

# Muslim Democrat

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## WELCOME...

We are pleased to announce the establishment of the 'Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy' and to invite you to become a member, a fellow, or a founding member, and join us in our journey toward building a better future and a better world.

## Why CSID?

Around the Muslim world today, we see escalating violence, turmoil, strife, suffering, wars and confrontations. Basic human rights are neglected and abused on a regular basis. Muslim intellectuals and elites are leaving their countries and choosing to settle in non-Muslim countries. The majority of the governments in the Muslim world continue to repress and stifle the public under the pretext of 'maintaining stability'. Opposition parties, when they come to power, often become worse than the regimes they used to criticize. Many groups, Islamic and secular, claim to have 'the solution', but they want to implement it by excluding other groups and people, thus leading to more violence and destruction.

What is the solution to this difficult and critical situation? What can we do to promote long-term peace and stability in the Muslim world while allowing human beings to enjoy the freedom and liberties bestowed upon them by their creator?

Muslims who live in the West, and especially the United States, have enjoyed the benefits of freedom and have seen how democracy leads to a functioning and accountable government. They have something to offer to the Muslim Ummah; a point of view that Islam and democracy are mutually inclusive and that the best solution to the dilemmas facing the

Muslim world today lies in the ideals of tolerance, dialogue, respect, peaceful co-existence and cooperation. Principles which were taught and practiced by prophet Muhammad 1,400 years ago. CSID was created to promote these ideals and to develop a framework for developing an "Islamic Democracy". As Muslims, we must accept that Islam has no *official spokesman*, learn to tolerate other views and opinions, and resolve our differences through debates and peaceful means.

## Join us...

We invite you read this newsletter and to **join us** in our effort to educate people, here and abroad, about the compatibility of Islam and Democracy. Please support CSID by becoming a member and/or making a financial contribution.



The second Founding Meeting for CSID was held on November 28, 1998, in Washington, D.C.

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# Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy

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## *An Idea Whose Time Has Come...*

### Executive Summary

The Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy is a non-profit organization, based in Washington, D. C., dedicated to promoting democracy in the Muslim world. The Center will endeavor to encourage peaceful dialogue and coexistence as the best way to resolve political disputes and disagreements among the various factions in the Muslim countries. By proving that Islam and democracy can be compatible, the Center seeks to foster the principle that a democratic and representative form of government is the best way to avoid the violence and confrontations that are threatening peace and stability in those countries. The Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy has three main functions. First, it acts as a Think-Tank and research institute to study Islamic and Democratic political thought and merge them into a modern Islamic Democratic discourse. Second, it attempts to propagate and publicize these democratic principles and ideals in the Muslim world. And, third, it will encourage the West, especially the United States, to play a constructive role by promoting and encouraging democratic reforms in the Muslim world.

In order to accomplish this mission, the center will bring together academicians, scholars, and activists, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to analyze political developments in the Muslim world and identify ways of promoting freedom, justice, and democracy in the various Muslim countries. The Center will organize meetings, seminars, and conferences, publish periodicals, and promote democracy in Muslim countries by organizing workshops, training classes, and seminars on conflict resolution, political participation, and building a strong civil society. By engaging the various groups, parties and governments, both secular and Islamic, in a public debate on how to adapt Islam and democracy, the CSID seeks to avoid conflicts and violence, and

promote dialogue, tolerance, and mutual understanding between civilizations and within the Muslim societies.

The Center will cooperate with various organizations, both governmental and non-governmental (NGO's) that share its mission and objectives. The Center will be supported by the generosity of its members and supporters, as well as by grants from public and private institutions. The Center is, however, not a mouthpiece for any government, group, or individual and is independently managed by an Executive Committee and a Board of Directors elected by its members.

The work of this center will focus on paving the way for a better future for the Muslim world; a future that is based both on the Islamic principles of freedom, justice, tolerance and equality as well as the concepts of human rights, democracy, and rule of law.

### Preamble

The Islamic world is going through a turbulent period, as is its relationship with the rest of the world, especially the West. The Muslim population in the world, which numbers more than one billion, is being pulled by different forces and in different directions. On one hand, the religion and principles of Islam continue to play a major role and exert a major influence on the majority of this population. On the other hand, a significant group, probably close to one third, believes in the virtues of modern *western-developed* principles. The rest is probably torn between those two ideals, Islam and modernity. The fate of the Muslim world and its future relations with the rest of the world depends on how this conflict, or apparent conflict, is resolved.

