diseases, with particular focus on cancer and polio, and promoting self-reliance in vaccine production.

The Secretary-General stressed that the General Secretariat has continued to strive towards the realization of the Visions and

Mission of the OIC and its leaders in terms of culture, social & family affairs, youth, and sports. In the cultural field, he stated that the General Secretariat is working closely with OIC Member States and institutions to organize joint cultural events, and follow up on the implementation of the Resolution relating to the establishment of the OIC Platform for the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage in the Muslim World, in coordination with the relevant institutions. With regard to intra-OIC cooperation in the social domain, the Secretary-General indicated that the General Secretariat continues its efforts to follow up on the implementation of the relevant recommendations, including the Jeddah Document on Women's Rights in Islam, issued by the International Conference on Women in Islam, held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in November 2023.

During this session which ran over three days, the representatives of OIC Member States reviewed the draft resolutions received from Member States, which will subsequently be submitted to the 51st session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, to be held in Istanbul, Türkiye, in June 2025, for final approval.



## Ministerial Committee assigned by Arab-Islamic Summit meets with EU Representative to discuss situation in Gaza

The Ministerial Committee assigned by the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit on Developments in the Gaza Strip met, on March 23, 2025, in Cairo, Egypt, with the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Ms. Kaja Kallas.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, H.H. Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah; Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani; Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Palestine, H.E. Dr. Mohammad Mustafa; Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, H.E. Mr. Ayman Safadi; Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, H.E. Dr. Abdullatif Al-Zayani; Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Dr. Badr Abdelatty; Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, H.E. Mr. Hakan Fidan;

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, H.E. Mr. Sugiono; Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, H.E. Mr. Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar; Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Republic of Nigeria in Cairo, H.E. Mr. Adesuyi Samotu; Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, H.E. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit; and Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha.

The Parties discussed recent developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and expressed their grave concern over the breakdown of the ceasefire in Gaza and the large number of civilian casualties in recent airstrikes. They condemned the resumption of hostilities and the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and called for an immediate return to the full implementation of the ceasefire-hostage and detainees release agreement that went into effect on January 19th, and was brokered by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States. They stressed the need for moving forward towards the

second phase of the agreement with a view to its full implementation, including the release of all hostages, a permanent end to hostilities, and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, in line with UNSC Resolution 2735.

The Parties called for full compliance with international humanitarian law and international law. This involves ensuring swift, sustained, and unimpeded humanitarian access and delivery of humanitarian aid into and throughout the entire Gaza Strip. They demanded the lifting of all restrictions hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as the immediate restoration of all essential services in the Strip, including electricity supplies, including electricity needed for water desalination plants.

The Parties welcomed the Arab Recovery and Reconstruction Plan, presented at the Arab Summit in Cairo on March 4, 2025, and subsequently adopted by the OIC and welcomed by the European Council. They stressed that the Plan ensures that the Palestinian people will remain on their territory.



## OIC Condemns Resumption of Israeli Aggression on Gaza

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) strongly condemned the resumption of the brutal military aggression by Israeli occupation forces on the Gaza Strip, resulting in hundreds of martyrs, injured, and missing persons, most of them children, women, and elderly people. The OIC considered this a continuation of the war crimes and acts of genocide committed by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people.

The OIC held Israel, the occupying power, fully responsible for these ongoing crimes against the Palestinian people. At the same time, it called on the international community, particularly the United Nations Security Council, to assume its responsibilities to enforce an immediate halt to the Israeli aggression, open border crossings, ensure delivery of humanitarian aid throughout the Gaza Strip, stand against attempts at annexation and the displacement of the Palestinians from their land, and provide international protection for the Palestinian people.

In the same context, the Ministerial Committee assigned by the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit on Developments in Gaza expressed its condemnation and denunciation of the raids launched by the Israeli occupation forces on the Gaza Strip, and their direct bombardment of areas populated by defenseless civilians, resulting

in hundreds of deaths and injuries among the Palestinians. These attacks constitute a plain violation of the ceasefire agreement as well as of UN resolutions, international charters, treaties, agreements, and international humanitarian law. They exacerbate the already deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, pose an additional threat and damage to security and stability in the region, increase the threat of a wider regional conflict, and undermine efforts to de-escalate tensions and achieve stability in the region. The Committee reiterated its call on the international community to assume its moral and legal responsibilities and to immediately act to put pressure on Israel, the occupying power, to immediately cease its aggression and violations, and comply with UN resolutions, international law and international humanitarian law. It also called for protecting Palestinian civilians from the Israeli brutal war machine, compel the Israeli authorities to restore Gaza's electricity supply, and open all crossings to ensure a continuous and expanded flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza which is suffering from an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. In this regard, the Committee affirmed the pressing need for a lasting ceasefire in Gaza, as well as for an end to the Israeli escalation and the resumption of dialogue and

negotiations for the implementation of all the stages of the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, ultimately putting an end to the war on Gaza and preventing a return to a new spiral of violence.

The Committee reiterated its firm position that stresses the importance of achieving a just and durable peace for the Palestinian Cause within the framework of the Two-State Solution and the Arab Peace Initiative, in accordance with UN resolutions, international law, and the agreed-on terms of reference, and ensuring the protection of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of their independent State on the 1967 borders and the embodiment of the Palestinian State with East Al-Quds as its capital.

The Committee, which was formed on November 11, 2023, includes the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, Bahrain, Türkiye, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Palestine, along with the Secretary-General of the Arab League and the Secretary-General of the OIC.

In the same context, the OIC reaffirmed its rejection and condemnation of plans aimed at displacing the Palestinian people from their homeland, whether temporarily or permanently, as well as attempts to liquidate the Palestinian Cause.



## At Extraordinary Arab Summit in Cairo :

### Secretary-General Affirms OIC's Rejection of "Displacement of Palestinians"

At the kind invitation of H.E. Mr. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, took part in the Extraordinary Arab Summit – Palestine Summit – held in Cairo, Egypt, on March 4, 2025.

In his address on this occasion, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of holding this Summit at this critical stage in which the Palestinian Cause is going through grave developments, which reflects the spirit of Arab and Islamic solidarity with the Palestinian Cause and the concerted efforts to counter the Israeli occupation's policies and aggressive crimes in the Gaza Strip. He condemned all statements and plans that aim to displace the Palestinians from their land, which constitutes a plain violation of international law and international norms.

The Secretary-General underlined the importance of increasing efforts in order to take concrete measures to provide support to the Palestinian people, achieve a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire in Gaza, provide humanitarian assistance to all areas of the Strip, and launch the reconstruction process. He condemned the targeting of UNRWA, and called for mobilizing financial and political support to this UN agency.

The Secretary-General concluded by stressing the need to expand recognition of the State of Palestine, support its full accession to the United Nations, and back up the efforts of the Global Alliance for Implementation of the Two-State Solution.

In this same context, the OIC welcomed the Joint Statement issued by the Arab Six-Party Meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers, held at the kind invitation of Egypt on February 1, 2025. The OIC expressed its full support for the positions expressed in the Statement, including the need to implement the ceasefire in all its stages and provisions, in a way that would ensure complete and durable calm and the Israeli occupation forces' full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

The OIC stressed the importance of the provisions of the Statement, including the need to enable the Palestinian government to assume its responsibilities in the Gaza Strip, to provide the essential needs to ensure that the Palestinians remain in their land and return safely to their homes, as well as to provide humanitarian and shelter assistance and the requirements for economic recovery and reconstruction.

The OIC expressed its rejection and condemnation of the policies of military aggres-

sion, colonial settlement, and Judaization of the city of Al-Quds, and any attempts to empty the Palestinian land of its people through annexation of lands and displacement, or through encouraging the transfer or uprooting of Palestinians from their land. It warned that these policies would undermine the chances of peace and threaten to destabilize the entire region. The OIC supported the Statement's emphasis on the pivotal, indispensable and irreplaceable role of UNRWA, and rejected any attempts to undermine its existence or legal mandate, considering this a top priority from a humanitarian and relief perspective, a testament to the collective international commitment to the rights of Palestinian refugees, and a factor of stability in the region. The OIC called on the international community to assume its responsibilities towards implementing the resolutions of international legitimacy in a way that would ensure the end of the Israeli occupation and enable the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of the sovereign independent Palestinian State on the borders of June 4, 1967, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.



## OIC Calls for Supporting UNRWA and Denounces Israeli Restrictions on its Operations

The OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs, Ambassador Samir Bakr, headed a delegation from the OIC General Secretariat to the third meeting of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, held in the Norwegian capital, Oslo, on January 15, 2025. The meeting was attended by H.E. Dr. Muhammad Mustafa, Prime Minister of the State of Palestine, and H.E. Mr. Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, along with over 80 delegations from States and regional and international organizations.

Amb. Samir Bakr reiterated the OIC's firm position and unwavering commitment to supporting international efforts aimed at ending the brutal Israeli aggression, occupation, and settlement against the Palestinian people, their land, and their sanctities. He pointed out the importance of this global alliance in mobilizing international support, enhancing joint cooperation, and taking practical steps, including political, economic, legal, and humanitarian actions. This, he added, would contribute to implementing the two-state solution and embodying the sovereignty of the State of Palestine, which has legal and political jurisdiction over the entire Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

Amb. Bakr also stressed the need to support UNRWA politically, financially, and legally

so that it can continue providing essential services and alleviate the humanitarian suffering endured by Palestinian refugees, especially in the Gaza Strip.

In this same context, the OIC has warned against the gravity of any potential actions that the Israeli occupation may undertake against UNRWA, as part of implementing invalid laws passed by the so-called Israeli Knesset. These laws prohibit the Agency from carrying out its operations in occupied Al-Quds, revoke its privileges and immunities, and ban any official engagement with it, all of which threaten to hinder the Agency's operations throughout the entire occupied Palestinian territory, in blatant violation of international law, the UN Charter, and relevant UN resolutions.

The OIC noted that these actions are part of the Israeli occupation's attempts to liquidate the Palestinian Cause and revoke the right of return for Palestinian refugees. It underscored the essential role of UNRWA, being a top priority from a humanitarian and relief perspective, a testament to the collective international commitment to the rights of Palestinian refugees, and a stabilizing factor in the region.

The OIC emphasized that UNRWA is irreplaceable, that the recent Israeli laws and measures are null and void, and that the Israeli occupation's targeting of UNRWA facilities, personnel, and thousands of displaced

individuals seeking refuge in its schools will not change the established legal status of Palestinian refugees' rights and UNRWA's mandate as defined by the UNGA resolutions.

The OIC reiterated its call on the international community to assume its responsibilities to end the Israeli occupation and colonial settlement activities in the Palestinian territory, including East Al-Quds. It called for accountability for the continuous Israeli violations and crimes, and insisted on the necessity of enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination, the embodiment of the sovereignty of the State of Palestine over the territory occupied since 1967, with Al-Quds as its capital, along with the right of return for refugees as outlined in UNGA Resolution 194.

Previously, the OIC had strongly condemned the closure of six UNRWA schools by the Israeli occupation authorities in East Al-Quds, as part of the Israeli illegal measures aimed at undermining the presence and role of UNRWA, particularly in the City of Al-Quds, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and relevant resolutions. It also warned against the serious implications of these closures, particularly the detrimental impact on Palestinian refugee children's basic right to education and the attempts to impose the Israeli curriculum on them.



## OIC Welcomes the French Stance and Supports Legal Action against Israel's Crimes

The OIC has welcomed the statements made by French President Emmanuel Macron regarding his country's intention to recognize the State of Palestine in the coming months. It expressed its appreciation for this stance and for all efforts made by France to achieve peace and implement the Two-State Solution, based on relevant UN resolutions. The OIC stressed the importance of this stance, which contributes to upholding and supporting the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and enhancing the status of the State of Palestine on the international scene. It called on all countries that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to do so and to support its right to obtain full membership in the United Nations.

On the other hand, the OIC expressed its rejection and condemnation of the decision of the Prime Minister of the Government of Fiji, Sitiveni Rabuka, to move his country's embassy to occupied Al-Quds, considering this illegal measure a provocative act and a flagrant violation of international law and all relevant UN resolutions, especially UNSC Resolution No. 478. The OIC reaffirmed that under all international legitimacy resolutions, the city of Al-Quds is part of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. It called on the Government of Fiji to reverse this illegal decision.

Previously, the OIC General Secretariat had

submitted written statements to the International Court of Justice regarding the Advisory Opinion on the obligations of Israel in relation to the presence and activities of the United Nations, other international organizations, and third States in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The OIC stressed the importance of these legal efforts to counter the measures of Israel, the occupying power, and its invalid laws that prevent UNRWA from operating in the occupied Palestinian territories as of 30 January 2025. It reaffirmed its unwavering support for this UN agency that was established pursuant to a UNGA resolution with the aim of serving the Palestinian refugees until a just and lasting solution is found to their cause.

On another note, the OIC strongly condemned the Israeli authorities' approval of a settlement road-building project in the occupied city of Al-Quds to reinforce the link between Israeli settlements, in blatant violation of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

The OIC warned against the gravity of this step which is part of a plan to annex the Maale Adumim settlement to occupied Al-Quds, and to isolate the city from its Palestinian environment, thereby undermining the Two-State Solution.

The OIC renewed its call on the internation-

al community, especially the Security Council, to assume its responsibilities towards compelling Israel, the occupying power, to stop its policies of settlement, annexation, forced displacement, and genocide against the Palestinian people, and to activate accountability mechanisms, including the imposition of international sanctions on Israel for its repeated violations of international law.

The OIC has also strongly condemned the so-called Israeli Cabinet's decision approving the separation of 13 illegal settlement neighborhoods in the West Bank, as a prelude to their "legalization" as colonial settlement outposts, in blatant contravention of international law and UN resolutions. It also condemned the accompanying extremist and racist statements by Israeli Finance Minister, Bezalel Smotrich, who described this step as part of a plan to impose an alleged Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank.

The OIC has also warned against the gravity of establishing a special Israeli agency for the displacement of Palestinians, through the so-called "voluntary departure". It reiterated its categorical rejection of any plans that involve the displacement of Palestinian, whether individuals or communities, within or outside their land, or those involving forced displacement or expulsion.



## Gazans Seek Refuge in Landfills to Escape Bombings

**Gaza – Imad Abdeljawad (DPA)**

On the outskirts of a massive landfill in southern Gaza City, dozens of families spread out on the ground. They live in dilapidated tents surrounded by piles of rotting garbage. The stench is suffocating. The buzzing of flies and the scurrying of rats mingle with the cries of children in a scene that seems to be extracted from a post-apocalyptic film.

Palestinian families displaced from Jabalia, Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun live in this harsh spot in the north of Gaza, after being forced to flee their homes due to violent Israeli bombardment on March 18th, 2025. This came after a brief return home that lasted about 50 days following a ceasefire that had taken effect on January 19th.

“Our hopes for a return to normal life,” the families say, “were short-lived, shattered once again under the fire of bombardment.” Samar Al-Shurafa, a mother of five, recounts: “We fled under the bombardment like it was the Day of Judgment. I thought I would die while running with my children.” Samar fled from Beit Lahia after the Israeli army bombed the neighborhood where she lived. Later, she says, the Israeli ordered her

husband to evacuate immediately.

“It was a quiet day. We were trying to rearrange what was left of our home, then suddenly the shells started raining down. We got a call from the Israeli army ordering us to evacuate within 10 minutes. We couldn’t take anything. We left barefoot, with our children crying. I carried my little girl on my shoulder, hearing the sound of shelling behind me. I didn’t think we’d survive,” she says.

After a two-day journey, Samar found herself with her children in a camp near the Yarmouk landfill in central Gaza City. “My husband tried to find a better place, but everywhere was overcrowded. We ended up here, next to the garbage. The smell is unbearable; rats filled the place, and the children suffered skin rashes,” she says.

Her youngest daughter, Maryam, 6, suffers from constant coughing fits. “The doctor said it’s due to polluted air, but what can we do? There’s no medicine, not enough food, and no clean water. We are living in the midst of death,” Samar adds.

In a nearby tent, 40-year-old Laila Al-Qadi sits holding the hand of her 8-year-old son

Hassan, who cries in pain as he scratches at his swollen legs. Hassan suffers from a severe skin rash due to the pollution and living conditions near the landfill. His mother, visibly exhausted, says: “We had a modest home in Jabalia. It wasn’t fancy, but it was warm. Now we live among rats. My son scratches until he bleeds. There’s no medicine here, and the water is contaminated. At night, rats come into the tent, and I’m afraid something poisonous will bite them.”

Laila pauses, then continues in a weary tone: “When night falls, we can’t sleep. We hear the sounds of warplanes, smell the stench of garbage, and hear children screaming. I feel like we’re trapped in a never-ending nightmare.”

Gaza’s waste crisis is not new, but it has reached critical levels since the Israeli bombardments resumed in March. Targeting of infrastructure has caused the collapse of waste collection systems, leaving trash piled up in the streets and around homes. Husam Hammouda, Director of Environmental Health at Gaza Municipality, says that Israel is preventing the municipality from accessing main landfill sites.

## BILATERALS



Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on January 27, 2025, Mr. Yousef Abdullah Al-Taneeb, Consul General of the State of Kuwait in Jeddah.



Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on 15 January 2025 H.E. Mr. Mohammed Jaber, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to OIC.



Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 5, 2025, H.E. Mr. Mahamat Salah-dine, new Consul General of Chad in Jeddah.



S.G. H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on January 27, 2025, H.E. Amb. Shahin Abdullayev, Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to OIC.



Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 17, 2025, H.E. Mr. Mokhtar Ould Dahi, Ambassador of Mauritania to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

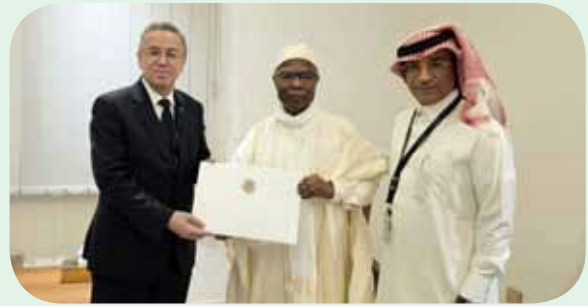


H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 6, 2025, H.E. Mr. Salim bin Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Buisaidi, Consul General of Oman.

## BILATERALS



H.E Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on March 13, 2025, H.E. Ambassador Cenk Uraz, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Turkiye to the OIC.



H.E Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on March 7, 2025, H.E. Amb. Mr. Orazmuhammet Charyev, Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the OIC.



Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on January 16, 2025, H.E. Mr. Ali Lejlic, Consul General of the United States in Jeddah.



H.E Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on April 9, 2025, H.E. Ambassador Omar Jibril Salah, Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the OIC.



H.E Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on February 17, 2025, H.E. Ambassador Aldrik Gierveld, Special Envoy for Enhanced Engagement of the Netherlands.



H.E Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on January 26, 2025, H.E. Mr. Nuno Mathias, Ambassador of Portugal to Saudi Arabia, and Special Envoy to the OIC.

## Secretary-General Meets with President of Tatarstan



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on February 12 in Jeddah, with H.E. President Rustam Minnikhanov, President of the Republic of Tatarstan and Chair of the Russia-Islamic World Strategic

Vision Group. During the meeting, President Minnikhanov expressed his appreciation for the significant role undertaken by the OIC in strengthening relations between OIC Member States and

the Republic of Tatarstan. For his part, the Secretary-General commended President Minnikhanov's leadership of the Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group for enhancing friendship and cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Islamic world. Both sides discussed ongoing preparations for the 16th International Economic Forum "Russia-Islamic World", to be hosted by Kazan, the Capital of the Republic of Tatarstan. They also addressed developments in relation to the Palestinian Cause. On February 26, the OIC Secretary-General received, at the General Secretariat headquarters, H.E. Ambassador Turko Dawudo, Permanent Observer of the Russian Federation to the OIC. Both sides commended the significant level of dialogue and cooperation between the OIC and the Russian Federation, and discussed prospects for further strengthening relations in pursuit of mutual interests.

## OIC Secretary-General Meets Ministers from Cameroon, Sudan and Canada



On January 14, 2025, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, H.E. Mr. Atanga Nji, Minister of Territorial Administration of the Republic of Cameroon. The meeting addressed cooperation

between Cameroon and the OIC, along with topics of mutual interest. The Secretary-General expressed his appreciation for Cameroon's support for the OIC and its programs, and for its contribution to strengthening inter-Islamic solidarity.

On January 15, 2025, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, at the OIC headquarters, H.E. Mr. Omar Bakheet Muhammad, Minister of Religious Affairs and Endowments of the Republic of Sudan. The meeting addressed relations between the OIC and Sudan. The Secretary-General reiterated the OIC's support for Sudan and the attention it accords to the security, unity, territorial integrity, and stability of Sudan, in line with the relevant resolutions issued by the OIC. For his part, the Minister reviewed the Hajj arrangements and what the OIC could offer in this regard. On January 7, 2025, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, at the OIC headquarters, H.E. Mr. Ahmed Hussen, Canada's Minister of International Development. Both sides exchanged views on ways of strengthening mutual cooperation, and reviewed a number of regional and international issues of common interest, most notably the Palestinian Cause.



## Second Intergovernmental Expert Group to

## Prepare Draft OIC Programme of Action 2026-2035

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, stated that contributions to the OIC Programme of Action 2026-2035 were received by the OIC General Secretariat from no less than 25 OIC Member States, representing 45 percent of the OIC Countries. These contributions cover a wide range of areas of mutual interest, including the situation in Palestine, environmental issues and climate change, poverty alleviation, food security, human development, and others.

The Secretary-General recalled that in July 2024, he had sent letters to the Foreign Ministers of OIC Member States regarding the expiration of the OIC-2025 Programme of Action, and called for convening meetings of the OIC Intergovernmental Expert Group to propose a draft Programme of Action for 2026-2035 that can yield tangible outcomes.

This was part of his statement at the opening session of the Second Intergovernmental Expert Group meeting on the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action 2026-2035, held on 27-29 January 2025 at the OIC headquar-

ters in Jeddah. This statement was delivered on his behalf by Amb. Samir Bakr Diab, Assistant Secretary-General for Palestine and Al-Quds Affairs.

The Secretary-General stressed that the new Programme of Action should reflect the priorities and aspirations of all Member States, noting that the active engagement and valuable contributions of Member States are key to ensuring that the Programme of Action truly meets the needs and serves the interests of the entire Islamic Ummah.

The Secretary-General went on to stress the importance of the active engagement of Member States in this significant process. He recalled that the first Expert Group meeting, held on October 1-3, 2024, had identified 31 priority areas to be considered for inclusion in the new Programme of Action, and added that participants in the January 2025 meeting discussed the strategic goals that should be linked to these priority areas. The Secretary-General indicated that the strategic goals addressed by the meeting serve as the basis for a strong and impactful

Programme that seeks to meet the pressing challenges facing the Muslim world.

The General Secretariat, he explained, gathered the strategic objectives based on the contributions received from Member States, and worked, in cooperation with all relevant OIC organs and institutions, to harmonize the texts, avoid duplication, and address overlaps and interconnected issues, in an endeavor to meet the recommendations of the OIC Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers for streamlining the content of all OIC documents.

The Secretary-General concluded by emphasizing that the OIC Programme of Action is a vital tool for meeting the collective interests of the Muslim world, and expressed his confidence that through collective efforts, a strong and effective Program of Action can be developed to serve as a roadmap for the next decade and beyond. He reaffirmed the General Secretariat's commitment to working with Member States to ensure the development of an excellent Programme of Action for the period to come.

## OIC Secretary-General Participates in Intra-Islamic Dialogue Conference in Manama



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, took part, on February 19, 2025, in Manama, Bahrain, in the "Intra-Islamic Dialogue Conference: One Nation, Shared Destiny", at the kind invitation of H.E. Sheikh Abdur-Rahman bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Bahrain. The Conference featured the presence of His Eminence the Grand Imam Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, Sheikh of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders,

and His Excellency Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia, along with a large number of leaders, scholars, thinkers, researchers, and media professionals from various Arab and Islamic countries.

Addressing the Conference, the Secretary-General expressed deep thanks and gratitude to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, for his support and his patronage of this important conference. He commended Bahrain's unwavering support for the causes of the Islamic Ummah,

and its valuable contribution to promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, and coexistence among Muslims of all backgrounds and schools of thought.

The Secretary-General underlined the importance of upholding the values of dialogue and solidarity among Muslims in order to confront challenges, stressing, in this regard, the role of scholars and thinkers in entrenching the language of dialogue, rejecting differences, and combating extremism and intolerance. He reviewed the efforts and programs of the OIC and its various organs and institutions in strengthening the foundations of peace and security, combating Islamophobia, hate speech, extremism, and terrorism, upholding the values of dialogue and moderation, and consolidating the message of brotherhood, by strengthening joint Islamic action.

On the sidelines of his participation in the Intra-Islamic Dialogue Conference, the OIC Secretary-General met with H.E. Dr. Mäulen Äimbaev, Chairman of the Senate of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Head of the General Secretariat of the "Congress of World and Traditional Religions Leaders".

Both sides discussed ways of enhancing cooperation between the OIC and Kazakhstan across various fields.

## Secretary-General Meets with Top-ranking Officials



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received, on 8 January 2025 in his office at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, His Eminence Shaykh al-Islam Allah ükür Pa azad, the Mufti of the Republic of Azerbaijan and President of the Council of Muslims of the Caucasus, who was accom-

panied by a delegation from the Azerbaijani Parliament.

Both sides expressed appreciation of the excellent relations between the OIC and the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the prospects for cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The meeting was also an opportunity

to exchange views on a number of issues of concern to the Muslim world.

On 13 February 2025, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, received H.E. Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos, High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), and his accompanying delegation.

The Secretary-General commended the significant progress made by UNAOC under the leadership of Mr. Moratinos since 2019, particularly in promoting peace and tolerance. For his part, the High Representative expressed readiness to further enhance cooperation and coordination with the OIC in their joint efforts to fight Islamophobia.

Both sides discussed ways to enhance their partnership, and explored new initiatives to address current challenges related to religious discrimination.



## Secretary-General: An Educated Woman

## is a Valuable Asset to Muslim Societies

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, at the Prime Minister's House in Islamabad.

Both leaders strongly condemned the Israeli aggression on Gaza, and reiterated their support for the Palestinian people. They called for an immediate end to Israeli hostilities and occupation, and reaffirmed that the OIC should continue to pressure the international community to address the Palestinian Cause on the basis of the Two-State Solution; thereby ensuring durable peace and stability in the region.

The Secretary-General thanked the Prime Minister for the invitation extended to him to attend the "International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities in Islamabad. He expressed appreciation for the initiative aimed at galvanizing concrete and concerted efforts to further promote quality education and enhance women's

empowerment in the Muslim World.

The Secretary-General commended Pakistan's principled commitment to the Palestinian Cause and the leading role it plays in the Muslim world. He also reiterated the OIC's principled stance and continued support with regard to the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

For his part, the Prime Minister expressed appreciation for the OIC's principled position and consistent support for the settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the UN and the OIC.

The Prime Minister also paid tribute to the Secretary-General for his dynamic leadership of the OIC, and reaffirmed Pakistan's full support in advancing the OIC's shared priorities and objectives, and enhancing its role as the collective voice of the Muslim Ummah.

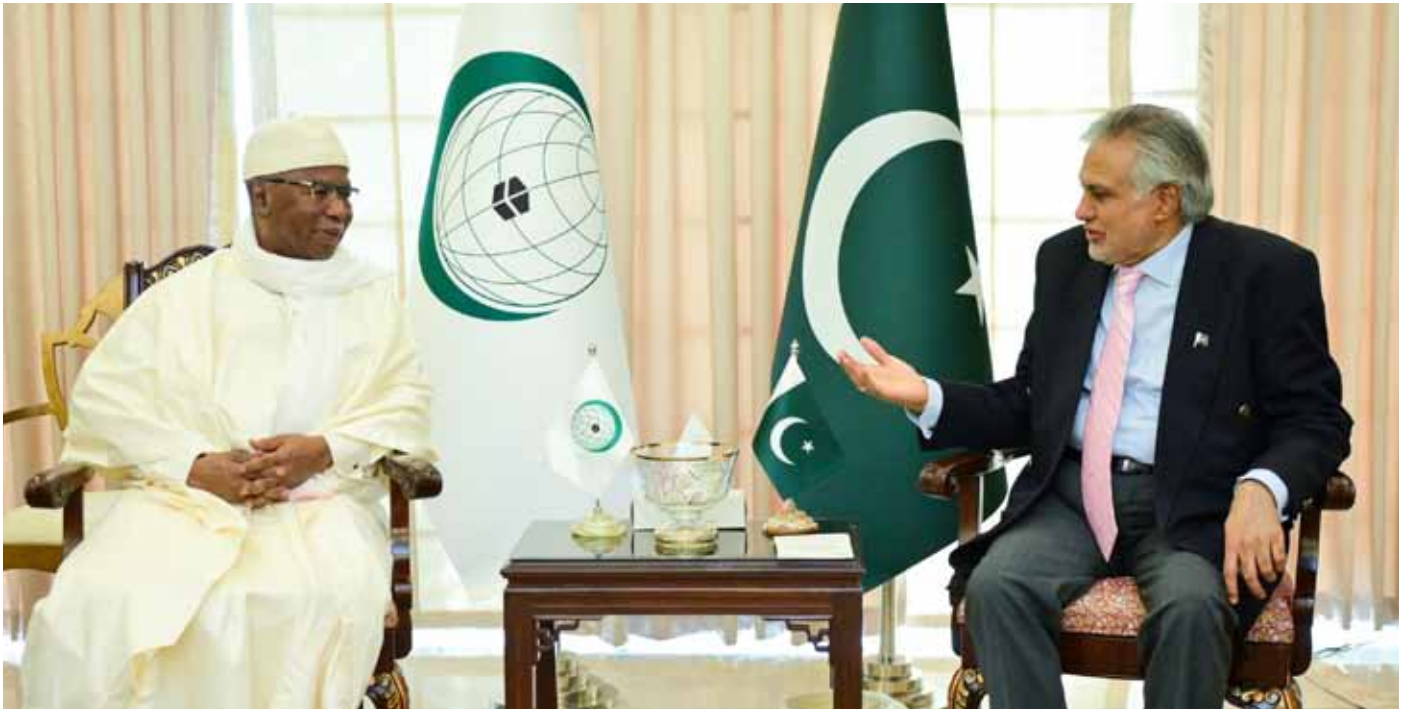
The two leaders also exchanged views on regional and global issues of shared inter-

est, including the situation in Afghanistan and the rising scourge of Islamophobia. The Secretary-General expressed great appreciation for Pakistan's leading role on the issue of Islamophobia.

The Secretary-General highlighted the challenges faced by OIC Member States in Africa, and urged the Prime Minister to support African countries to overcome these challenges. In response, the Prime Minister stressed that Pakistan stands ready to support OIC's initiatives in Africa in the fields of health, education, and science & technology.

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, spoke at the inaugural session of the International Conference on "Girls Education in Muslim Societies: Challenges and Opportunities". The Conference, held in Islamabad, Pakistan, was jointly organized by the Government of Pakistan and the Muslim World League (MWL).

## Secretary-General Meets Foreign Minister of Pakistan



The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, in Islamabad at the Prime Minister's Office, with H.E. Mr. Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Both leaders held extensive discussions on a wide range of issues.

The Secretary-General commended Pakistan's initiative to host the International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities. He emphasized the importance of joining efforts among OIC Member States to formulate long-term policies relating to girls' education, ensure their effective implementation, and allocate adequate resources to that end. He also stressed that the resolutions adopted at the OIC Summit and CFM meetings clearly prioritize girls' education in the national policies of OIC Member States.

The two leaders recalled the OIC resolutions and decisions related to the Israeli aggression in Gaza and other Palestinian territories, and called for urgent measures to address the atrocities that have severely affected the whole region, including educational institutions. They reaffirmed the OIC's principled solidarity with and commitment to the Palestinian Cause.

The Deputy Prime Minister welcomed the Secretary-General and thanked him for his participation in the Conference. He reaffirmed Pakistan's full and continued support to the OIC's initiative, and commended the leadership role of the Secretary-General in promoting the OIC priorities on a range of global and regional issues. He also thanked the Secretary-General for the OIC's unwavering stance on the Kashmir issue. The Secretary-General reaffirmed, in this regard, that the OIC will continue to uphold its commitment and principled policy on the Kashmir issue.

The OIC General Secretariat welcomed the Islamabad Declaration adopted by the International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities: Challenges and Opportunities. The Secretary-General commended the provisions of the Declaration calling for providing education opportunities for girls in Muslim communities around the world, raising awareness about the importance of girls' education, and promoting the commitment of Islamic countries to develop their supportive policies and thus backstop the OIC's endeavors to advance women's education and empowerment.

The General Secretariat expressed its com-

mitment to strengthening its collaboration and partnership with the Muslim World League, and to effectively play its role in implementing the provisions of the Declaration in collaboration with OIC institutions and relevant international bodies.

As part of his visit to Islamabad, the OIC Secretary-General paid a visit to the Secretariat of the OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) in Islamabad, during which he announced the launch of the "Expert Service for Technological Cooperation and Innovation Promotion" program. He expressed his appreciation of this timely initiative by COMSTECH, and urged Member States to contribute to and benefit from the Expert Service program.

The Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, and the Coordinator-General of COMSTECH, Prof. Iqbal Chaudhry, welcomed the OIC Secretary-General. The Minister thanked the Secretary-General for his leadership role and support to COMSTECH. He indicated that this strategic initiative is designed to enhance technological self-reliance, foster sustainable development, and reduce brain drain within the OIC Member States.

## OIC Secretary-General Participates in 4th Antalya Diplomacy Forum



H.E. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye, inaugurated, on April 11, 2025, in Antalya, the 4th Antalya Diplomacy Forum. A high-level delegation from the OIC, led by H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, took part in the Forum.