As we quickly enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Islamic thought and practices are being challenged to adapt to modern ideas, methods, and principles. The future peace and prosperity of the Muslim world depends on the Muslims' response to these challenges and on their ability to resolve political differences and disputes through peaceful and legitimate means.

Islam is not a stranger to civilization and innovation. For over a thousand years, Islam was the launch pad of a great civilization and scientific breakthroughs and co-existed peacefully with other world religions in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East. However, in the last four or five centuries, Muslims and the Islamic civilization have stagnated and suffered major setbacks. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims have started to regain their awareness after decades of colonization and centuries of stagnation. Due to the lack of democracy and freedom in most of the Muslim world, movements and individuals that have tried to revive Islamic thought were often seen as a threat to the status quo and to the existing political and social order. They were severely repressed and driven

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into secrecy, and often became violent themselves due to oppression.

The Islamic world today is in a state of disarray and confrontation between extremist religious movements that see themselves as the “defenders of Islam” and authoritarian political regimes that claim to be “defenders of modernity”. Yet, neither Islam nor modernity can be imposed on the people. This dichotomy warns of terrible consequences if the voices of reason and moderation – on both sides – are not allowed to prevail. Democracy offers a practical solution, and, possibly, the only way out of this dangerous situation.

Democracy is not an alien concept to Islam. When the Prophet of Islam died, he did not appoint any person or group of people to lead the Muslim society. The companions of the Prophet (pbuh) were asked to convene in a house and elect a new leader, Abu Bakr. By not appointing a successor, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) clearly wanted to teach his followers that it is up to them to choose their leader. Therefore it is clear that the ruler in a Muslim society does not represent God Almighty but represents and serves the people who elect him. He serves at their pleasure and can be removed from office if he does not do a good job. Although Islam does not specify how these elections are to take place or the mechanism by which the ruler is made accountable to the people, Islam clearly forbids repression and oppression and advocates justice, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and the freedom to criticize, or even oppose, the ruler. Islam is inherently democratic because it does not have a religious hierarchy or spokesperson. What Islam has is generations of religious scholars (*Ulama*), and Muslims are in effect free to choose whom to follow or *not to follow*.

## What is an Islamic State?

Many movements in the Islamic world today aspire for an *Islamic state*, however, there is no clear definition or consensus on what an Islamic state is. There is disagreement among the various scholars and schools of thought on how the government should function and how laws should be made. The so-called ‘*Islamic*’ state in Afghanistan illustrates how various Islamic groups can fight each other to death simply because they cannot agree on how to elect the leader or how to make and enforce laws. There are two ways to resolve these differences of opinion: violent confrontation or peaceful dialogue. Clearly, peaceful dialogue is preferable both from an Islamic and from a rational perspective. However, peaceful debates do not always lead to consensus and the question becomes how should Muslims resolve their differences when dialogue has been tried and no consensus has emerged? Some Muslims will say we follow the opinion of the religious scholars (*Ulama*), but there is no consensus on who the scholars are and there is no consensus among the scholars themselves. This is the dilemma that threatens to pit Muslim groups and individuals against each other and has

already pitted Islamist movements (with few exceptions) against their governments. Furthermore, the scholars should not only possess religious knowledge (from the Qur’an and the Sunna) but must also have knowledge of the society and its needs. Thus, they will be able to perform the critical function of *Jihad* (coming up with innovative solutions to modern day problems) and their representation of the people is essential.

Since Islam does not have a final authoritative spokesperson, there is no easy answer or solution to this question. The only plausible solution is to follow the majority in the hope and expectation that the majority has more chances of being **right** and **correct** than does the minority. Some Muslim groups or individuals are bound to believe that they and **they alone** are right and those who disagree with them are wrong, however they have no religious basis to this claim other than their own convictions.

## What is Democracy?

Democracy means that the majority rules and that the rights of the minority are protected. One chooses to follow the majority, in a democracy, even when he/she holds a minority opinion, because a democracy guarantees respect for minority opinions even as the majority rules. Therefore a holder of a minority opinion does not feel threatened on account of his or her opinion, and each minority opinion has hopes of becoming the majority using open dialogue and persuasion. Democracy is not a perfect system but it offers the best type of government that can solve the real problems and address the real needs of the people. Democracy is not an ideal, it is an instrument to achieve a higher goal which is justice, peace, equality, and rule of law.

Democracy is an old concept. It was not invented in the West nor is it tied to any particular civilization or culture. The concept is at least 3,000 years old, and has evolved in several stages to become what it is today. Islam itself has made significant contributions to the evolution of democracy by protecting **freedom of religion**, by promoting the ideals of consultation (*Shura*), and by banning compulsion or oppression.