On the sidelines of the Forum, the Secretary-General held a series of meetings with high-ranking officials, including the UN Under-Secretary-General, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. Philippe Lazzarini, and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Mr. Karim Ahmad Khan. He also met with the heads of the participating delegations. The meetings addressed developments of the situation in Gaza amid the Israeli occupation's ongoing aggressions, along with other related issues.

As part of the 4th Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Ambassador Youssef Al-Dobeay, OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, participated in a panel discussion entitled 'From Vision to Action: Strengthening the Organization of Islamic Cooperation', attended by H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, and a number of decision-makers, thinkers, and diplomats. He highlighted the OIC's efforts across various

fields, with a particular focus on the Palestinian Cause. He also reviewed the efforts of Member States in the reform process, noting that it is a continued action that ranks high among the OIC's priorities.

The Panel was also attended by H.E. Mr. Mamadou Tangara, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia, and Chair of the Islamic Summit, who spoke about the key challenges facing the OIC.

On the sidelines of the 4th Antalya Diplomacy Forum, the Bosnian Member of the Presidential Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Denis Beirovi, received, on April 12, 2025, at his residence in Antalya, Türkiye, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha.

The meeting addressed bilateral relations between the OIC and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Beirovi expressed his appreciation for the significant role played by the OIC and its positions in solidarity with Bosnia and Herzegovina. He looked forward to continued cooperation between the two sides, and invited the Secretary-General to participate in the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Srebrenica Massacre, to be held next July.

For his part, the OIC Secretary-General reiterated his thanks to Mr. Beirovi and welcomed the kind invitation. He expressed his solidarity with the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, stressing the OIC's support for peace and stability in the country.

The OIC Secretary-General also met, on April 12, 2025, at his residence in Antalya, with H.E. Dr. Abdallah Saber Fadl, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, International Cooperation, and Chadians Abroad of the Republic of Chad, on the sidelines of his participation at the 4th Antalya Diplomacy Forum.

The meeting discussed bilateral relations between the OIC and the Republic of Chad, and explored ways to strengthen them. It also touched on other issues of mutual interest.

On the other hand, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, and his accompanying high-level delegation, attended the Coordination Meeting of the Ministerial Committee assigned by the Extraordinary Joint Arab and Islamic Summit on Developments in the Gaza Strip, held in Antalya, Türkiye, on April 11, 2025.

## Secretary-General's Envoy for Afghanistan Holds Consultations in Kabul



The OIC Secretary-General's Envoy for Afghanistan, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, met, on February 17, 2025, with Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, Foreign Minister of the de facto government in Afghanistan, at the headquarters of the Afghan Foreign Ministry in Kabul.

Both sides discussed political, social, humanitarian, and economic issues that constitute a priority for the OIC, as part of following up on the implementation of the resolutions of the OIC Summit and CFM meetings in connection with the situation in Afghanistan.

Amb. Bakheet also met with Sheikh Neda Mohammad Nadim, Minister of Higher Education, Sheikh Mohammad Khalid Hanafi, Minister for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, and Mawlawi Abdul Karim Haidar, Deputy Minister of Justice. He reaffirmed the OIC's commitment to pursue constructive engagement with the de facto government in order to follow up on the issues outlined in the CFM resolutions, particularly those related to education and women's rights. He emphasized that this is

the most effective way forward, not only for promoting Afghanistan's economic and political stability, but also for ensuring security and stability in the region and around the world.

On another note, Ambassador Bakheet met with Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, President of the Afghan Red Crescent Society. The meeting addressed the humanitarian projects implemented by the OIC Office in Kabul in coordination with the Afghan Red Crescent, as well as the future projects.

The Special Envoy also held discussions with the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, at the OIC Office in Kabul. The meeting focused on both sides' efforts to disseminate the "Jeddah Document on Women's Rights in Islam", adopted at the International Conference on Women in Islam, held on November 6-8, 2023, through a workshop held at the OIC Office in Kabul, in collaboration between UNAMA and the OIC Office. Both sides exchanged views on how the OIC and the UN can continue their

joint cooperation to support the Afghan people and address the political, humanitarian, and security challenges facing Afghanistan.

On February 20, 2025, the "Vocational Tailoring Training Center for Empowering Female Inmates through Tailoring Skills Development" project was inaugurated at the Office of Prison Administration (OPA) in Kabul. This project, funded by the Indonesian Humanitarian Mission in Afghanistan, is designed to equip female inmates with essential tailoring skills, thereby contributing to their empowerment and rehabilitation.

This initiative constitutes a significant step toward enhancing rehabilitation programs for female inmates, by providing them with vocational skills that facilitate their reintegration into society.

It is worth recalling that the relevant resolutions of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers called on Member States to channel part of their humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan through the OIC Office in Kabul.

## Kabul: Workshop on Advancement of Women's Rights in Islam

The OIC Office in Kabul held, in collaboration with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), a two-day workshop on February 17-18, 2025 at the OIC Mission in Kabul, on the dissemination of the "Jeddah Document on the Rights of Women in Islam".

The workshop was held to mark the first anniversary of the Jeddah Document's adoption. It was designed to empower both female and male leaders from the education sector, civil society, religious institutions, and public service in Afghanistan with the knowledge and tools to advocate for women's rights in accordance with Islamic teachings. The event also aimed at fostering dialogue, enhancing awareness, building networks to support women's rights in Afghanistan in line with Islamic principles, and developing strategies for effective implementation of the Jeddah Document's provisions in Muslim communities.

Addressing the workshop, Amb. Tariq Bakheet, OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs, highlighted the significance of the Jeddah Document as a vital tool for advocating women's rights in Islam, particularly their right to education. "Women's education",

he said, "is not merely a question of equality, but is a fundamental pillar of the noble teachings of Islam and a key driver for sustainable development and societal harmony". "The Jeddah Document", he added, "provides a unified and authentic interpretation of Islamic teachings which promote the values of justice, equality, and dignity for all, particularly for women".

Amb. Bakheet also highlighted the international recognition of the Jeddah Document, as reaffirmed during the International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities, held in January 2025 in Pakistan. He commended the Government of Pakistan and the Muslim World League (MWL) for co-organizing this significant conference, and indicated that the OIC signed a MoU with the MWL for collaborating on implementing the "Education of Girls in Muslim Communities: Challenges and Opportunities" initiative.

The opening session also included a speech by Amb. Dr. Mohammed Saeed Alayyash, Director-General of the OIC Mission in Kabul, in which he welcomed all participants, and reaffirmed the commitment of the OIC Office in Kabul to coordinating and cooperating with international partners to promote policies that support gender equality and justice.

For her part, Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan, emphasized the importance of leveraging the Jeddah Declaration as a practical tool for advocacy and political and social reform in Afghanistan.

The workshop featured presentations by prominent female speakers, and leaders of OIC institutions, including H.E. Dr. Noura Al Rashoud, Executive Director of the IPHRC, who spoke on "Muslim Women: A Human Rights Perspective on Balancing Cultural Traditions and Practices with Contemporary Needs for Social Progress"; H.E. Dr. Afnan Al Shuaybi, Executive Director of the Women Development Organization (WDO), who spoke on "The Prospects of Women's Empowerment in Islam: Opportunities & Challenges"; H.E. Dr. Zehra Zümrüt Selçuk, Executive Director of SESRIC, who spoke on "The Impact of Muslim Women on Socio-Economic Development in OIC Member States"; and Mrs. Suzan Ahmed Mohamed, Representative of the Department of Social & Family Affairs at the OIC General Secretariat, who spoke on the "Status of Women in Islam and the Significance of the Jeddah Document".





## OIC Reaffirms Commitment

## to Women's Leadership in Science

The OIC joined the international community in celebrating the “International Day of Women and Girls in Science”, observed annually on February 11th. In a statement issued on this occasion, the OIC stressed that this celebration recognizes the vital contributions of women and girls to the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This day serves as a reminder of the importance of gender equality in fostering innovation and ensuring sustainable progress worldwide.

The statement went on to say that the theme chosen for the 2025 celebration, “Women and Girls in Science Leadership, a New Era for Sustainability”, reflects the vital role of women, as leaders in science and technology, in shaping a more sustainable future.

The OIC reaffirmed its support for women's empowerment across its Member States, particularly in science and technology, as demonstrated through the adoption of a resolution promoting women's education in STEM, during the 8th session of the OIC Ministerial Conference on Women, held in Cairo, Egypt, in 2021.

In the same context, the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW) serves as a strategic framework for empowering women in various fields, including science and technology. The Plan underscores the need for promoting equal opportunities in education, employment, and leadership positions, in alignment with broader efforts to enhance women's participation in scientific research and technological innovation.

For its part, the OIC Women Development Organization (WDO), headquartered in Cairo, plays a significant role in advancing women's empowerment, including in STEM fields, by promoting policies and initiatives that enhance their engagement in science and technology. On this occasion, the OIC urged all Member States that have not yet signed and ratified the WDO Statute to do so as soon as possible and become active members of this organization, thereby contributing to its mission of fostering gender equality and sustainable development.

Additionally, the “Jeddah Document on the Rights of Women in Islam”, adopted at the

International Conference on Women in Islam, jointly organized by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the OIC General Secretariat on November 6-8, 2023 in Jeddah, stressed the importance of women's empowerment in all spheres, including STEM.

On this occasion, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, called on Member States and relevant institutions to intensify efforts to ensure the full participation of women and girls in science and technology. He emphasized that, in line with this year's theme, women and girls should be empowered to take leadership roles in science and technology, which helps to drive forward long-term sustainable development and tackle global challenges. “By fostering policies that promote inclusivity and investment in women-led scientific research,” he added, “the OIC seeks to bridge the gender gap in science and technology and create an environment where women and girls can embrace excellence as leaders in STEM, thereby contributing to sustainable development and the well-being of societies.”

## Workshop on the Implementation of the Family Bank Project in N'Djamena

As part of implementing Resolution No. 10/7-W on Popularizing the Family Bank within the OIC Member States, issued by the 7th OIC Ministerial Conference on Women, held in 2018 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, which called for strengthening the Family Bank in the G5 Sahel countries, the OIC General Secretariat organized on February 12-13, 2025 in N'Djamena, jointly with the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development and the Chadian Ministry of Women and Early Childhood, a workshop to monitor the progress made, by national committees in the five Sahel countries, in implementing the Family Bank project.

In his opening remarks on behalf of the OIC General Secretariat, Ambassador Dinkoulla, Advisor to the Secretary-General and Head of Delegation, expressed sincere thanks to the Government of Chad for hosting the workshop and for the arrangements made to facilitate the participation of delegations. He stressed that the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, attaches great importance to this project and to the role of microfinance in empowering women.

During the two-day workshop, participants assessed the progress achieved by authori-

ties and other stakeholders in their respective countries, examined the challenges faced in the implementation of the project, and discussed the feasibility study prepared by the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development.

On another note, the OIC and UN-Women reaffirmed their commitment to promoting women's rights and gender equality through the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding. The signing ceremony was held on the sidelines of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held at the UN headquarters in New York. The OIC's Permanent Observer to the United Nations, H.E. Ambassador Hameed Opeloyeru, signed the MoU on behalf of the OIC, while UN-Women was represented by its Executive Director, H.E. Dr. Sima Bahous.

Ambassador Opeloyeru underlined the importance of the renewed cooperation between the two institutions. "Today's event," he said, "marks another milestone in the institutional collaboration between the OIC and UN-Women. It is a clear demonstration of our joint commitment to advancing women's rights and well-being, in line with the goals of both organizations." He also

highlighted recent OIC initiatives, including the establishment of the Women Development Organization, based in Cairo, and the successful hosting of the International Conference on Women in Islam in Jeddah in 2023. These efforts reflect the OIC's dedication to enhancing women's economic participation, leadership, and protection in the face of gender-based challenges.

For her part, Dr. Sima Bahous welcomed the MoU as a crucial step toward ensuring sustainable progress in women's empowerment and their full participation in all aspects of society worldwide. "Partnership between UN-Women and the OIC is built on a shared vision of empowering women in all areas of life," she said.

This renewed agreement provides a strong framework for strategic initiatives that will bring about tangible change, particularly in terms of economic empowerment, leadership opportunities, and protection of women's rights within and beyond the OIC Member States. She also commended the OIC's efforts in advancing the status of women in the Islamic world, and reaffirmed UN-Women's commitment to supporting these initiatives through expertise, resources, and advocacy campaigns.



## OIC and KSGAAL Celebrate World Arabic Language Day



The OIC General Secretariat and King Salman International Academy for Arabic Language (KSGAAL) organized, on January 9, 2025, at the OIC headquarters, a joint event to commemorate World Arabic Language Day. This year's celebration was held under the theme of "Arabic Language and Artificial Intelligence: Promoting Innovation while Preserving Cultural Heritage." The event featured extensive participation from representatives of Member States, relevant OIC institutions and organs, as well as Arabic Language Academies.

In his statement on this occasion, delivered on his behalf by Amb. Tarig Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, pointed out that the initiative to commemorate World Arabic Language Day in collaboration with KSGAAL reflects the General Secretariat's commitment to engaging with all stakeholders in Saudi Arabia and other Member States seeking to give the Arabic language the prominent status it deserves.

The Secretary-General expressed deep thanks and gratitude to KSGAAL for its collaboration, looking forward to more enhanced cooperation with all stakeholders across the OIC Member States.

For his part, H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Saleh Al-Washmi, Secretary-General of KSGAAL, offered remarks in which he expressed profound gratitude to H.H. Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Culture and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of KSGAAL, for his unwavering support for KSGAAL's programs, activities and strategies. He extended his thanks to the OIC for its continued collaboration.

Dr. Al-Washmi stated that KSGAAL is pleased to serve as a key partner in the significant event, noting that through its programs and initiatives, the Academy seeks to support and promote the Arabic language in all fields and fora, and to enhance its use across various domains, by building bridges of cooperation with many countries and institutions around the world.

The celebration focused on the status of

the Arabic language across Member States, highlighting contributions from leading scholars in the field. Presentations and lectures were offered by representatives from Qatar, Egypt, Palestine, Türkiye, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Chad, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Senegal, Bangladesh, and Nigeria.

This celebration was held in implementation of relevant ministerial resolutions aimed at enhancing the presence of the Arabic language, the language of the Holy Qur'an, the latest of which being Resolution No. 13/50-CUL, adopted by the 50th CFM session held on August 29-30, 2024 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on promoting, preserving, and disseminating the Arabic language, and reinforcing its status in the world.

This event was designed to shed more light on the rich contributions of the Arabic language as the language of the Holy Qur'an, and its significant role in enriching humanity's cultural and linguistic diversity, in addition to its contributions to science and knowledge, making it a cornerstone of humanity's cultural diversity.

## OIC General Secretariat Participates in Rabat in International Symposium on Arabic Language



The OIC General Secretariat took part in the “International Symposium on the Status of Arabic Language Teaching in the World”, organized by ICESCO in partnership with King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language (KSGAAL), in Rabat, Capital of Morocco, on February 18-19, 2025.

The Symposium featured eight panels with the participation of international experts and researchers who addressed, in their interventions, the challenges of teaching Arabic as a second language in non-Arabic speaking countries, as well as the future vision and prospects for promoting the teaching of this eternal language, the language of the Holy Quran, in all countries of the world.

The Symposium also featured presentations on the efforts of ICESCO and KSGAAL in enhancing the presence of the Arabic language at the local, regional, and international levels, the strategic dimensions of its teaching, as well as its role in inter-civilizational communication.

Participants also discussed the report on the status of the Arabic language in the world prepared by KSGAAL, which serves as a basic reference for understanding the status of the Arabic language and the strategies for teaching and disseminating it.

The Symposium concluded with the presen-

tation of recommendations aimed at finding effective solutions to overcome the challenges that hinder the development and growth of the influence of the Arabic language, compared to other languages, and exploring ways to ensure its dissemination and teaching on the widest scale.

The statement of the OIC General Secretariat at the Symposium was delivered by Dr. Lhoucine Rhazoui, Director of Cultural Affairs, on behalf of the OIC Secretary-General, who paid tribute to the efforts of ICESCO and KSGAAL to support Arabic-language teaching programs, and contribute to developing language-related policies in Islamic countries and implementing programs and strategies for the promotion of the Arabic language. He also commended the Academy’s report which provides an accurate scientific diagnosis of the current status of Arabic-language teaching across the world, and highlighted the recommendations issued by this international symposium, which serve as a roadmap for implementing well thought-out, measurable, and assessable work programs designed to serve the Arabic language and give it the prominent status it deserves.

On another note, the OIC General Secretariat took part in the 9th meeting of the Inter-

national Committee for the Preservation of Human Historical Heritage, held on 20 April 2025 at the headquarters of the League of Arab States. The meeting addressed the endangered cultural heritage in the Member States, both tangible and intangible, and the means of protecting and preserving it, especially the human heritage of Palestine, amidst the critical situation it is currently experiencing, which is of great concern to the OIC Member States.

Addressing the meeting, the representative of the OIC General Secretariat, Dr. Rami Anchassi, indicated that the participation of the General Secretariat in this meeting is a continuation of its efforts in terms of heritage preservation, as part of implementing the resolutions adopted by successive CFM sessions, which urged Member States to establish the OIC Platform for the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage. The most recent of these was Resolution No. 50/10-C, adopted by the 50th CFM session, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in August 2024, in addition to other conferences and events that reaffirmed Member States’ commitment to exerting every possible effort to enhance joint action in preserving the Member States’ rich and diverse cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible.



## OIC Secretary-General Participates in Selection

### Committee Meeting for King Faisal Prize

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, took part in the meeting of the Selection Committee for the 2025 "King Faisal Prize for Service to Islam". The meeting, chaired by HRH Prince Turki Al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Founder and Member of the Board of Trustees of the King Faisal Foundation and Chairman of the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, took place on January 29, 2025, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to select the winners of the 47th edition of the Prize.

The "King Faisal Prize for Service to Islam" aims to honor the outstanding efforts of individuals or institutions that provide services benefiting Islam and Muslims. It is awarded to individuals or institutions that serve Islam and Muslims, through their knowledge or advocacy, or undertake a significant effort that results in a benefit to Islam and Muslims, thereby achieving one or more of the Prize's objectives, as determined by the Selection Committee.

On February 12, 2025, the OIC Secretary-General also participated in the opening of the 13th Conference of Culture Ministers in the Islamic World, held in Jeddah on February 12-13 under the theme of "The Impact of Culture on Social and Economic Develop-

ment."

The opening session of the Conference featured speeches by H.H. Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; H.E. Mr. Rustam Minnikhanov, President of the Republic of Tatarstan; Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations; and Dr. Salim M. Al-Malik, Director-General of ICESCO.

Addressing the Conference, the OIC Secretary-General thanked the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to all delegations, and commended its central role in serving the causes of the Islamic Ummah.

The Secretary-General addressed the role of culture and creative industries in supporting the economies of countries and highlighting their civilizational, human, and historical foundations. He called for creating new dynamics for inter-cooperation in the cultural field, in a way that serves sustainable development programs in these countries.

The Secretary-General also emphasized the need for concerted efforts to stop the repeated Israeli aggressions against Palestine, and to stand against its persistent attempts

to obliterate the Palestinian identity, and destroy Palestinian heritage and history, while insisting on the Judaization of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. He also underlined the need to reject displacement, be it forced or voluntary, and to reaffirm support for the Two-State Solution.

On January 30, 2025, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural, and Social Affairs, received, in his office, a delegation from the Russian Federation led by H.E. Olga LYUBIMOVA, Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation.

Still in the field of culture, and in response to the invitation extended to the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, from the highest authorities of Burkina Faso, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Africa, H.E. Mr. Nassirou Bako-Arifari, took part, on behalf of the Secretary-General, at the 29th edition of the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO), organized from 22 February to 1 March 2025. The event was held under the high patronage of the President of Burkina Faso, H.E. Captain Ibrahim TRAORE, and the President of the Republic of Chad, H.E. Marshal Mahamat DEBY ITNO, Guest of Honor.



## American Library Discovers it Holds the Largest Example in Existence of an Extremely Rare Paper Type

### CHICAGO — (DPA)

The ancient manuscript rested, for more than a century, on the shelves of the famous Newberry Library, in Chicago, Illinois.

According to a “Chicago Tribune” recent report, little was known about the bound book from colonial Mexico that had been donated to the library in 1911 by Edward Ayer, a collector and businessman who made his fortune supplying ties to railroad companies. It was called “Ayer 1485” in the library’s catalog.

But then, two years ago, pages of the manuscript were projected onto the big screen at a Nahuatl Conference at Harvard University where experts of the Aztec language had gathered, their first conference since the COVID pandemic. It was like a family reunion, one attendee remembered.

“Nahuatl” is the name given to a group of closely related languages spoken by Indigenous peoples in North America, specifically in central Mexico. These languages belong to the Uto-Aztecan language family.

At the podium was Ben Leeming, an independent scholar. While Leeming showed images of the rare manuscript and discussed the significance of the words on its pages,

Barbara Mundy, a Tulane University art history professor, became slightly preoccupied with the pages themselves.

“What really drew my attention was the slides of different pages from this manuscript,” said Mundy, “And I said, ‘Ben, could we zoom in on that paper?’ Because the manuscript, which was big, was clearly done on a paper that was not European.”

The “Chicago Tribune” points out that the Library of Congress, prompted by Mundy’s hunch, analyzed the papers this fall and made an astounding discovery. The manuscript was printed on maguey paper, a type made from pounded agave plants that is so rare that only 10 sheets were known to exist: four at the Library of Congress and six at the National Library of Anthropology and History in Mexico City. The Newberry’s Library’s manuscript is about 49 sheets long.

“When the results did come back, it was very exciting,” said Kim Nichols, the library’s director of conservation. “It’s always exciting to see that something ancient survives. There are so many reasons why it’s lost.”

According to the library’s records, Ayer acquired the manuscript in 1886 from a London rare book dealer. Its first known owner

was a Mexican collector and bibliophile. At least two people owned the manuscript between the Mexican collector and the London dealer, records show.

The manuscript was among the roughly 17,000 items related to Native peoples. At first, Mundy believed the manuscript was made of another type of Native paper, amatl paper.

Leeming told her he thought the paper was amatl, she said. But he wasn’t sure. He hadn’t seen much Native paper.

Only four amatl and no maguey manuscripts that are definitively pre-Hispanic have survived, according to Mundy. The surviving amatl manuscripts are from the Maya region, which is in the eastern half of Mesoamerica.

All surviving maguey manuscripts are colonial-era manuscripts. Sometime after the arrival of Europeans, maguey papermaking stopped and the technology went extinct, according to an International Council of Museums publication.

Amatl paper, which is made from the inner bark of fig trees, was more common than maguey paper. Amatl paper is still being produced today.

## Humanitarian Forum: Effective Ways to Support Displacement Solutions



The OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Social, and Cultural Affairs, Ambassador Tariq Ali Bakheet, took part at the Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum, held on February 24-25, 2025 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He participated as a speaker in the high-level discussion panel on “Addressing displacement in an era of increasing conflicts and humanitarian crises”.

Amb. Bakheet reaffirmed the importance the OIC attaches to the protection of, and assistance to, displaced persons in its Member States affected by humanitarian crises and conflicts. He stressed the need to adopt alternative and innovative ways of financing humanitarian aid, which can generate substantial additional resources that can be used to implement crisis prevention and impact mitigation programs. Those alternative mechanisms, he added, include Islamic philanthropy tools such as Zakat, Sadaqah (almsgiving), and Waqf, which can significantly support humanitarian efforts. He also underscored the necessity to reinforce partnerships among humanitarian donors and promote the “localization” approach to

build resilience and ensure a more efficient delivery of humanitarian aid to displaced persons.

Participants in the Panel included Ms. Amy Pope, Director-General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM); Ms. Kelly T. Clements, UN Deputy High-Commissioner for Refugees; Mr. Muhannad Hadi, UN Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle-East Peace Process, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, and Designated Official for the UN Security in Palestine; Mrs. Pramila Patten, UN Secretary-General Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and Dr. Michael Kohler, Former Director-General of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, who moderated the Panel.

On the sidelines of the Riyadh Humanitarian Forum, Ambassador Tariq Ali Bakheet, OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Social and Cultural Affairs, and his accompanying delegation, held discussions, on February 24, 2025, with Ms. Sarah Poole, Special Representative of the Administrator for UNDP Programme of Assistance to

the Palestinian People, and Ms. Zena Ali Ahmed, UNDP Resident Representative in Yemen. The two delegations exchanged views on issues of mutual interest, and agreed to pursue consultations on the humanitarian situation in Yemen and Palestine. Amb. Bakheet also met with Mr. Maciej Popowski, Director-General of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, in the presence of the two accompanying delegations. The meeting addressed bilateral cooperation between the OIC and the EU in the humanitarian field, and explored new avenues of cooperation.

In the same context, the OIC delegation, led by Amb. Bakheet, held a bilateral meeting with the UNHCR delegation, led by Ms. Kelly T. Clements, Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, who was accompanied by Dr. Khaled Khalifa, Senior Advisor to the High Commissioner and UNHCR Regional Representative.

The two delegations explored ways of enhancing bilateral cooperation, and shared views on the global situation of refugees worldwide, particularly in the Muslim world.

## OIC Takes Part in the Launch Event of the IOM Islamic Philanthropy Fund



The OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Social and Cultural Affairs, Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, and his accompanying delegation, took part in the launch event of the Islamic Philanthropy Fund (IPF), organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on February 25, 2025, at the United Nations House in Riyadh.

The event featured a panel discussion during which Amb. Bakheet highlighted the significant role Islamic philanthropy can play in mobilizing additional resources to help institutions to most effectively address the needs of displaced persons, refugees, and migrants. Representatives of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) also spoke at the panel session.

The launch event was marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the OIC and IOM regarding the OIC's support for the IOM's Islamic Philanthropy Fund. The MoU was signed by Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, OIC ASG for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. Mohammed Abdiker, Chief

of Staff of the Director-General of IOM.

In the same context, Amb. Bakheet, OIC ASG for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. Nathan Carey, Global Advocacy Lead Partnerships and Policy at the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), signed, on February 25, 2025, a Memorandum of Understanding between the OIC and NRC, with the aim of promoting cooperation in the areas of humanitarian diplomacy, advocacy, and provision of humanitarian aid to refugees in the OIC Member States.

The signing of the MoU, which was the culmination of intensive consultations and negotiations that had started earlier this year, took place on the sidelines of the 4th edition of the Riyadh Humanitarian Forum.

The OIC delegation to the 4th Riyadh Humanitarian Forum, led by Amb. Tarig Ali Bakheet, ASG for Humanitarian Affairs, and comprising Dr. Aisha Al Ayafi, Director of Humanitarian Affairs, held, on February 25, 2025, a meeting with Ms. Amy Pope, Director-General of IOM, at the United Nations House in Riyadh.

Ms. Amy Pope was accompanied in the meeting by Mr. Mohammed Abdiker, her Chief of Staff, Mr. Othman Belbeisi, Head of the IOM Regional Office to the MENA, Mr. Mouhamed El Zarkani, UN Resident Coordinator to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as Mr. Ashraf El Nour, Head of the IOM Office in Riyadh.

The meeting discussed partnership between the OIC and IOM, and explored prospects for further cooperation, in line with the MoU signed between the two sides in 2003. On another note, the OIC Department of Humanitarian Affairs, represented by Dr. Aisha Shami Alayafi, Director of Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. Aliou Diallo, Professional Officer, held, on April 16, 2025, an online meeting with a delegation of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) of the Republic of Türkiye, comprising Mr. Uur Tanyeli, Head of Department of Foreign Relations and Partnerships, and Mr. Mehmed Taha Doan, Expert at the same department.



## Prime Minister of Niger Meets OIC Delegation in Niamey

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Niger, H.E. Mr. Ali Mahamn Lamine Zeine, received, on 13 February 2025 in his office in Niamey, an OIC delegation led by H.E. Amb. Aftab Ahmad Khokher, Assistant Secretary-General for Science and Technology.

Discussions focused on ways of enhancing cooperation between Niger and the OIC, particularly in the field of higher education, including the role of the Islamic University in Niger, based in Niamey, as well as in the health sector.

Ambassador Khokher conveyed to the Prime Minister the greetings of the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Houssein Brahim Taha. He commended the role of Niger in promoting and supporting the OIC mandate and vision, and underlined the importance of further strengthening collaboration among OIC Member States in the fields of education, science & technology, health, water, and climate action. He also briefed about the scholarship opportunities offered by OIC Member States.

For his part, the Prime Minister underlined the longstanding relations between Niger and the OIC. He shared with the OIC delegation his vision and future programs aimed at serving Niger's interests, supporting its stability, and advancing its development process.

The meeting was also attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Higher Education, and the Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister.

On another note, H.E. Dr. Ibrahima Sy, Minister of Health and Social Action of the Republic of Senegal, inaugurated the 5th OIC Health Expo and the 10th Edition of the Dakar International Expo on Health and Medical Equipment, held in Dakar, the Capital of Senegal.

Jointly organized by the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), the Ministry of Health and Social Action, and the Ministry of Trade and Industries of Senegal, the Expo brought together government officials from OIC Member States and beyond, along with representatives from pharmaceutical companies, civil society organizations, and academic and research institutions. The Expo was held under the theme of "Health as a tool for economic development in OIC Member States."

Speaking on behalf of the OIC General Secretariat, Mr. Abdunur M. Sekindi, Director-General of the Department of Science & Technology, highlighted the significance of the Expo in fostering public-private partnerships and providing a platform for Member States to showcase their capabilities. He reaffirmed the OIC General Secretariat's full

support to the ICDT, to the Government of Senegal, and to all participating stakeholders to ensure the continued success of this significant initiative.

For his part, Dr. Ibrahima Sy reiterated, in his address, Senegal's commitment to advancing regional cooperation in health and sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of collaboration for tackling shared health challenges.

The Expo featured several high-level panel discussions addressing critical topics, including access to and promotion of pharmaceutical products, the One Health approach, Health in All Policies, and investment opportunities in the health sector. It also served as a platform for business-to-business (B2B) networking and the signing of joint ventures aimed at strengthening the health ecosystem across OIC countries.

On the other hand, H.E. Mr. Houssein Brahim Taha, OIC Secretary-General, received, at the OIC headquarters, H.E. Dr. Hossein Simaei Saraf, Minister of Science, Research and Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Secretary-General highly commended Dr. Saraf's support for OIC programs and activities.



## Chad: Farmers increase yields with technology

The Climate Resilience and Agricultural Productivity Project (ProPAD) call center is located on the third floor of the Ministry of Agriculture building. It is outfitted with state-of-the-art technologies and new electronic installations. The Center serves as a pivotal element in Chad's initiative to modernize agriculture through the implementation of climate-smart technologies and enhanced extension and advisory services facilitated by information and communication technologies. The "e-voucher" system for distributing agricultural subsidies and e-extension services is being used in Chad for the first time.

The creation of an e-voucher platform and an e-extension platform allows the government to address the shortage of extension agents, offering agricultural advisory services to farmers. These platforms also create a transparent system for distributing input subsidies in the project intervention areas. Since its inception in April 2021, the call center has operated in a spacious area divided into booths, where each call center representative works at a computer equipped with a headset. The team consists of eight members: six call center agents, an IT specialist, and a supervisor. They have handled

a total of 118,438 calls from over 30,000 producers across three provinces (Mandoul, Moyen Chari, Salamat). To effectively communicate within the project's environment, they use the local languages of the intervention area as well as French through the toll-free number. "When an on-site intervention is necessary, we dispatch one of the 250 farmer relays, who are trained and equipped with bicycles, to visit the location and provide updates," explains Adoum Djidda Ali, the call center manager.

These agents are integral to the technical system designed to inform and guide beneficiaries, acting as intermediaries between them, the cantonal controllers, and the IT specialists overseeing the e-voucher programme. This platform for e-vouchers and e-extensions enables subsidized sales of agricultural inputs (maize, sorghum, sesame, pesticides, NPK fertilizer, and urea) via mobile phones to producers identified in the five pilot cantons of the project: Hemat in Salamat, Danamadji and Balimba in Moyen Chari, and Bedjondo and Bedaya in Mandoul.

ProPAD agents, stationed within the project areas, are assisting beneficiaries with the utilization of the e-extension system. This

system facilitates the dissemination of agricultural recommendations to 60,000 households. Additionally, farmers have access to a toll-free hotline for advice and guidance. By dialing 13 22, they can communicate with a technician from the project's call center in French or one of the local languages.

In Balimba, a town in southeast Chad known for its maize and groundnut crops, inconsistent rainfall and a shortage of supervisors to advise farmers have impacted production. Mndadjim Prisca, head of a women's group in Balimba sub-prefecture that has benefited from the call center's services, describes the benefits: "We have increased our production; We now earn between 60,000 and 80,000 CFA francs for agricultural work, which used to bring us 600,000 to 700,000 CFA francs."

The e-voucher platform effectively distributes agricultural subsidies and e-extension. It has provided over 5,000 tons of improved seeds to farmers' organizations across different agroecological zones. Project data shows that 133,656 producers, with 41% being women, have received improved seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides through the platform.



## OIC Emphasizes the Importance of Establishing a Collaborative Platform to Improve Water Management

In his inaugural statement at the opening of the First Meeting for Networking of Water Centers of Excellence in OIC Member States, delivered on behalf of the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Assistant Secretary-General for Science and Technology, Amb. Aftab Ahmad Khokher, underlined the importance of establishing a collaborative platform for sharing innovative solutions and best practices in water management. The meeting was hosted at COMSTech headquarters in Islamabad on February 24-25, 2025.

Amb. Khokher noted that this meeting constitutes a significant step towards strengthening research, knowledge-sharing, and coordinated OIC action on water security.

This initiative was undertaken in implementation of Resolution No. 1/4-ICWM/2018, adopted by the 4th Islamic Conference of Ministers Responsible for Water, held in

Egypt in October 2018, and the Recommendations of the 2nd OIC Water Council Meeting, held in October 2019.