The Qur’an has made it clear that “**there is no compulsion in religion**”. Christians, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists lived and prospered under Islamic rule for almost 14 centuries in North Africa, Spain, the Middle East, central and southeast Asia. Even in Europe, until a few hundred years ago, if the King changes his religion from Protestant to Catholic, everyone had to follow or face persecution. Yet, the concept that people should be free to choose their religion had been practiced in the Muslim world for more than a thousand years. Significant Christian and Jewish minorities lived for centuries, and continue to live and practice their religion, in many Muslim countries. Some of the oldest churches and synagogues in

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the world today are in the Muslim world in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. While things were not always perfect for these minorities (they were not perfect for the Muslim majority either), Islam has a proud history of tolerance and co-existence with other religions.

## A Bridge to the New Millenium

Current circumstances require a consolidated response to institutionalize the efforts of those who are working to promote freedom, justice and democracy in the New World order. As we enter the new millennium with high hopes and great dreams of a global village that enjoys stability, peace and understanding between civilizations, a serious effort is required to promote a universal culture of freedom, democracy and human rights. This effort should aim at convincing governments in the Muslim world to implement democracy and at changing the cultural imprints of the Muslim society toward adopting democratic ideals and principles.

Hence, the same effort should be channeled and facilitated through a great institution that we propose to form for this purpose under the name of ***The Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy***.

To promote democracy in the Islamic world, the Center will work to develop a complete framework which brings together both Islamic and democratic principles and ideals. The CSID will be an independent non-profit organization that receives donations from various individuals and institutions, but without jeopardizing its independence and neutrality. The CSID will not support or oppose any government or movement but will seek to promote dialogue and understanding between the various players in the Muslim world. The CSID is not a political organization and will not support candidates or political parties in any of the Muslim countries. The CSID will be far from a confrontational approach toward any of the governments in the Muslim world and will seek to work with them to support their efforts and stated objectives of promoting democracy and respect for human rights. CSID will fairly monitor developments in the Muslim world and will acknowledge and encourage the efforts of any government, whether it calls itself *Islamic* or *secular*, in promoting tolerance, freedom, and democracy. Most of all, the CSID will foster a dialogue between secular and Islamic thinkers and scholars in order to develop a common platform which will serve as the basis for improving the prospects of democracy in the Muslim world. Conferences, meetings, and publications will be used as a way of fostering the dialogue and free exchange of information and ideas between these scholars and thought leaders.

## Objectives

- Promote democracy in the Muslim world.
- Promote a better understanding and a common platform between supporters of democracy and human rights and the proponents of the “Islamic solution” in the Muslim world.
- Encourage and foster dialogue between Islam and the rest of the world, especially the West.
- Encourage American Muslims to partake in the American political system and to become full active members of the American democracy.
- Discourage fanaticism, radicalism, violence, and oppression in the Muslim world, whether in the name of Islam or in the name of secular and Western values.
- Encourage the development of Islamic political thought based on modern principles of democracy, human rights, political freedom, religious and cultural diversity, and tolerance.
- Support the efforts of those individuals, groups, and governments in the Muslim world who espouse the ideals of democracy and human rights.
- Encourage attempts in the West, and particularly the United States, to play a positive role in promoting democracy in the Muslim world and establishing a constructive dialogue and engagement with the Muslim people.
- Advocate dialogue and constructive cooperation between the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and promoting a just and peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Middle East.

## Activities

- Publish various periodicals including a newsletter and a journal of high-level academic and scientific papers on Islam and Democracy and democratization in the Muslim world.
- Organize various conferences, seminars and debates at various universities and research institutions on topics related to Islam and Democracy, and political development in the Muslim world.
- Participate and cooperate with other organizations in putting together conferences and meetings to promote the concepts of Islamic Democracy.

- Use other means of communications (such as the internet) to propagate the ideals of the Center.
- Organize seminars, classes, and training sessions for young leaders in the Muslim world on democracy, human rights, and civil society.
- Invite political thinkers, intellectuals, leaders, and *Ulamas* from the Muslim world to participate in activities in the United States and other western countries to expose them to different institutions of western democracy.

## Structure

The CSID will be composed of the following bodies:

- ***A General Body meeting***, held every year during the annual conference, in which the members express their opinions and recommendations to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors, and elect the required members of the board. The first Founding General Body meeting will be held in Washington DC during April 2000. In order to become a Fellow, the applicant must sign a form in which he/she states that he/she is committed to the goals and objectives of the Center, and the application must be endorsed by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will set clear guidelines for the admission to the Fellow status. Fellows are expected to be experts in their fields with high integrity and a good reputation. Members do not have to sign this form to participate in the activities of the center. Members can attend the General Body meeting and express their opinions and/or recommendations to the Board.

- ***A Board of Directors***, which is composed of 12 to 15 individuals elected for a term of 3 year by the Fellows. Each year, four new members of the board will be elected during the General Body meeting. The Board of Directors will be responsible for setting the general objectives, policies, and guidelines of the organization and for approving the activities and finances of the Center. The Board of Directors has the final word on any issue related to the Center, and meets as needed with a minimum of once a year. Directors have to be Fellows of the center. It is important that the Board be comprised of diverse and highly skilled individuals who are committed to the objective of promoting democracy in the Muslim world. One third of the board should be business people who are responsible for raising money for the Center. Another third should be made up of intellectuals and scholars (both Muslims and Non-Muslims) who are world-renowned experts in their fields. The other third should be made up of committed Muslim activists and leaders who are willing to spend some of their time and energy in supporting the various activities and projects of the Center. Every year, the

board will elect a Chairman who will act as the coordinator for the board and as an advisor/facilitator to the Executive Committee.

- ***An Executive Committee***, composed of 6 people; an Executive Director, a General Secretary, a Treasurer, a Publications Editor, Research Director, and an Event Coordinator. The Board of Directors will appoint the Executive Director, who will in turn select his or her executive members and submit them for approval to the Board of Directors. The Executive Committee will be responsible for carrying out the activities of the Center in accordance with the decisions and recommendations of the board of Directors and also in accordance with the applicable laws. At the beginning of each year, the Executive Director prepares a general plan and budget and submits it for approval to the Board of Directors. The Executive Director for the first two years (1999 and 2000) will be Dr. Radwan Masmoudi, who is a founding member of the organization. The Executive Director and all the members of the Executive Board must be Fellows of the Center.

## Types of Membership

There will be three types of memberships in the Center:

**1. Member:** membership fee: \$50.00

A member participates in all the activities of the Center, receives a copy of all the publications of the Center, and has the right to express his/her opinion and/or suggestions during the General Body meeting.

**2. Fellow:** membership fee: \$100.00

The Fellow has the same rights and privileges as the member. In addition, he/she has the right to vote in the elections of the Board of Directors and can become a member of the board or the Executive Committee.

**3. Founding member:** membership fee: \$1,000.00

Any ***member*** who pays the amount of \$1,000.00 during the first year of activities will be considered a Founding Member of the Center. This amount can be paid in installments but must be paid in full by December 31, 1999. In addition to the same rights and privileges as the member, each Founding Member will receive a plaque in recognition for being a founding member of the Center for Islam and Democracy. Each founding member will pledge to bring at least 5 new members to the center during the first two years of activities. Founding members are exempted from paying membership dues for 5 years.

**4. Lifetime member:** membership fee: \$2,500.00

**5. Institutional member:** membership fee: \$200.00

## 6. Student member:

membership fee: \$35.00

Membership dues in excess of \$35 per year will be considered a donation to the Center, and will therefore be tax-deductible.

## Finances

The Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy will be supported through membership fees, tax-deductible donations, and grants from foundations and institutions. In order to maintain a solid and independent organization, it will be necessary to collect funds from **diverse** sources. This is obviously a very challenging task, but it is essential to the well being and success of the organization. The Board of Directors must approve donations to the Center that are larger than \$10,000. Such donations must be unconditional and must not jeopardize the integrity and independence of the Center. An important source of funding for the Center will be grants to perform specific projects (organizing events, conducting research, etc.). The Executive Committee shall prepare these proposals for grants and submit them in a timely manner to various organizations and institutions. An annual statement, detailing sources of income and expenditures, will be published at the end of each fiscal year and presented during the General Body meeting. The estimated budget for the first three years will be as follows:

### First year: 1999

Revenues	Expenses	
Membership fees	Administrative	\$ 5,000
200 Members	Legal	\$ 5,000
100 Fellows	Newsletter	\$10,000
20 Founding members	Journal	\$ 5,000
Donations	Web site	\$ 5,000
Grants	Seminars & Conf.	\$10,000
	Salary (& rent)	\$30,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>	<b>\$70,000</b>