Amb. Khokher stressed that establishing this Network for Water Centers of Excellence will help develop sustainable and resilient water systems that contribute to the collective well-being of the Muslim world, and enable OIC Member States to adopt successful strategies tailored to their unique contexts, while facilitating their efforts in this vital field. He added that enhancing research and development ecosystems is key to promoting sustainable water management practices. By fostering capacity-building initiatives, knowledge-sharing, and robust institutional frameworks, the OIC Member States can ensure water security while strengthening public trust in water governance.

Amb. Khokher indicated that water security is not only a regional issue but also a global

priority. Strengthening partnerships with international organizations, including UN agencies, he added, would facilitate access to expertise, resources, and best practices. Furthermore, engaging the private sector in technology-driven solutions is key to advancing sustainable water management. He insisted that collaboration with global and regional financial institutions could unlock new resources and investment opportunities, helping OIC Member States meet their water security objectives.

Amb. Khokher went on to emphasize that the meeting provides a crucial platform for dialogue, enabling participants to analyze water-related challenges, share best practices, and explore avenues for regional cooperation. He called on all participants to seize this opportunity to work together and leverage their collective expertise and resources to build a more sustainable and water-secure future.



## Sahel Countries Issue an Urgent Call to Strengthen Irrigation, and Improve Food Security

The governments of the Sahel countries — Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Chad — gathered in Dakar for a high-level forum marking the tenth anniversary of the Declaration on Irrigation in the Sahel, called the Dakar+10 Forum. On this occasion, they called for action to accelerate investments in irrigation to achieve the goal of bringing 1,000,000 hectares of land under full water control by 2035.

After three days of debates and reflections, the ministers of the Sahel countries adopted the new Dakar Declaration, committing to promoting efficient, effective, sustainable, and resilient irrigation in the face of environmental and socio-economic challenges.

In response to recent global challenges and the growing interconnection of environmental, health, economic, and geopolitical crises, the states have shifted toward food sovereignty policies, moving away from reliance on imported agricultural products. “Food sovereignty is possible not only given

the immense potential in water, land, and energy in the region but also thanks to new technologies in the field of irrigation,” said Dr. Abdoulaye Mohamadou, Executive Secretary of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). The 2013 Dakar Declaration on Irrigation in the Sahel had established an ambitious vision to strengthen resilience, food security, and economic prosperity. The achievements over the decade testify to the progress made toward this strategic horizon. The assessment by the participants revealed that although the irrigated areas increased by about 285,000 hectares, the set goal was not reached.

The Forum provided an opportunity for participants to adopt a new strategy defining five major investment priorities aimed at fostering a transformation in irrigation in the Sahel. These priorities include: (i) supporting national irrigation programs that integrate a regional aspect; (ii) improving the

performance of public and community-led irrigation schemes; (iii) promoting farmer-led irrigation development; (iv) reducing the investment gap; (v) implementing an integrated territorial approach; (vi) diversifying water sources for better climate resilience; and (vii) strengthening the resilience of irrigation systems in the face of environmental and conflict challenges.

The importance of partnerships between states, financial institutions, researchers, and the private sector was highlighted to foster innovative and inclusive solutions. “Let’s invest in modern and resilient irrigation systems that will increase agricultural productivity, reduce our dependence on climatic hazards, and ensure a prosperous future for our populations,” said Dr. Mabouba Diagne, Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty, and Livestock of Senegal. “Together, let us make sustainable irrigation a pillar of agricultural transformation in the Sahel.”



## OIC Secretary-General Highlights the Importance of the Implementation of the Dakar-Port Sudan Railway Project

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, welcomed all participants at the 2nd Stakeholders' Meeting on the Implementation of the Dakar-Port Sudan Railway Project. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Jean Ernest Ngalle Bibehe, Minister of Transport of the Republic of Cameroon, Chair of the 50th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers.

The Minister welcomed all participants, and highlighted the importance of this Second Stakeholders' Meeting, following the First Meeting held in 2009 at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah.

In his opening speech, the OIC Secretary-General stressed the importance of intra-OIC cooperation and the OIC Member States' commitment to ensuring the success of this project. He called on participants to discuss ways to address the challenges that hinder the project and develop strategies to accelerate its implementation.

The meeting brought together senior officials from the participating countries as well as from organizations whose strategic interests align with the OIC's commitment to developing the economies of its Member States.

This Dakar-Port Sudan Railway Project aims to enhance economic development, reduce

transport costs and travel time, and foster economic integration and sustainable growth across the African continent.

On January 20, 2025, the OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, Dr. Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo, received in his office at the OIC General Secretariat, a delegation from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) led by Ms. Fatou Haidara, Deputy to the Director General and the Managing Director of the Directorate of Global Partnerships and External Relations.

The meeting addressed ways of enhancing cooperation between the OIC and UNIDO, including joint efforts towards fostering comprehensive and sustainable socio-economic development in the common Member States.

On another note, regional consultations on the Draft Strategic Plan for Ensuring Food Security in the OIC Member States were conducted virtually, on February 11-13, 2025, with the OIC Member States in the African, Arab, and Asian Groups.

Chaired by Dr. Masoud Almarri, Director of the Food Security Department at the Ministry of Municipality of the State of Qatar, Chair of the 9th OIC Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Develop-

ment, the consultations brought together experts from relevant ministries in OIC Member States as well as representatives from relevant OIC institutions.

These regional consultations were organized pursuant to the Resolution of the 9th OIC Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development, held in Doha, Qatar, on October 1-2, 2023.

In his statement, Dr. Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo, OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, noted that the consultations offered an excellent opportunity for Member States to provide their input and contributions on issues of strategic importance for enhancing food security and increasing agricultural productivity in OIC Member States. He drew attention to the fact that, despite their vast agricultural potential, the OIC Member States, as a group, have become a net importer of food.

During the consultations, participants raised a number of issues that should be prioritized in the Draft Strategic Plan for Ensuring Food Security in OIC Member States. They also underscored the need to focus on capacity-building to meet new challenges and opportunities most effectively.



## “Tekiyya”: A Lifeline for Gazans in the Battle Against Hunger

### Khan Younis – Tareq Al-Astal (WAFA):

Displaced woman Suzan Shaat sits on the ground every morning for hours along Istabl Al-Khail Street in Al-Mawasi area of Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, awaiting the arrival of the ‘tekiyya’ (community kitchen) to feed her starving children. This comes amid the ongoing closure of border crossings and the tight siege imposed on Gaza since March 2.

Shaat, 58, said: “Every day I come early before the ‘tekiyya’ arrives to reserve a spot and secure a meal for my family, given how many displaced people rush to get what little they can.” She explained that the harsh conditions and lack of basic necessities have forced her into that situation.

She attributed her personal presence to obtain food to her husband’s chronic illness, which prevents him from standing for hours in line, a burden that exacerbates the growing suffering endured by women in managing their households.

Shaat pointed out that two months ago, aid was still reaching displaced people, and food prices were still affordable for everyone.

“Now, there’s nothing, aid has stopped, and prices have skyrocketed.” She added, “I can’t afford to buy flour, which now costs 25 shekels per kilo (about \$8), and vegetables are also expensive — a kilo of tomatoes is 25 shekels, onions 40, and cucumbers 20 — not to mention the other food prices.” She continued, “The situation is getting worse by the day. If the ‘tekiyya’ stops providing food, we will starve.” She insisted that the meal she receives has become the main source of food for her children.

For his part, displaced man Nehad Abdul Wahid, 48, said that the soaring food prices and the lack of vegetables and other food supplies have forced thousands of displaced people to stand in line for hours at “tekiyyas”, waiting to receive a meal that barely satisfies their children’s hunger.

Abdul Wahid added that he has relied on food from the “tekiyya” for over two months now, unable to feed his family otherwise. “I no longer get enough food for my family, so I had to borrow money just to buy two kilos of flour to make bread.” He noted that his situation is similar to many other

displaced people facing the same hardship. The “tekiyya”, he explained, is the only remaining refuge for displaced families in Al-Mawasi, Khan Younis, given the continued closure of crossings and the surging prices. “If the tekiyya stops, thousands of residents here will die of hunger.”

Another displaced person, Mohammed Inshasi, 44, said: “Under these conditions, with closed crossings and no aid coming in, no one can prepare food for their family. Many displaced people rely on the ‘tekiyya’ because it also provides other essentials like firewood, food supplies, and vegetables — all of which have now become unaffordable.”

Inshasi explained, “The tekiyya plays a critical role in the daily lives of the displaced — it is the reason they’re still alive.” “Most of the time, I return to the tent empty-handed, without any food, because there just isn’t enough for everyone,” he added.

His story is no different from that of Samer Al-Astal, 45, who is also unable to provide food for his family. “I have nothing to feed my children,” he said.



## Antakya Seeks to Regain Hope Two Years After the Earthquake

**Antakya - Anne Pollmann (DPA)**

A veil of dust lies over Antakya, Türkiye, stretching from the vast building site in the center out to every part of the city. Two years after the devastating earthquakes that killed tens of thousands of people in Türkiye, rubble is still strewn throughout the historic center of Antakya.

But at night, at times, the city recovers, and shows its brighter side. That is thanks to the efforts of people like Dogus Genc who is working hard to breathe life back into his hometown. He runs a small business between alleyways of ruins.

Dogus Genc was fearful, before he re-opened his business last year, though that was already a year after the February quake that killed 53,000 people in Türkiye alone. Some 24,000 people died in the province of Hatay, home to Antakya. "We were afraid people would say, so many people have died, how can you celebrate?" Nationwide,

11 provinces were affected, but none as badly as Hatay.

It is not only Dogus Genc who is trying to bring life back to the city that has suffered destruction. A few hundred meters away, Cahit Güzelyurt has also re-opened Meyhane, a traditional Turkish restaurant with live music. He is trying to get back on his feet, he says.

One wall of the historic building was destroyed by the earthquake. Thieves stole everything through it, "including the power cables," says Güzelyurt

Although the restaurant with the live music has now been restored, it will probably never be the same again, he says. "A whole town has disappeared. Our guests are gone. Many have died, others have left the city." And not everyone who has stayed feels like celebrating. Many have lost everything. They have nothing left to spend on going out. Still, other people are coming to the restaur-

rant, like the numerous laborers who have come to the city from all over the country to work on construction sites.

Two years after the earthquakes, there are barely any places worth living in Antakya but building is under way. The center is dominated by a gigantic construction site, with masses of cranes, concrete mixers plants and the shells of building towering upwards. Some 64,000 new flats are being built here, says the Governor's office.

The disaster also scarred people's psyches. After the quake, some spent days buried beneath the rubble of fallen buildings, calling for help. People rushed to rescue the victims from under the rubble, digging and clearing the debris using every tool available to them.

Psychologist Elif Özbakan reports that relationship problems are much more common in the region.

## Historical Development of the Manuscript Industry in Islamic Civilization

Sharjah – Hajjaj Salama (DPA):

In his book titled: "The Historical Development of Manuscript Industry: An Overview of Paper Production and Manuscript Decoration in Islamic Civilization", published by the Sharjah Heritage Institute, Dr. Saleh Mohammed Zaki Al-Lahibi reviews the stages through which the manuscript production industry has evolved in Arab and Islamic civilizations.

The book documents the various stages that humanity went through in its pursuit of knowledge and science, seeking every means possible to attain its goals, quench its thirst, and facilitate the path to learning. It explores how humans have managed to develop tools and methods that made knowledge accessible to all who sought it. The book examines how Muslims had developed papermaking, eventually turning Baghdad, the capital of the Caliphate, into a hub for this industry. This marked the beginning of a new chapter in human history, with book production and circulation becoming more efficient, less laborious, and more affordable.

In the introduction, the author notes that Muslims did not merely stop at producing paper, but sought to elevate it to an art form. They saw books as possessing multiple layers of value, beginning with knowledge and extending into limitless dimensions, with touches and additions reflecting the greatness of book creators in Islamic civilization.

Over time, the aesthetics of manuscripts evolved to the point that they became intellectual treasures, featuring rich contents and vivid colors, and reflecting eras of renaissance that overflowed with unmatched intellectual and artistic brilliance.

Dr. Al-Luhaibi discusses the evolution of book production in Islamic history and how it drew on deep pools of knowledge, craftsmanship, and spiritual inspiration, producing a wealth of intellectual and artistic heritage that still testifies to the creativity of this great civilization.

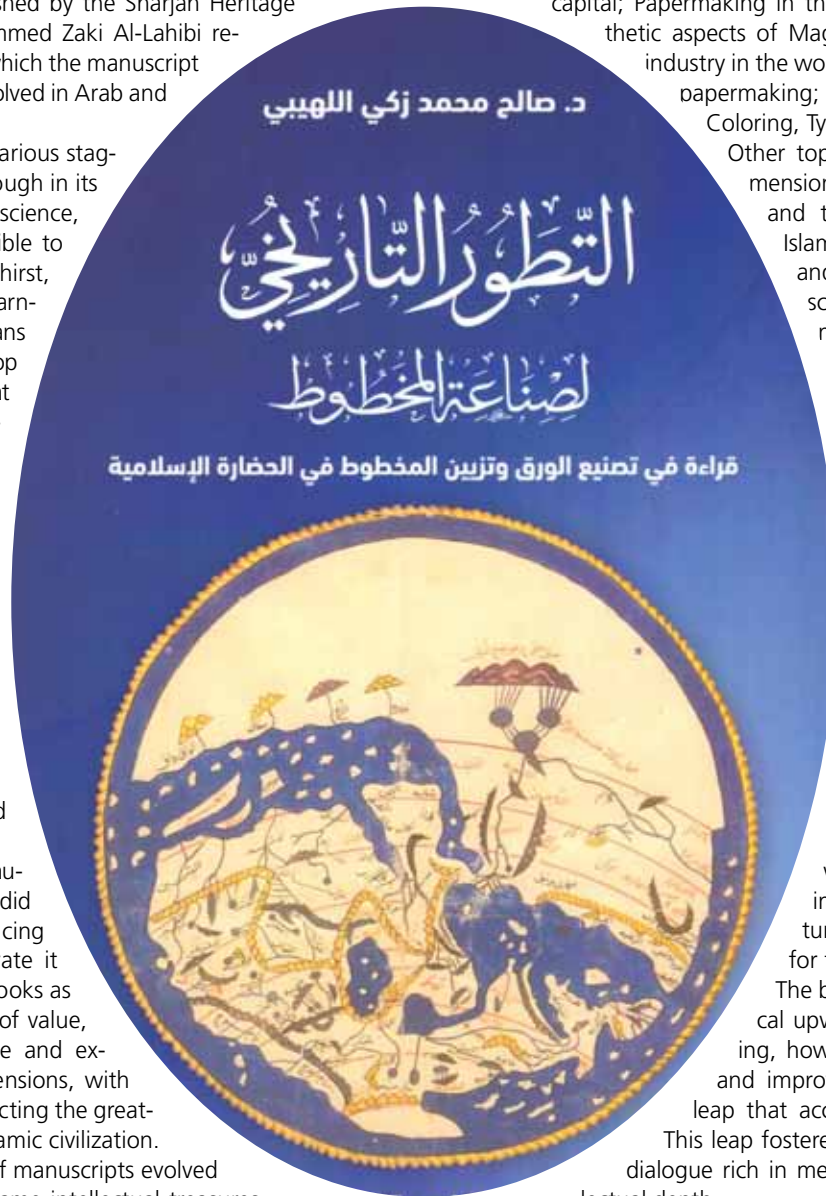
The book is divided into two chapters and five sections, which branch into several topics, including the History and geographical spread of the paper industry; Papermaking in Baghdad, the Abbasid capital; Papermaking in the Islamic Maghreb; the Aesthetic aspects of Maghrebi Calligraphy; the book industry in the world; Major works on the art of papermaking; and The Art of Papermaking: Coloring, Types, and Sizes.

Other topics include the aesthetic dimensions of manuscript production and their cultural significance in Islamic civilization; the Scientific and literary illustrated manuscripts; Illustrated historical manuscripts; The influence of Islamic manuscript aesthetics on European manuscripts; and other related subjects.

The book provides an overview of the development of the paper industry in Islamic history, from the discovery and initial usage to the significant qualitative enhancements made by Muslim artisans and scholars. Their innovations transformed paper into a medium with diverse forms, sizes, colors, names, and uses, tailored to the needs of both writer and written word. This evolution immortalized sciences and cultures that are still praised today for their precision and beauty.

The book also analyzes the historical upward trajectory of papermaking, how Muslims gradually adopted and improved it, and the civilizational leap that accompanied its advancement. This leap fostered an unprecedented cultural dialogue rich in meaning and evidence of intellectual depth.

The author concludes that papermaking underwent substantial evolution over the centuries. Although its invention is credited to the Chinese, it was the Muslims who significantly advanced and refined the craft. Samarkand is identified as the launching point of papermaking in Islamic civilization. From there, it spread across the Islamic world. The era of Caliph Harun al-Rashid is marked as the period when papermaking was transferred to the Abbasid capital, Baghdad, where it flourished and evolved throughout the ages.