### Second year: 2000

Revenues	Expenses	
Membership fees	Administrative	\$ 5,000
400 Members	Legal	\$ 5,000
200 Fellows	Newsletter	\$10,000
10 Lifetime members	Journal	\$10,000
Donations	Web site	\$ 5,000
Grants	Seminars & Conf.	\$10,000
	Salary (& rent)	\$40,000
	Projects	\$25,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$135,000</b>	<b>\$110,000</b>

### Third year: 2001

Revenues	Expenses	
Membership fees	Administrative	\$10,000
500 Members	Legal	\$ 5,000
200 Fellows	Newsletter	\$15,000
10 Lifetime members	Journal	\$10,000
Donations	Web site	\$ 5,000
Grants	Seminars & Conf.	\$15,000
Journal - sales	Salary (secretary)	\$30,000
	Office rent	\$20,000
	Projects	\$50,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$175,000</b>	<b>\$160,000</b>

By January 2000, at least one full time paid employee (secretary) will be hired by the Center to run the day-to-day business of the center. An office space will also be rented as soon as the financial situation of the center allows it. The budget shown above is the minimum budget required to run the organization. Our objective will be to have a much higher annual operating budget in order to carry out as many activities as possible both in the United States and in the Muslim World. Most of this budget will be spent on projects to study topics related to Islam and Democracy as well as projects to promote democracy in the Muslim world. This is an ambitious goal but we believe that once people start to see the benefits of this center, money will start to flow in memberships, donations, and grants to support the various projects that will be sponsored by the Center. During the first couple of years, which are of course critical, the founding members will try to collect as much funds for the Center as possible. It is suggested that each founding member tries to collect at least \$5,000 from his friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. Once enough funds have been collected to support the Center's activities and projects, we should immediately start thinking about putting money aside in an endowment fund that will support the Center in the long run.

The support and encouragement (both moral and financial) of those who believe in the mission of this Center and who are interested in promoting democracy in the Muslim world are greatly needed and sought. It is important to note that the board of directors consists of highly-respected individuals who have a big stature in the Muslim world and/or in the West so that this much needed dialogue can be initiated and sustained. It is also important to note that this is a long-term project. Developing and promoting the concepts of Islamic Democracy is not an easy task, and the fruits will not be borne in a short period of time. Only through dedication, perseverance, and hard work can we hope to play a positive role in the future of the Muslim world, and of the world as a whole.

We hope that CSID will be an important player in promoting tolerance, stability, and freedoms in the Islamic world.

# Report on First Two Founding Meetings



By Radwan Masmoudi

Two kick-off meetings were held on Nov. 21 and Nov. 28, 1998 in Georgetown University to discuss the draft proposal for the creation of a new organization to be called the “Center for Islam & Democracy”. Attendance at the two meetings was as follows:

**Saturday, Nov. 21, 1998:**

Louis J. Cantori	Imad ad-Deen Ahmad
Samira Hussein	Hesham N. Reda
Leila Najar	Ismail Obeidallah
Ali Nawaz Memon	Ibrahim M. Abdil-Muid
Svend White	Radwan A. Masmoudi

**Saturday, Nov. 28, 1998:**

Louis J. Cantori	Ahmad al-Haidar
Antony T. Sullivan	Charles E. Butterworth
Sofiane Ennifar	Ejaz Akram
Azizah al-Hibri	Svend White
Samira Hussein	Michael Hudson
Atif Harden	Muqtedar Khan
John Esposito	Ibrahim al-Wazir
Leila Najar	Isa Siddiqui
Ali Nawaz Memon	Radwan A. Masmoudi.

The two meetings lasted three and a half hours (each) and began with a lunch (couscous) cooked and donated by Mrs. Leila Najar and Mrs. Samira Hussein. After eating lunch, and a brief self-introduction by all the participants, Dr. Radwan Masmoudi gave a 20-minute presentation on the need, mission, and structure for the proposed organization. The presentation emphasized that there is a crisis in the Muslim world characterized by lack of freedoms, lack of tolerance, and a political system that is dangerously and inherently unstable. The only way to provide long-term peace and stability in the Muslim world is by adopting and applying democratic principles which are fully compatible with Islam: rule of law, freedom of religion and expression, elected and representative government, and separation of powers. The American Muslim community is in a unique position to make a significant contribution in this regard since it enjoys both a large degree of freedom and democracy and a firm commitment to Islamic traditions and teachings. The main objectives of this proposed organization are to educate the public (both Muslims and Non-Muslims alike) about the compatibility of Islam and democracy and to develop a complete theoretical

framework for “Islamic Democracy”. A great emphasis should be placed on the educational aspect since many Muslims (and non-Muslims) still view Democracy as incompatible with Islam (or vice-versa). Dr. Masmoudi finished his presentation by stating that this is a very ambitious and long term project with potentially great benefits and that he is going to need help from people who are interested in a peaceful and more stable future for the Muslim world.

The presentation was followed by a discussion and interventions from the participants. The majority felt that this is a much-needed organization and is unique in its focus on the issue of Islam and Democracy. Although there are other organizations that address this topic among others, this new Center will focus entirely on the issue of compatibility between Islam and Democracy, and therefore can be useful in developing the theoretical and practical framework for promoting democracy in the Muslim world. The Center is needed to give the issue of Islam and Democracy the prominence and high-visibility that it deserves. The Center will also be unique in bringing academicians and activists together to discuss important issues related to compatibility between Islam and Democracy.

Among the major recommendations and/or suggestions are:

1. The organization should be a think-tank and focus primarily on education, research, and training. In this regard, the majority suggested that the organization be named: The Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy. Its main focus will be on education and research, and much smaller emphasis will be placed on advocacy (small a, instead of capital A). The Center will offer an ‘open space’ where Muslims can come together and discuss the relationship between Islam and Democracy. This should be seen as a Muslim initiative, but should also include non-Muslims who are students or experts of Islam and the Islamic world, or who are experts in democracy and democratic systems.
2. The organization should be focused on the American scene. Fellowship should be limited to those who reside legally in the United States.
3. The Center can play a vital role in promoting a greater understanding between Islam and the West. It should be led by Muslims, since it is directed mainly for the Muslim world, but Non-Muslim experts can play an important role in the Center.
4. We should accept funding from various institutions, public and private, as long as the support is unconditional. Donations in excess of \$10,000 have to approved by the board of directors before they are accepted.
5. We should always emphasize that we do not view democracy as an alternative to Islam, or as *better* than Islam. We view democracy as an Islamic principle that was taught and practiced by

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*“We do not view democracy as an alternative to Islam, or as better than Islam. We view democracy as an Islamic principle that was taught and practiced by Prophet Muhammad and his companions.”*

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Prophet Muhammad and his companions. The synergy between Islam and democracy offers the best hope for the Muslim world.

6. Emphasize diversity in the membership and try to include a diverse group that is representative of different schools of thought, regions, and ethnic groups.

7. Sources of funding and expenditures must be 100% transparent and in accordance with U.S. laws and with IRS regulations for non-profit organizations. For this, we must hire a good lawyer and a good accountant to make sure that our books and records are always kept up to the minute.

8. We should not get involved with political or human rights issues in the various Muslim countries, especially in the first 3 to 5 years. The invited guests and speakers can of course express their own opinions about current events in the Muslim World, but the Center and its publications should not take a political stand.

9. Although, we cannot say ‘Islamic Democracy’ every time we want to speak about democracy, it should be clear that whenever we talk about democracy we mean one that is compatible with Islam.

10. The Center’s main function will be to serve as forum, or free space, for Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals to discuss the relationship between Islam and Democracy, and how to develop an ‘Islamic Democracy’.

11. We should be selective in admitting individuals to the fellowship category. We want people who are experts in their fields, who have a high integrity and a good reputation, and who are genuinely interested in the topic of Islam and Democracy. We obviously do not want fellows who are enemies of Islam or enemies of democracy. Some disagreements about the specific issues related to Islam and Democracy can be tolerated, however, the fellow must be interested in promoting rule of law, tolerance, and representative governments in the Muslim world. The Board of Directors must set

clear guidelines for the admission to fellowship category.

12. One of our objective should be to affect the foreign policy of the United States government by educating policy makers about the importance of promoting democracy in the Muslim world and about the compatibility between Islam and Democracy. The Center will not undertake any lobbying for any government or political group, however, the Center will try to build strong support among American policy-makers for promoting and encouraging democracy and rule of law in the Muslim world as the only way to resolve political, cultural, and ethnic conflicts.

13. As an American organization, formed by American citizens (Muslim and non-Muslim alike) the organization will be entitled to receive funding and support from various American institutions, foundations, and corporations (such as the National Endowment for Democracy, etc..). We should not shy away from this support, as long as it is unconditional and does not deviate from the aforementioned objectives of the Center. Although some Muslims, especially overseas, might be offended by this financial support and might attack the organization as an ‘American’ agent, these kinds of links and associations with American and international institutions are vital if the Center is to be effective and successful.

14. The next step should be to organize a small symposium in March-April time frame, and a big conference in the October-November time frame. A newsletter should also be published (asap) to generate support for this new organization.