## Secretary-General Participates in Hajj Services Conference and Exhibition 2025

At the invitation of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hisein Brahim Taha, attended the fourth edition of the Hajj Conference and Exhibition, held under the auspices of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

The Conference was inaugurated by HRH Prince Saud bin Mishal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Deputy Governor of Makkah Al-Mukarramah Region, on January 13, 2025, in Jeddah. It was attended by ministers from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, along with high-ranking officials in charge of Hajj affairs in their respective countries, including 50 ministers and muftis, as well as several ambassadors and consuls accredited to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On the sidelines of this significant event, the OIC Secretary-General met with H.E. Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah, as well as with various delegations from OIC Members and ambassadors and consuls from other countries.

On March 6, 2025, Makkah Al-Mukarramah hosted the second edition of the International Conference on "Building Bridges between Islamic Schools of Thought", organized by the Muslim World League under the auspices of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

At the kind invitation of the Secretary-General of the Muslim World League, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hisein Brahim Taha, took part in this event, which brought together a large number of Islamic scholars from various schools of thought and coun-

tries.

Addressing the opening session, the Secretary-General underscored the significance of fostering rapprochement and brotherhood among Muslim schools of thought and sects, being a crucial safeguard for the Islamic Ummah amid growing challenges to its unity. He emphasized the importance of internal dialogue among all Muslims as a means of upholding the values of unity embedded in the teachings of Islam. He expressed his sincere appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for sponsoring this important event and its dedication to bringing Muslims together during the holy month of Ramadan.

The Muslim World League (MWL) indicated that this edition of the Conference, titled "Toward an Effective Islamic Coalition", constitutes a further step toward Islamic unity, moving beyond the repetitive dialogues to developing practical programs for the Document on Building Bridges Between Islamic Schools of Thought, while working to coordinate positions in the face of shared challenges and threats. This would lay the foundations for a methodical effort that would yield initiatives and projects to promote the path of moderation and refute sectarian rhetoric and practices.

The MWL pointed out that the first edition of the Conference and its Document embodied the wisdom and vastness of Islam, and established the

foundations for more coordinated positions and efforts among the forces of Islamic moderation across various sects and schools of thought; thereby benefiting servicing the Islamic Ummah in the face of the forces of extremism and fanaticism that have tarnished the image of Islam.

On behalf of the scholars of the Islamic Ummah who came from around the world to participate in the Conference, the MWL expressed deep thanks, appreciation, and gratitude to King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and to HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, for their past and ongoing contributions to serving Islam and Muslims, enhancing their unity, and elevating their status.



## Unlocking Cameroonian youth's potential

Young people aged 18 to 35 represent 57% of the labor force in Cameroon—but many struggle to find work. With rapid population growth and urbanization, the need for better employment opportunities is urgent. The United Nations forecasts that by 2050, 70% of Cameroon's population will live in urban areas. While this presents a chance to reap the benefits of a demographic dividend, it also raises the risk of deepening poverty and exclusion if jobs do not keep pace.

To meet this challenge, Cameroon is implementing a dual-track approach to youth employment through the Adaptive Safety Nets and Economic Inclusion Project, supported by the World Bank. Two innovative programs under this project - the Business Plan Competition (BPC) and the Economic Inclusion of Youth (EIY) - are helping to unlock opportunity for thousands of young people in the country's main cities.

**Catalyzing Job Creation for Young Entrepreneurs**

The Business Plan Competition (BPC) program targets emerging entrepreneurs who are ready to scale their businesses. It provides grants of \$10,000 to \$20,000, alongside coaching and support for formaliza-

tion. With a focus on high-growth sectors and women-led enterprises, the program is supporting 2,000 young business owners—with the potential for a ripple effect in job creation.

BPC beneficiaries like Françoise face real constraints—from accessing finance to registering their businesses. Many operate informally and lack the collateral or credit history required by banks. By helping them overcome these barriers, the program opens the door to greater productivity and sustainability.

This kind of support doesn't just help individuals—it enables them to grow enterprises that employ others. By the end of the 24-month implementation period, the program aims to strengthen the entrepreneurial capacity of young business owners and inspire a new generation of youth entrepreneurs across Cameroon.

**Creating Pathways to Jobs and Economic Inclusion**

Not everyone can grow a large business. For most of the youth—those with limited resources and few formal job prospects—creating their own job is often the most viable path. The Economic Inclusion of Youth (EIY)

program responds to this need by targeting 65,000 unemployed urban youth with a bundled package of basic business training, coaching, and a \$500 grant, helping them launch or grow micro-enterprises. Beyond income, EIY helps young people build self-confidence, resilience, and a future vision—providing a crucial entry point to the labor market.

**Complementary Programs, Shared Vision**

Together, the two programs illustrate a vision for more and better jobs, supporting youth at different stages of their entrepreneurial journey. BPC helps promising businesses scale and create formal jobs, while EIY helps those who are just starting out to get onto the first rung of the jobs ladder. Both are essential for a dynamic labor market and a more inclusive economy.

Jobs are central to development, as they build self-reliant economies, reduce fragility and migration pressures, and create demand for local goods and services. The two programs in Cameroon speak directly to this vision—channeling public resources to crowd in private initiative and giving youth the tools to succeed in their own communities.



## How financial inclusion in Central Asia drives opportunity and jobs

Aziza, a small retail business owner in the city of Karshi, in southern Uzbekistan, had a dream: If only she had more money, she would buy a second sewing machine and hire her neighbor's daughter. Except she couldn't. She didn't have a credit history. She didn't have collateral. She was paid primarily in cash, so she didn't have any formal records. Aziza was invisible to the financial system.

Madina, another entrepreneur from the Tashkent region, also a small business owner, faced a similar fate. When a supermarket chain offered her a contract to supply eco-friendly packaging, she could have doubled her monthly revenue. She turned down the offer. Why? Because she could not get access to a short-term loan to purchase the raw materials she needed upfront. Madina didn't lack ambition, product, or demand; she only lacked credit.

These are true stories, far too common for women entrepreneurs, not just in Central Asia but across the globe. Multiply these stories by millions, and the enormity of untapped potential becomes blatantly evident. So, how do we change this and make Aziza's and Madina's small and bigger dreams come true?

The answer is not as complicated as it seems but there are two parts to it. Accelerating financial inclusion to empower individuals. And providing businesses with access to credit and capital. The good news? We know how to do this; but it's time to scale up our efforts dramatically. What will it take?

First: innovation at scale. The landscape for financial inclusion has evolved in recent years. For the better. Financial innovations, such as alternative credit scoring models, digital lending platforms, and data-driven risk assessment tools, are transforming access to finance. By leveraging transaction data, mobile payments, and non-traditional credit histories, these innovations are breaking down barriers to credit for underserved entrepreneurs, particularly women-led enterprises. On a recent trip to the region, we met the founder of the first Tajik startup in Central Asia to attract investments from global venture capital heavyweights. The company leverages Artificial Intelligence (AI) to unlock access to credit. Lesson number one: innovation knows no borders.

Central Asian countries have made progress in improving access to capital, but much more could be done. In Uzbekistan, for ex-

ample, only 19% of small enterprises use credit. And the full potential of digital payments remains untapped across the region, particularly among women, youth, and the rural populations. That makes it the perfect lab for innovation at scale. Increased use of digital payments would create new job opportunities in emerging sectors such as the gig economy, especially attracting young people. It could also stimulate job growth in traditional sectors through improved market access via e-commerce and digital marketplaces, for example.

Second: a business-friendly environment. Scaling digital payments requires policymakers who champion the private sector while protecting consumers, along with telecom liberalization, resilient digital infrastructure, and strong cybersecurity measures. Partial credit guarantees where the government shares the risk with lenders in case of defaults are also an effective way to unlock riskier lending and empower small businesses. And in a countries, digital IDs proved crucial in expanding financial inclusion. Lesson number two: borrow successful strategies from others and adapt them to local contexts.



## S.G. Congratulates OIC Countries on the Advent of Ramadan 1446

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, extended his warm congratulations to the Islamic Ummah on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr 1446. He prayed to Almighty Allah to accept the fasting of Muslims, bless the Islamic peoples on this occasion, and spread goodness throughout the Islamic world. He extended his congratulations to Their Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies the Kings, Presidents, and Emirs of the OIC Member States.

The Secretary-General seized the opportunity of the blessed Eid, during which the OIC shares celebrations with the Host Country, to express his heartfelt congratulations to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of 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. He wished continued prosperity and stability to Saudi Arabia and all OIC Countries.

The Secretary-General expressed hope that the Eid would serve as an opportunity to see an end to the suffering and tragedies of Muslims everywhere. He specifically pointed to the displacement, scarcity of resources,

and lack of services faced by the Palestinians in Gaza, in addition to the deliberate killings committed by the Israeli occupation forces. He also pointed to the suffering of displaced people and refugees in the Lake Chad and Sahel region and in Sudan, in addition to the suffering of the Rohingya and others who are enduring extremely harsh circumstances. Previously, the OIC Secretary-General had extended his warmest congratulations to the entire Muslim Ummah on the occasion of the advent of the holy and blessed month of Ramadan for the year 1446 Hijri, and to all OIC Member States. He expressed his congratulations to 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, Prime Minister, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, as well as to all leaders of OIC Member States and all Muslim peoples. The Secretary-General expressed his deep sorrow and concern over the tragic conditions experienced by the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, stricken by the brutal Israeli aggression for a year and four months. He also expressed concern over the ongoing Israeli

crimes and attacks on the West Bank, occupied Al-Quds, and the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Secretary-General expressed his wishes that Almighty Allah would grant the Palestinian people His support and victory, that the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque would be liberated from the clutches of the Israeli occupation, and that the holy month of Ramadan would be a decisive turning point towards the Palestinian people's regaining their rights, achieving self-determination, and establishing their independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. He also prayed to Almighty Allah to make this holy month an opportunity to see an end to the tragedies and sufferings endured by all Muslims, and an occasion for the return of the displaced and refugees to their homes and homelands.

On March 11, 2025, the OIC Secretary-General hosted a Ramadan Iftar reception in Jeddah, bringing together the Permanent Representatives of OIC Member States, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, along with consuls and diplomats from non-Member States.



## Jeddah Hosts 13th Conference of

## Culture Ministers in the Islamic World

In the presence of H.H. Prince Bader bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and H.H. Mr. Rustam Minnikhanov, President of the Republic of Tatarstan in the Russian Federation, the 13th Conference of Ministers of Culture in the Islamic World kicked off on 12 February 2025. The event, organized by ICESCO, was hosted by Saudi Arabia, represented by the Ministry of Culture, under the theme of: “The Impact of Culture on Socio-Economic Development.” The Conference brought together Culture Ministers and Delegations from ICESCO Member States, alongside heads of several relevant regional and international organizations.

Addressing the opening session, H.H. Prince Bader bin Abdullah bin Farhan Al Saud expressed Saudi Arabia’s pride in chairing the 13th Conference of Culture Ministers in the Islamic World, which aims to enhance joint cultural efforts and empower culture as a fundamental pillar for achieving socio-economic development.

The Saudi Culture Minister reaffirmed the Kingdom’s support for ICESCO’s efforts in empowering intellectuals and writers from Islamic countries, by enhancing their presence in various cultural events and research

projects. He also expressed appreciation for the cooperation of the Member States in ensuring the success of this session and the projects and initiatives that will emerge from it, emphasizing the importance of pursuing efforts to strengthen joint cultural work.

For his part, the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, commended the theme chosen for the Conference, which underscores the importance of culture as a driving force for comprehensive development in the Islamic world, and its effective role as a soft power that bridges cultures and upholds human values. He pointed out that culture today extends beyond self-expression and national identity to influence the economic identity of countries. This makes it imperative to support cultural and creative industries and make them part of a broader vision for the promotion of culture in the Islamic world and the renewal of its content.

Dr. Ghanim bin Mubarak Al-Ali, Assistant Undersecretary for Cultural Affairs at the Ministry of Culture of the State of Qatar, Chair of the previous Conference session, reviewed Qatar’s diligent efforts during its presidency of the Conference to implement the foundations of the “Doha Declaration

on the Renewal of Cultural Action in the Islamic World”, which serves as a fundamental reference in protecting, preserving, valuing, and digitizing heritage.

H.E. Mr. Rustam Minnikhanov, President of the Republic of Tatarstan, emphasized his commitment to strengthening cooperation with the Islamic world in pursuit of sustainable cultural development. He commended ICESCO’s endeavors in preserving and promoting Islamic heritage through its various programs and initiatives.

H.E. Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, stressed the need to focus on the role that culture can play in achieving sustainable development in the economic and social fields.

The opening session concluded with remarks by H.E. Dr. Salim AlMalik, ICESCO Director-General, in which he expressed the Organization’s honor in holding this historic gathering in Saudi Arabia, stating that the Kingdom has “raised high the banner of culture, and by the hands of its youth, charted a course that commands admiration.” He extended deep gratitude to Saudi Arabia for its efforts to successfully arrange the hosting of the Conference.



## Islamic University in Niger Stresses the Importance of Digital Transformation in Modern Education

The 37th session of the Board of Trustees of the Islamic University in Niger (IUN) was held on 17 February 2025 in Niamey. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Sheikh Abdulrahman Ali Al Jarwan, Vice-President of the Board of Trustees, and was honored by the presence of H.E. Mohamadou Seydou, Minister of Higher Education of the Republic of Niger.

Representing the OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Amb. Adamou Boubakar, Director of African Affairs at the Political Affairs Department, conveyed the greetings of H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha and extended sincere wishes for the success of the meeting. He expressed gratitude to the host country for its continued support to the University, and acknowledged the significant contributions from the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF), OIC institutions, and other generous donors. He indicated that these financial and material contributions have been instrumental in the growth and success of the IUN.

Amb. Boubakar underscored the importance of digital transformation in modern education, urging the IUN to embrace technological advancements in order to meet the evolving needs of learners. He also emphasized the need to expand partnerships with leading Institutions and Universities in OIC

Member States so as to diversify revenue sources and enhance academic collaboration. The OIC representative reaffirmed the OIC's commitment to supporting the IUN's mission and vision.

The Islamic University in Niger continues to play a pivotal role in providing quality higher education in the West African region, contributing to the advancement of knowledge and the promotion of cultural exchange among students from various OIC Member States. The University currently hosts 5,065 students, mostly from Niger, reflecting its significant impact on local human capital development. It has also achieved remarkable progress in enhancing its infrastructure, thereby improving the learning environment for its growing student body.

The development of the IUN has been made possible through the support of the government of Niger, the Islamic Solidarity Fund, OIC institutions, and other generous donors. Their contributions have been instrumental in driving the University's continued growth and success.

The session concluded with fruitful discussions on ways of advancing the University's future and promoting its activities, with participants expressing their continued commitment to achieving the IUN's goals.

On 27 February 2025, the OIC Secretary-General received, at the OIC headquarters, H.E. Ambassador Nasser bin Abdullah Al-Zaabi, President of the Permanent Council of the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Islamic University in Niger (IUN), along with members of the Board of Trustees who were in Saudi Arabia to participate in the 68th session of the Permanent Council of the ISF. The meeting was attended by H.E. Dr. Saleh Hamad Al-Suhaiban, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the OIC and Vice President of the Permanent Council of the ISF.

The delegation included the Vice-Chairman of the Board and Chairman of the Academic Committee, H.E. Mr. Abdulrahman bin Ali Al-Jarwan; H.E. Mr. Muhammad bin Sulaiman Abal-Khail, Executive-Director of ISF; H.E. Dr. Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz Al-Zaid; and other prominent members.

The Secretary-General welcomed the delegation, and expressed his deep appreciation for their deep commitment, invaluable contributions, and tireless efforts toward the growth and development of this prestigious institution.



## Islamic University of Technology

### Concludes its 52nd Governing Board Meeting

The 52nd Meeting of the Governing Board of the Islamic University of Technology (IUT) took place on 28-29 January 2025 at the IUT campus in Gazipur, Bangladesh. The meeting brought together representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education of Bangladesh, along with officials from several OIC Member States, members of the IUT Governing Board.

Representatives from Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Chad, Malaysia, and Somalia attended the meeting, as part of reinforcing the collaborative efforts of OIC Member States in furthering the IUT's mission. The OIC was represented by Ambassador Aftab Ahmad Khokher, Assistant Secretary-General for Science and Technology, who led the OIC delegation.

One of the key outcomes of the meeting was the election of Dr. Nasser bin Mohammed Al-Aqili, Deputy Minister of Education for International Cooperation from Saudi Arabia, as the new Chairman of the Governing Board. The positions of Vice-Chairmen were assigned to representatives from Malaysia, Somalia, and Bangladesh.

The Governing Board discussed several important matters, including the Univer-

sity's current Statute, reports from the Vice-Chancellor, and recommendations from the Finance Committee regarding the proposed budgets for the financial year 2026.

The meeting also approved the nomination of new members to the Core Committees within the University, such as the Academic Council, the Finance Committee, and the Selection Committee.

Ambassador Khokher emphasized the OIC's strong commitment to supporting the University in overcoming any challenges it may face. He reaffirmed the Organization's dedication to the IUT's success and growth, and its commitment to supporting the IUT in surmounting challenging circumstances.