15. A good portion of the funding should come from the members. The participants suggested that no less than 30% of the annual budget should come from membership fees in order to build and maintain the independence and self-funding necessary for good credibility. IRS laws, which must be adhered to very strictly, require that any grant of \$5,000 or more (whether from American or foreign sources) has to be reported to the IRS.

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*“The Center’s main function will be to serve as forum, or free space, for Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals to discuss the relationship between Islam and Democracy, and how to develop an ‘Islamic Democracy’.*

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16. The Center should be proud to be “American” and proud to be “Muslim”. There are plenty of centers for Islam, and plenty of Centers for Democracy, but this will be a unique center for “Islam & Democracy”. This will hopefully be an important contribution from American Muslims to the Muslim Ummah, since American Muslims have the privilege of living in the most democratic country in the world as well as the most powerful country in the world. This offers a great opportunity to make a difference for the betterment of the lives of 1.3 billion Muslims around the world, as well as for promoting peace and stability around the world.

17. A main emphasis should be placed on reaching the grass root Muslims, especially in America, to motivate them, educate them, and train them about democracy and its benefits as well as shortcomings. It is of course understood that democracy is not a perfect system but it offers the best type of governments that can solve the real problems and address the real needs of the people. Democracy is not an ideal, it is an instrument to achieve a higher goal which is justice, peace, equality, and rule of law.

18. We need to establish good relations with other institutes and centers that are interested in this topic, both in the United States and in the Muslim world, and we should organize joint events and activities with them, whenever possible.

19. The publications and meetings of the Center should reflect diversity of opinions, and it should be clear that those opinions do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Center or its directors.

20. The Center needs a lot of grass root support from Muslims, starting with American Muslims, so we need to be innovative in our efforts to reach Muslims all over the world (through public media and the internet). The Center should not be seen as a threat to existing governments. To the contrary, we should work with existing governments and help them modernize and democratize.

21. Even though, it is conceivable that some individuals, especially if they live in the Middle East, may wish to support the Center behind the scenes, this has to be done in total conformity with American law. Once again, the need for competent and strong legal support is very important.

22. A lawyer should be hired as soon as possible to start working on the articles of incorporation and by-laws. These draft documents should be presented to and approved by the board of directors, prior to actual incorporation which should take place during the first three months of 1999. The lawyer should be consulted in choosing a structure for an independent think-tank, which allows a good compromise between being a democratically-run organization and protecting the Center against potential hostile takeovers. This should include careful selection of voting members (fellows), wide general membership, and the election of a board of directors that is of the highest caliber possible.

23. The Center should make a big effort to bring Muslim scholars (*Ulemas*) from the Muslim world to discuss these issues from an Islamic perspective, as well as organizing conferences and seminars abroad to reach the Muslim masses.

24. The majority of the participants recommended cutting the membership fees in half, and creating a Lifetime Membership category which should be around \$2,500. Founding members, who pay \$1,000 during 1999, should be exempt from paying membership fees for the next 5 years. Institution memberships should be for \$200 per year.

25. It was recommended that donations from outside the United States should not exceed 25% of the annual budget.



**First Meeting on November 21, 1998**



**Second Meeting on November 28, 1998**

**Please e-mail articles, short papers and letters to the editor to:**

**[editor@islam-democracy.org](mailto:editor@islam-democracy.org)**

**Fathi Osman Speaks on:**

## The Future of Democracy in the Muslim World

Between April 7 and April 13, 1999, CSID organized four public lectures by board member and well-known Muslim thinker, Dr. Fathi Osman. These lectures were held at the National Democratic Institute, the American University, al-Hewar Center, and the University of Maryland. These events were well attended (average of 40-50 individuals), and were followed by thought-provoking discussions and debates.

Dr. Osman began his lecture at the NDI by stating that a considerable majority of Muslims today, especially among the educated, believe that Islam and Democracy are compatible, but are faced with difficulties in implementing and choosing between the various forms and adaptations of democracy. Generalization between Muslim countries is difficult because each Muslim country has its particularities. Democratization is a difficult process, but it is inevitable if Muslim countries do not want to lag behind in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Trial and error is necessary, and mistakes on the path of democratization should be expected and tolerated.

## Board of Directors holds its first meeting

The Board of Directors of the Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy held its first meeting on April 11, 1999 at Georgetown University in Washington DC. All the board members, except Prof. Ali Mazrui and Dr. Ali Memon, were present. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Radwan Masmoudi, founder and executive director of the Center.

The board started by reviewing the draft bylaws prepared by the CSID legal counsel. The board made few modifications to the bylaws before adopting them. The board then elected the following individuals as officers of the corporation for 1999:

*Chairman* Prof. Ali Mazrui  
*Vice-chair* Prof. John Esposito  
*Executive Director* Dr. Radwan Masmoudi

Some regimes in the Muslim world have resorted to the 'dictatorship of the majority' which is not better than the dictatorship of the minority. In a democracy, as well as according to Islamic teachings, the majority rules, but the rights of the minority must be protected. Dr. Osman stated that the concepts of Shura and Democracy are the same, but democracy provides a mechanism by which the concept of Shura can be implemented.

The relationship with the West is also critical because the masses sometimes base their judgements on an emotional rather than a political or ideological basis. Muslim masses continue to see the West through 'the veil of Hollywood' and the mass media, although this is beginning to change after a large number of Muslims have begun to immigrate and live in the West.

Dr. Osman believes that an increasing number of Muslim intellectuals (both Islamists and secularists) are tired of having to choose between autocratic regimes and radical movements. He sees that hope for democracy in the Muslim world lies in having secular democrats and Islamic democrats joining forces on a common platform for promoting genuine democracy in their respective countries.

*Secretary* Dr. Muqtedar Khan  
*Treasurer* Mr. Svend White

The board then moved to sign a 'unanimous consent form' ratifying and confirming the Certificate of Incorporation and the bylaws, and appointing the above-mentioned individuals as officers. The board further instructed the officers to execute and file all necessary applications to seek recognition of the Corporation as a charitable organization exempt from federal, state, and local taxes.

Finally, the board discussed upcoming events and activities for the Center and decided to organize a roundtable discussion on "Islam, Democracy, and Good Governance" on November 22, 1999, in Washington DC. The Annual Conference, and general body meeting, will be organized in April 2000.





**Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy**

P. O. Box 864, Burtonsville, MD, 20866  
Phone/fax: (301) 384-7786

www.islam-democracy.org

**Board of Directors**

*Chair:* Ali Mazrui

*Vice-Chair:* John Esposito

Taha Jaber Alalwani

Jamal Barazanji

Charles Butterworth

Louis Cantori

John Entelis

Muqtedar Khan

Radwan Masmoudi

Ali Memon

Fathi Osman

Hesham Reda

**Executive Committee**

Radwan A. Masmoudi  
Executive Director

■  
Ismail Obeidallah  
Event Coordinator

■  
Svend White  
Treasurer

■  
Muqtedar Khan  
Secretary

■  
Maher Kharma  
Membership Coordinator

**Please support CSID.  
Become a Member today.**

**CSID Membership Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tel.: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax.: \_\_\_\_\_

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I would like to join CSID as:

- |                       |                                |                             |                                 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Student Member</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35  | <b>Institutional Member</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> \$200  |
| <b>Member</b>         | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50  | <b>Founding Member</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 |
| <b>Fellow</b>         | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | <b>Lifetime Member</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> \$2500 |

I also would like to volunteer for the following positions:

- |                                            |                                           |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Director        | <input type="checkbox"/> Book reviews     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Editor | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership drive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Journal Editor    | <input type="checkbox"/> Local seminars   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program Volunteer | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund raising      |                                           |

I would like to make a tax-deductible donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments and/or suggestions:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*please send membership form, with payment, to: CSID, P. O. Box 864, Burtonsville, MD 20866*





## Quotes & Endorsements

“CSID represents an idea whose time has come. All those interested in encouraging democracy, human rights, individual liberty and limited government in the Arab and Muslim world should interest themselves in CSID’s work.”

***Tony Sullivan***

The University of Michigan.

“This center is way overdue. Not only will it focus the attention of Muslims on critical issues of basic Islamic governance principles, but it will also bring the perspective and experience of American Muslims to the table. The result, hopefully, would be to revitalize discussion on these issues worldwide.”

***Azizah al-Hibri***

University of Richmond

“This Center is a timely and an important undertaking. The issue of democratization in the Middle East and North Africa has become more critical in recent years. This undertaking has great potential and will require significant human and financial resources. I trust that many will see fit to provide that support.”

***John Esposito***

Georgetown University

“In a period of inflated rhetoric and bombastic assertions, one requires such a center now more than ever. Intended as a non political forum for the free and comprehensive discussion of the many issues surrounding this compelling dialectic, the Center will serve an important educational, pedagogical, and public policy function.”

***John Entelis***

Fordham University

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