In light of the current challenges facing the University, including student protests, the Governing Board emphasized its determination to ensure that the IUT pursues its work and delivers on its mission.

The meeting concluded with a shared resolve to continue working toward the IUT's progress and to address the challenges ahead, while building on the University's achievements.

It is worth mentioning that the University will offer 128 scholarships for students from

OIC Member States for the academic year 2025-2026, according to an announcement published on the official website of the Cultural Affairs and Missions Department. The deadline for registration is April 30, 2025.

According to the IUT website, OIC full scholarship opportunities are offered for international students in engineering and technical education programs. They are only granted to eligible and nominated international students. Non-nominated international students will not be eligible for the OIC full scholarships.

A total of 40 full scholarships have been allocated to international students enrolled in BA programs in Mechanical Engineering (ME), Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE), and Computer Science and Engineering (CSE).

Scholarships are distributed equally among eligible and nominated students from OIC Member States. The University also offers OIC scholarships for BA and MA programs in technical education, with all students admitted to technical education programs receiving full scholarships from the OIC. All international applicants must apply through their respective nominating authority.



## OIC Secretary-General Addresses

## UNA Executive Council Meeting

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, delivered a speech at the 26th session of the Executive Council of the Union of OIC News Agencies (UNA), held virtually on 23 January 2025.

The session was opened by H.E. Mr. Ali bin Abdullah Al-Zaid, Vice-President of the Executive Council and General Assembly of the Union, and Chairman of the Saudi Press Agency, representing H.E. Mr. Salman bin Youssef Al-Dosari, Chairman of the Executive Council and General Assembly of the Union, Minister of Media of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The opening session was also addressed by H.E. Dr. Ahmed Assaf, Palestinian Minister of Information, and Mr. Mohammed Abd Rabbo Al-Yami, UNA Director-General.

The Secretary-General noted that in light of the rapid global technological boom in the field of media and communication, and the remarkable advancements in modern media, especially Social Media platforms and artificial intelligence as a support to media work, the OIC highly appreciates the significant progress and tangible success achieved by UNA in recent years. He noted that, as a specialized institution and one of the active

media arms of the OIC, the Union should receive full support to further develop its work in the future.

The Secretary-General welcomed the media projects undertaken by UNA to support the OIC media work and enhance its visibility, along with the much-needed development of the UNA infrastructure. This, he added, involves providing specialized training courses to refine the skills of journalists in various fields, as well as to support the interfaces of news agencies on the Internet and Social Media platforms; thereby enabling them to keep pace with contemporary challenges and requirements, and to provide added value and great services to the peoples of the Islamic world in their various languages and cultures.

The Secretary-General commended the significant efforts made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of 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. He expressed deep thanks to Saudi Arabia for its continued support for the OIC.

The Secretary-General also expressed ap-

preciation for the purposeful media partnerships recently forged by the Union, and the resulting signing of MoUs with a number of local and international institutions.

The Secretary-General expressed hope that, through these partnerships, particularly through the MoU on media cooperation between the OIC General Secretariat—represented by the Information Department, and UNA, signed on December 5, 2024 at the OIC headquarters during the 8th Annual Coordination Meeting of OIC Institutions (ACMOI), there will be greater media support and promotion of OIC projects, programs, and conference outcomes across various fields.

The Secretary-General also commended the significant efforts of UNA in support of the Palestinian Cause, especially amidst the ongoing relentless attacks and brutal war against the Palestinian people, causing tens of thousands of martyrs and injured people, in addition to widespread destruction of property. These efforts include organizing numerous media activities with the aim of countering misinformation and disinformation, in partnership with various Saudi and other institutions.



## Kuwait Hosts Forum on the Activation

## of the International Islamic Court of Justice

The State of Kuwait hosted, on February 11-12, 2025, a High-Level Forum for representatives of OIC Member States for “Activating the International Islamic Court of Justice”, as part of Kuwait’s diplomatic efforts for the ratification of the Statute of the Court by Member States.

The Forum addressed the resolution to establish the Court since the 3rd OIC Summit held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah in January 1981, as well as the 5th Islamic Summit held in Kuwait, which designated Kuwait as the Court’s headquarters. It also examined a series of subsequent resolutions urging Member States to expedite the signing and ratification of the Statute in order to bring the Court into force. Discussions focused on recent developments



in international justice, the objectives and jurisdiction of the International Islamic Court of Justice in comparison with similar international

courts, as well as the importance of activating the Court to enhance cooperation and facilitate conflict resolution among Member States.

## Secretary-General Meets with Director-General of the Islamic Organization for Food Security

The OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, met, on 25 February, 2025, with the Director-General of the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), Mr. Berik Aryn, at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah.

The meeting discussed issues related to the work of the IOFS, which is a specialized institution of the OIC, especially the promotion of sustainable agricultural development as well as the enhancement of food security in Member States.

Both sides also exchanged views on the ongoing preparations for the convening of the 7th General Assembly Meeting of the IOFS in Astana, Kazakhstan, in July 2025, as well as the 10th OIC Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development.

On another note, the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, and his team from the Youth and Sports Department, participated in the 42nd Executive Board Meet-



ing of the Islamic Solidarity Sports Association (ISSA). The meeting was held virtually on 21 April 2025, under the Chairmanship of HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal Al-Saud, Minister of Sports of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the ISSA.

The meeting discussed the items on its agen-

da, and listened to the report presented by the ISSA’s General Secretariat on progress in the preparation of the 6th edition of the Islamic Solidarity Games, to be held on November 7-21, 2025 in Riyadh, along with updates on the 2029 and 2033 editions of the Islamic Solidarity Games.

## OIC Secretary-General Hails the Role of SESRIC

The 48th Meeting of the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) was held in Ankara, Türkiye, on January 23-24, 2025.

In his address to the meeting, delivered on his behalf by Mr. Naghi Jabbarov, Director-General of the Department of Economic Affairs at the OIC General Secretariat, the Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, underscored the significant and effective contributions of SESRIC in the socio-economic development of OIC Member States. He also commended SESRIC's contributions to the impact assessment of the OIC-2025: Programme of Action, as well as its inputs to the new OIC Programme of Action for 2026-2035.

The Secretary-General called on the SESRIC Board Members to focus on specific program areas that SESRIC should include in its program of action for 2025 and 2026, as well as to identify priority areas, especially agriculture and food security, investment, poverty alleviation, employment, digitalization, transportation, and tourism projects, in order to move forward with implementation.



The Secretary-General also urged the Board Members and SESRIC to provide relevant support for the successful organization of the 10th Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Agricultural Development, to be held in the Republic of Chad in 2025, and the OIC Investment Forum in Africa, to be held in the

Republic of Mali, in November 2025.

The Meeting reviewed the programs and projects in the areas of research, capacity-building, and training in various economic and social fields, scheduled for implementation in 2025 and 2026. It also approved the SESRIC Budget for 2025.

## Saudi Technical and Vocational Training Corporation and SESRIC Sign MoU

On the sidelines of the second edition of the Human Capability Initiative Conference held in Riyadh, the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed two agreements: one with the UK Department for Business and Trade, and the other with the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC).

The MoU was signed by Dr. Adel ALZENEDY, Deputy Governor of TVTC, and Ms. Zehra Zümrüt Selçuk, Director-General of SESRIC.

The MoU aims to enhance and develop cooperation in the field of technical and vocational training, and to launch joint initiatives to improve institutional and human resource capacities in technical and vocational training institutions, as part of the Vocational Education and Training Program for OIC Member States.

The MoU also involves the sharing of information, research ideas, statistics, publications, best practices, experience and expertise, and



technical materials relevant to shared areas of interest.

On the other hand, Eng. Abdulrahman Al-Marwani, Assistant Deputy Governor for Training and Quality Policies, signed an Executive Program with Mr. Rupert Daniels, Director of Services and Skills at the UK Department for Business and Trade. This program aims to promote the hosting of joint conferences, semi-

nars, workshops, and exhibitions, encourage the exchange of policies and expertise, and collaborate on developing and implementing technical and vocational training policies. It also seeks to enhance training quality in both countries, and involves the establishment of a governance body to oversee and monitor the implementation of the agreed areas of cooperation.



## ICESCO Mission Monitors 75 Heritage Sites in Azerbaijan

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), in collaboration with the Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture, dispatched a second technical field mission to assess the state of preservation and conservation of cultural, religious, and civilizational heritage in the liberated Azerbaijani territories, as part of the "Post-Conflict Heritage Management in the Islamic World" program.

During its stay in Azerbaijan from April 18 to 30, 2025, the mission visited 75 heritage sites across 10 regions. The visited sites included mosques, churches, museums, historical monuments, archaeological sites, cemeteries, shrines, and homes of prominent cultural figures, along with administrative buildings and other sites associated with collective memory. The mission documented these sites using observation forms, photographs, and video recordings to build an accurate database reflecting their current state.

The mission consisted of four independent international experts - from Iraq, Italy, and Spain - in the fields of archaeology, architecture, and cultural heritage management, with each

of them having over 20 years of experience and enjoying a distinguished scientific standing. The mission was supervised by Dr. Weber Nodoro, Director of ICESCO's Islamic World Heritage Center, along with Mr. Mohamed Al-Absi and Dr. Mohamed Aba Othman, Experts at the Center.

The expert team held coordination meetings with officials from the Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture, local authorities, and key figures from the Karabakh region. These meetings aimed to exchange expertise and broaden the scope of field data collection. The team relied on documents and archival files provided by the Ministry of Culture, which included heritage site passports, inventory cards, archival photographs, and technical drawings.

The experts are expected to release a detailed technical and scientific report on the state of heritage conservation in the post-conflict phase. The report will highlight the extent of material and intangible damage suffered by the sites, instances of looting, and attempts to ideologically exploit heritage and arts. This effort is intended to support Azerbaijan's initia-

tives to rehabilitate and preserve its national heritage for future generations.

On March 12, 2025, Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, Director-General of ICESCO, received Mr. Fuad Muradov, Chairperson of the State Committee on Work with Diaspora of the Republic of Azerbaijan, along with his accompanying delegation, at ICESCO headquarters in Rabat, during their visit to Morocco. The meeting explored potential areas of cooperation in fields of mutual interest.

During the meeting, which was attended by Mr. Nazim Samadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Morocco, Dr. AlMalik underlined the strong ties between ICESCO and Azerbaijan, as evidenced through the series of successfully implemented joint programs and projects.

Dr. AlMalik expressed his appreciation for the generous and ongoing support extended by H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Azerbaijani authorities, to ICESCO's initiatives, programs, and projects.



## Samarkand Continues its Celebration of Islamic Culture



The city of Samarkand in the Republic of Uzbekistan celebrated its designation as the Islamic World's Capital of Culture for the year 2025. In honor of this occasion, the city hosted a series of events, including the international conference titled "Al-Jami' al-Musnad al-Sahih by Imam al-Bukhari: The Book of an Ummah as a Scientific Embodiment of the Civilization of Authenticity and Documentation", held on April 21-23, 2025. ICESCO had invited researchers and specialists in Islamic studies to contribute papers to the Conference, which took place in Tashkent, Capital of Uzbekistan.

The Conference aimed to highlight Imam al-Bukhari's scholarly contributions and to encourage academic research in the field of Prophetic tradition and Hadith Sciences, as part of the broader celebration of Samarkand as the Islamic World's Capital of Culture for 2025.

In this context, Dr. Salim AlMalik, Director-General of ICESCO, affirmed that culture embodies the identity of peoples and is a cornerstone of their civilization. He indicated

that ICESCO, through its various programs and initiatives, seeks to preserve and valorize tangible and intangible heritage in the Islamic world, leveraging the latest technologies and techniques in this regard. This was part of his recorded statement at the opening of the International Scientific Conference titled "The Art of Bakhshi in New Uzbekistan: Contemporary Research and Future Prospects," held as part of the 4th edition of the International Bakhshi Art Festival in Khiva, Uzbekistan (April 26–28, 2025), attended by around 200 participants from over 40 countries.

Dr. AlMalik added that ICESCO has inscribed the Uzbek art of Bakhshi on its Islamic World Heritage List, in recognition of the prominent status of this ancient art, its artistic value, its being associated with major transitional periods in the Uzbek history, and its role in safeguarding collective memory and strengthening national identity. He also commended Uzbekistan's rich heritage, stating: "In every stone of Uzbekistan's ancient cities, history teems with life, and heritage speaks in a thousand tongues, yet always whispers

with the same spirit: the spirit of the Uzbeks, which remains unbroken, unforgotten."

Dr. AlMalik concluded by highlighting the celebration of Samarkand as the Capital of Culture in the Islamic World for 2025, as part of ICESCO's Capitals of Culture Program. This designation aims to showcase the city's cultural wealth through the implementation of a rich and diverse program, featuring numerous activities and initiatives throughout the entire year.

In celebration of this event, the Uzbek Tourism Authority had previously organized a media tour that covered several ancient cities and historic landmarks in preparation for the official inauguration.

Among these cities is Samarkand, the jewel of Uzbekistan, known for its many civilizational and historical monuments. The city stands as a testament to the country's deep cultural roots, rich history, and lush natural landscapes. The city is distinguished by its buildings adorned with various blue domes and geometric decorations dating back to 2750 BCE.



The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) took part in the Graphic Designers Forum, “PexTor 2025”, held in the Sultanate of Oman on April 27, 2025, under the theme of “Where Art Meets Message”. ICESCO participated with a specialized workshop moderated by Ms. Nezha Ringa, Head of the Design and Printing Division at ICESCO’s Translation and Publishing Center.

Through the Workshop, titled, “Visual Identity and Key Elements of Graphic Design”, Ms. Ringa shared her expertise in this field, with the aim of equipping participants with the necessary tools and techniques to design an integrated visual identity.

Ms. Ringa stressed that such forums provide key opportunities to exchange expertise and knowledge in the field of graphic design, and widen the scope of cooperation among the institutions of the Islamic world. She noted that the workshop seeks to provide a comprehensive overview about visual identity and its significance in consolidating institutional communication and promoting the mental image of institutions.

This participation is part of the efforts of ICESCO’s Division of Design and Printing to pro-

mote cooperation and expertise-sharing with similar institutions across the globe. The PexTor Forum is a new leading forum in the Islamic world which seeks to build designers’ capacities and promote the role of design in achieving sustainable development visions.

The current edition of the Forum was a great success in light of the growing interest in the field of graphic design and its role in promoting institutional communication and developing the visual identities of institutions, in line with Oman’s Vision 2040 and other sustainable development visions in the Islamic world. Still in Oman, ICESCO took part in “Oman Climate Week”, held in Muscat under the theme of “Life in a Sustainable World.” The event brought together international leaders and experts to discuss practical environmental solutions to mitigate climate change impacts and explore best practices and policies to address these challenges.

Dr. Adel Smeda and Dr. Wissam Chehade, Experts at ICESCO’s Science and Environment Sector, represented ICESCO at this event, which took place on February 24-27, 2025. They addressed ways of enhancing resilience to climate change and the role of modern

technologies in mitigating the impacts of climate crises on individuals and communities.

As part of the Oman Climate Week’s activities, ICESCO, in partnership with the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science and the Oman Environment Authority, organized a panel discussion titled : “Shaping Policies for Resilient Communities: Best Practices for Disaster Risk Reduction and Early Warning Systems.”

The panel provided a platform for participants to share best practices in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and development of early warning systems. It also highlighted technological innovations, integrated policies, and financial mechanisms that can help Member States build more climate-resilient societies.

ICESCO’s participation in “Oman Climate Week” coincided with the launch of its policy document on “Best Practices for Disaster Risk Reduction and Early Warning Systems.” This strategic guide offers Member States practical insights to strengthen disaster risk reduction mechanisms and enhance preparedness and response strategies by integrating the latest AI technologies, data analytics, and satellite monitoring.



## Germany's Migrant Helpers Face Financial Problems and Threats from the Far Right

### Grossenhain - Jorg Schurig (DPA)

The bus driver simply drives off, refusing to take immigrant children waiting at a bus stop. This behavior may seem strange and unbelievable, but here is another incident that took place in a school. «You can pack your bags,» a third-grader tells a classmate whose family migrated to Germany. The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) «is now the strongest party here.»

Incidents like these are becoming more common in Meissen near Dresden in Germany's former communist east, a region that has emerged as a stronghold for the anti-immigrant AfD party.

Children from refugee families often face bullying, while physical altercations aren't rare. Staff from the church-based social welfare provider Diakonie say the overall atmosphere has become more tense. It's not only migrants that are facing threats, but also those who

help them. The far-right's rise has contributed to a more polarized political climate, particularly around issues of immigration and integration.

States that were formerly part of East Germany have faced unique challenges since German reunification in 1990, and have remained distinctly poorer than western German states. Experts suggest that these issues have fostered feelings of marginalization among the populations of the eastern states, creating a breeding ground for far-right ideologies and anti-establishment sentiments.

«The threat has intensified. There has always been a level of danger for migrants, but they usually stayed silent about it. Now, they're speaking up,» says migrant counsellor Kerstin Böttger. «People are less scared of sharing their anti-migrant opinions now», she says. «Some think they can say anything now.» Advisers often need counselling themselves.

Aggression towards refugees is only one side of the story. People trying to help them are also exposed to hostility.

«Some employees have the impression that they have to constantly justify their engagement in humanitarian work. They no longer even tell their acquaintances where they work. They avoid the topic,» said Diakonie spokeswoman Nora Köhler.

The threats are not limited to verbal abuse; they also come in the form of threatening letters and even dog faeces left on doorsteps.

«You can tell it's getting more unpleasant and painful,» she says. «The employees often need counselling themselves, to help them cope with the negative atmosphere surrounding their work, as well as the threats and feelings of hostility they are exposed to.»

During training days at Diakonie, the program includes workshops focused on how to effectively manage the increasing pressure.



## The Domes of Cairo: A Unique Historical Feature

**Cairo, Hajjaj Salama – DPA:**

Throughout the ages, domes have had a prominent presence in Islamic architecture, with their rich spirituality and beauty that captured the admiring eyes of travelers and Orientalists. They served as a source of inspiration for artists in both the East and the West, and were featured in numerous paintings by European artists who visited Egypt and the Arab region in ancient times.

As an aspect of Islamic architecture, Islamic domes have been the focus of myriad architectural, academic, and artistic studies.

In historic Cairo, domes were a striking feature of the architecture found in Fatimid Cairo, representing landmarks that have remained immortal in the heritage records of Egyptian, Islamic, and universal architecture.

In this context, in the introduction to his book “Domes in Egyptian Islamic Architecture”, Dr. Muhammad Hamza states that Egypt’s cities, especially Cairo, are rich with an interconnected chain of architectural structures—religious, civilian, and military. He notes that many scholars and researchers have studied Egyptian Islamic architecture throughout its various eras, producing valuable academic works in this field.

Hamza points out that domes are key elements in Islamic architecture, especially those built over shrines and graveyards. He traces the his-

tory of domes back to many centuries before the Islamic era.

As sources indicate, domes are among the greatest innovations that played a significant role in the development of architectural systems. They saw significant advancements during the Islamic era in terms of their shapes and harmonious architectural design.

Since domes built over tombs in Cairo have been of great interest to researchers, the Center of Documentation of Islamic and Coptic Antiquities at the Supreme Council of Egyptian Antiquities has taken an interest in documenting and studying domes erected over tombs and shrines of saints and righteous figures—which can be referred to as funerary domes.

The Center published an important study titled “The Fatimid Domes of Cairo,” as part of the National Project for the Documentation of Islamic and Coptic Monuments. This study focused on a number of Fatimid domes in Cairo built over tombs, examining their history and architectural features.

According to the Center, Egypt has known the construction of domes over tombs since the beginning of the Islamic era. However, scholars have differed as to what constitutes the earliest example of this type of dome. Some believe it to be the Mashhad (Mausoleum) of Al-Tabataba (334 AH / 943 CE) from the Ikhshidid period,

while others consider that the earliest example is the Seven Domes (400 AH / 1010 CE).

References by some historians suggest that many tombs in Cairo’s historic Qarafa (cemetery) were topped with domes. One such example is the tomb of Al-Layth ibn Saad, who died in 175 AH / 791 CE, indicating that domed tombs were known in Egypt from an early period, or at the end of the 2nd Hijri century / 8th CE—predating both the Ikhshidid and Fatimid periods.

It is also noteworthy that Al-Sari ibn al-Hakam, one of the Abbasid governors, constructed a domed tomb for Sayyida Nafisa, which was later renovated during the Fatimid era. The Aswan Qarafa (cemetery) also contains several domed tombs dating back to the first three centuries. From the book “The Fatimid Domes of Cairo,” we learn that the Fatimid era also saw the construction of many domed tombs, especially over the graves of the Prophet’s Family (Ahl al-Bayt). Historical sources indicate that Mash’hads (Mausoleums) were essentially new architectural forms of mosques that emerged during the Fatimid era, with no precedent in earlier periods. The Mashhad of al-Juyushi and Sayyida Ruqayya in Cairo are considered as unique examples of this style, with the term Mash’had referring to a place where a particular person is seen, whether in reality or in a dream.



## Halal Family Tourism in Türkiye

Since 2013, there have been growing interest in following the evolution of halal beach resorts in Türkiye, studying their growth, measuring their market potential, and advising industry leaders on how to tap into the growing demand from travelers who observe Islamic traditions and values. It turns out that these resorts actually offer a unique experience, with meticulous attention to Islamic values, and have scored significant commercial success.

Turkish halal-friendly beach resorts have not only proven the economic viability of catering primarily to the Muslim market, but have also set a precedent that should be taken into consideration.

While many Muslim-majority destinations continue to debate on how to accommodate Muslim travelers without alienating mainstream tourists, Türkiye has quietly build an entire ecosystem of halal-friendly resorts that seamlessly integrate religious values with leisure, without compromise.

The halal resort sector in Türkiye has emerged as a lucrative industry, with HalalBooking.com playing a pivotal role in its global expansion. Initially, these resorts catered primarily to domestic travelers. But today, they attract a growing number

of Muslim tourists from Europe, the Middle East and beyond.

As a testament to this success, HalalBooking recently secured \$8 million in a Series B angel funding round, valuing the company at \$125 million, and is currently in talks for a larger Series C round in 2025. Its ability to attract significant investment underscores the commercial viability of halal tourism, and highlights the growing demand for Muslim-friendly travel options.

Experts stopped first at Bera Alanya Hotel, where they were joined by a small group of women from the UK. The hotel features a rooftop women-only pool, a fully private space where guests can wear regular swimsuits without worry. The women-only spa and hamman facilities enhance the experience, providing a relaxing, faith-conscious environment.

Even the beach follows a modesty policy, ensuring a family-friendly atmosphere while allowing guests to enjoy the stunning Mediterranean coastline. Evening entertainment is also family-friendly, catering to all age groups.

The following day, after a morning visit to Alanya Castle and the city's famous Red Tower, Experts

headed to the Adin Beach Hotel. A more boutique-style resort, Adin provides an upscale halal-friendly experience with separate pools for men and women, and a commitment to preserving an authentic Islamic hospitality.

Adin Beach Hotel also features a fully secluded women-only beach, with water slides cleverly enclosed with strategically placed giant retractable sails for privacy.

As an all-inclusive resort, Adin offers lavish buffets, poolside snack bars, and even a pastry shop within the hotel. Guests can enjoy virgin mojitos, Turkish coffee, and a variety of non-alcoholic drinks on a spacious beachfront terrace, serving as a popular gathering spot for families in the evening.

What sets Türkiye's halal resorts apart is not just their facilities, but the deep-rooted philosophy behind them. Many of these resorts are family-owned, ensuring a commitment to Muslim-friendly values and exceptional service. The general manager of Bera Alanya Hotel, Ruhat Ulgen Cengiz, is one of the few female managers in the industry.



## Hundreds of Thousands of Gaza's Students Return to What Remains of Their Schools

Gaza – Emad Abdel Jawad (DPA)

In a scene that reflects an extraordinary determination, many students in Gaza have returned to their destroyed schools to resume learning, defying the harsh conditions imposed by the recent Israeli war. Despite lacking school uniforms and textbooks, hope for a better future has driven them to continue their educational journey.

Samed Ihab, a 13-year-old ninth-grade student from Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza, was among the hundreds who rushed back to their schools, hoping to find their classrooms as they had left them. Reality, however, was different. Speaking to the German Press Agency (DPA), he said: "All we found were a few destroyed walls and remnants of classrooms. Still, we chose to return to our education, even if everything around us is in ruins."

Ihab didn't just lose his school; he also lost his uniform, which he was unable to keep due to repeated displacement. "It's true we've lost almost everything, but that won't stop us from learning. We are determined to build our future, even if our schools are in ruins." He firmly believes that education is the only path out of

the difficult conditions faced by Gazans. He said: "Education is the only way to survive, not just from these harsh conditions, but also from the ignorance that Israel is trying to impose on us." "It wasn't easy to return to school and not find many of my classmates," he added. "Some were killed by the Israeli army, while others were displaced to other areas. But I've met new friends who share the same determination to continue our education no matter what the circumstances. Education is the strongest weapon against ignorance, and we know that knowledge is the tool for change in this world."

The Ministry of Education in Gaza announced the start of the new academic year, marking the first resumption of formal education since the outbreak of the Israeli war in October 2023. Hundreds of thousands of students returned to what remained of their schools—over 80% of which had been destroyed by the Israeli military. In addition to these remnants, tents and temporary learning centers have been set up to ensure return of face-to-face learning.

Hala Al-Sabe', a 13-year-old ninth-grade student, was among those who returned to the classroom despite the dire conditions. "We

missed school and our school life. This is a new beginning for our learning journey," she said. "It's true we don't have textbooks, notebooks, or even uniforms, but we have the determination and will to continue our education—even if we rely only on memorization," she added.

"We are the future generation that will rely on knowledge as a key weapon to rebuild and uplift our country." However, not all students were able to return to face-to-face schooling due to a lack of basic necessities, like transportation. This has led the Ministry of Education to provide remote learning options for those unable to attend physically.

Ibrahim Abdul Rahman, from Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, was one of the students unable to return. "I dreamed of going back to school to see my friends and teachers again, but the extensive destruction has made that impossible," he said. "Even online learning isn't easy for me. With frequent internet outages, I'm afraid I'll lose this academic year or that my future education will be affected if things continue like this for much longer," he added.

## Syria

**Capital:** Damascus  
**Total Area:** 185,000 km<sup>2</sup>  
**Population:** 18.27 million  
**National Language:** Arabic  
**Currency:** Syrian Pound (Lira)



Syria, officially the Syrian Arab Republic, is composed of 14 Governorates. Its capital and largest city is Damascus. Located in the Middle East and the Levant region of West Asia, Syria borders Turkiye to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south, and Palestine, Lebanon, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. It spans an area of 185,180 square kilometers, with diverse terrain, flora, and fauna, and a climate ranging from Mediterranean to semi-arid.

Traces of human presence were found in Syria dating back thousands of years, with numerous human settlements extending from the Stone Age.

In ancient times, the country flourished thanks to its fertile soil, in addition to its strategic position as a route for trade caravans and armies. Successive powerful empires rose in Syria, most of which spanned the entire Fertile Crescent. During the Hellenistic period, the country was part of the Seleucid Empire. In the Middle Ages, following the Muslim conquest of the Levant, it became the capital of the Umayyad State. During the Abbasid era, several influential emirates and states emerged, later followed by the rise of Ottoman Syria.

After World War I, Syria declared independence on March 8, 1920, through the Syrian National Congress, but France refused to recognize the

declaration. Syria finally gained full independence in 1946.

The country's geography is varied. In the south, there is the Golan Heights, occupied by the Israeli occupation forces, and the fertile Hauran Plain, followed by Jabal al-Arab, primarily composed of basalt rocks.

To the north, the Western Mount Lebanon Range stretches along the Lebanese border, where Mount Hermon (Jabal al-Sheikh) represents Syria's highest point. From there, fertile plains stretch out to form the Damascus Ghouta, before turning into arid and barren mountainous areas in Al-Qalamoun and An-Nabk ranges, north of Damascus countryside. These plains then spread out again into the Al-Ghab Plain and the Syrian coast plains, which is longitudinally divided by the Coastal Mountain Range that extends from the Turkish border down to Lebanon.

Syria's climate is broadly classified into two major categories: Mediterranean in the coastal region and nearby areas, and arid in the rest of the country.

The Mediterranean climate is characterized by hot, dry summers, and by cold, rainy winters, with two transitional seasons: autumn and spring. The arid climate, on the other hand, is characterized by low rainfall, freezing winter

temperatures that can drop below zero, and extremely hot summers.

In the mountainous and highland areas, summer temperatures tend to be moderate. Rain typically falls between September and May, with snowfall common in the western highlands. January usually sees the highest rainfall, with uneven rain distribution between the coast and inland regions.

Due to the crisis that hit the country, Syria's economy sharply declined, contracting by 20% in 2013. The country also suffered extensive destruction of infrastructure, rising poverty rates, and high unemployment, especially among youth, recent graduates, and individuals working in jobs unrelated to their academic qualifications. These impacts are considered among the most severe globally.

Additionally, the Syrian Pound experienced a dramatic collapse, losing approximately 200% of its value between 2012 and 2013, and leading to inflation and a drop in citizens' purchasing power.

With the war now over, and with attention focused on economic reconstruction, some optimistic reports suggest, based on previous economic experiences, that a rapid economic recovery in Syria is possible.



## Societies Can Only be Developed by Realizing What Truly Benefits Them

Imam Al-Shafi'i said, "I hold my opinion to be right, with the possibility that it may be wrong; and I hold the opinion of another who disagrees with me to be wrong, with the possibility that it may be right." This statement implies the necessity of respecting differences as a prerequisite for a comprehensive discussion on how to achieve a balance between cultural traditions and practices, on the one hand, and the contemporary needs essential for the advancement of Islamic societies, on the other hand. The universality of human rights involves the need to respect cultural diversity, which helps bridge perception gaps.

It goes without saying that human rights, rooted in the dignity of the individual, transcend borders, ideologies, and interests. Let us now ask: Are we on par with this global vision? And have human rights become a source of division? At any rate, what should always be borne in mind is that human rights serve as a tool to enhance human dignity, rather than a "stick" for punishment.

In Islam, social development is a duty and an imperative. One of the key foundations of the Islamic concept of development is the focus on achieving equality, equity, and justice. Islamic thought seeks to interpret religious texts and traditions in ways that promote women's rights within an Islamic framework, with Almighty Allah having undertaken to define them. When addressing the rights of Muslim women, we find that they align with universal Islamic principles of equality and justice. This prompts us to delve deeper into the significance of the interpretations and practices that vary across Muslim societies, and to approach this discussion with caution, acknowledging its sensitive nature and the geographic diversity of Muslim women.

Islam heralded an exceptional era of honoring women by establishing normative equality between men and women. The role and autonomy of Muslim women through these rights were a novelty for contemporary societies at that time. In fact, it is essential to grasp the concept of equality through complementarity, and not to overlook the notion of "empowerment." Women's responsibilities naturally involve ensuring family well-being, improving resource productivity, and preserving the environment.

The Islamic world has made significant progress in advancing the status of women. All OIC Member States have signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, reflecting consensus with regard to the realization of girls' rights. Yet, women and girls still face serious challenges that clearly affect Islamic principles and international human rights law.

The OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) supports the right of women and girls to access education, including higher education. The Commission held a workshop on "The Right to Education for Women: Challenges and Way Forward – The Case of Afghanistan", with the aim of facilitating women's access to education.

The OIC also adopted the "Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam", with provisions calling for the protection of women. Similar guarantees have been included in the draft OIC Convention on the Rights of the Child, currently under discussion. Additionally, the Jeddah Document emanating from the "International Conference on Women in Islam", adopted at the Islamic Summit in Gambia, serves as a key reference in terms of Muslim women empowerment. The IPHRC has actively contributed to the drafting of this document.

It is essential that all these efforts do not lead to gains for some and losses for others. Rather, their aim should be to empower women and advance their status. It is, therefore, necessary that we pursue a constructive approach, one that involves engaging governments and communities in dialogue, rather than imposing external solutions.

Our countries should translate these commitments into enforceable national laws and policies, challenges remain in bridging the gap between international and local standards. To address these challenges, the Commission stands ready to collaborate with governments by offering technical expertise, capacity-building initiatives, and policy recommendations that ensure compliance with international commitments in alignment with Islamic principles; thereby achieving a balance between the concept of women's equality with that of equity.

It is time for the OIC to consider adopting its own convention on eliminating discrimination against women. This could help address "reservations" about the text of the CEDAW. Additionally, digital technologies, especially AI, should be integrated to enhance access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for women facing barriers. Similarly, e-commerce can be leveraged to promote economic empowerment for women entrepreneurs. This is in addition to establishing the Women's Development Fund to support women's and girls' developmental, educational, and social activities worldwide, as well as creating a disaggregated database on women.

It is worth stressing, in this regard, the key role of civil society, the media, and national human rights institutions in providing an enabling environment for achieving equality, and the importance of involving men not only as beneficiaries of change programs but also as key actors in achieving equality.

It is my belief that change cannot be achieved through pressure only, but also through dialogue and gradual reform. In fact, societies do not advance because they are compelled to face reality and make the needed change, but rather because they realize the importance of what truly benefits them.



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

*Empirical statistics show that women's empowerment and social development are mutually reinforcing. Women invest nearly 90% of their earnings into improving family income, health, education, and combating poverty. In this regard, World Bank studies indicate that development strategies that take women's contribution into account achieve greater economic growth.*

# 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](http://www.oic-oci.org)**



منظمة التعاون الإسلامي  
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 • Promoting development  
 Combating terrorism • Achieving economic and trade cooperations  
 Encouraging dialogue among cultures and religions  
 Boosting Economic and Trade cooperation  
 Defending the Palestine Cause • Defending the rights of Muslims



منظمة التعاون الإسلامي  
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