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Conference Report:

The Implementation of Shari'ah in a Democracy: The Nigerian Experience

The Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (CSID) organized a conference on "Shari'ah in a Democracy" at the Sheraton Conference Center in Abuja, Nigeria from July 7 through July 9, 2004. Over 300 people attended the opening session, chaired by Nigerian Chief Justice Muhammad Lawal Uwais. The special Guest of Honors were the Vice-President of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar, represented by Dr. A. D. Yahaya, Special Advisor on Political Matters, and the Governors of Kano, Bauchi, and Zamfara States. Several other prominent guests were in attendance during the opening session, including prominent Qadis (judges) and several academics and civil servants.

Professor S. U. Abdullahi, Vice Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, gave the welcoming address on behalf of the Centre for Islamic Legal Studies, CSID's local Nigerian partner for the conference. Dr. Radwan Masmoudi, President of CSID, then welcomed the guests and spoke about the need to reflect on Nigeria's experience with Shari'ah. He called for open discussion and for intellectual examination of Shari'ah practices in



A Nigerian participant speaking about women rights in Islam

Nigeria.

In his welcoming remarks, Chief Justice Muhammad Lawal Uwais summarized the purpose of the three-day event: "This conference is concerned with the implementation of Shari'ah in a democracy, and in particular, in Nigeria. Shari'ah has been in Nigeria for many years, even before colonialism. With the coming of democracy in 1999 and the declaration of Shari'ah, a lot of interest has been shown on the implementation of Shari'ah. Some of this attention has been positive and a lot has been negative. This conference will examine the difficulties of this implementation."

In his address, the Governor of Bauchi State raised a set of questions: "In the light of globalization, how do we determine the limits within which we will implement Shari'ah so that the rights of non-Muslims are respected? How do we evaluate changes in Shari'ah without losing our distinct identity as Muslims? What practical steps can we take? Shari'ah should not only apply to the weak and poor, while we turn

a blind eye to the rich and the powerful. How can we create a spiritual policeman or a spiritual judge?"

The Meaning of Shari'ah

The first working session concerned the meaning of Shari'ah. The Imam of Kano opened the session with a prayer and a welcome greeting from the people of Kano. Malam Ibrahim Sulaiman of CILS spoke about the meaning of Shari'ah. Dr. Abdul-Aziz Sachedina, Chairman of CSID, gave a presentation titled "The Role of Islam in



More than 200 Nigerian scholars, leaders, lawyers, and judges participated in the three-day conference deliberations.

Public Square: Guidance or Governance", in which he spoke of Shari'ah as a vehicle to strengthen and improve human relations: "It is important to keep in mind that Islam did not come into the vacuum of other religions. Islam came into being when there were other religions already in existence. Islam is relationships. There is an ethical component that is extremely important. Modernization has weakened human relationships. Implementation of the Shari'ah means to improve human relationships at every level."

Dr. Mohamed Habash, an Islamic scholar from Syria, spoke about "The Concept of citizenship in Shari'ah". After him, Professor Malam S. Abubakar of CILS argued that before we understand Shari'ah, we need to understand what religion is. He also criticized the US position on Nigeria,

saying, "The Prophet came to bring about a change not only for his time but for all times. So for us the issue of the Shari'ah is a matter of responsibility." Justice A. Orire, Secretary General of J. N. I. Kaduna, was the discussant of the session.

Shari'ah and Good Governance

The second session concerned Shari'ah and Good Governance. It started with a presentation by Dr Sulaiman Kumo on "Shari'ah issues in Nigeria: Politics and Legal Technicalities." Syed Mostafa Qazwini, director of the Islamic Educational Center of Southern California, Los Angeles, spoke on "Shari'ah and Good Governance": "We in America enjoy freedom that we were deprived from in our native lands, especially freedom of religion and freedom of expression. And although we do not implement Shari'ah, we implement the spirit of

Islam which believes in freedom and equality. We enjoy good relationships with the people of the book and this is because we believe in the sanctity of human beings." Justice Mohamed Bashir Sambo spoke critically of the discourse on Shari'ah and Democracy, saying that while there is always pressure to conform Islam to democracy, there is very little effort to see if democracy can conform to Islam. He asked: "Has anyone heard about divine right? They will not speak about it because everything in the UN is based on man-made laws. Human rights, animal rights—these are all in Islam. You preach laws belonging to other nations but they forget divine laws?"

In a moving paper presentation on "Shari'ah and Nigerian Legal System", Professor Awwalu Yadudu of Bayero

University stated three facts about Shari'ah in Nigeria:

- 1) That Shari'ah was introduced by popular demand, not by the military;
- 2) The Shari'ah law is constitutional;
- 3) the Shari'ah is implemented within the context of the federal government but not directly by the national government."

Dr. Usman Bugaje, Chairman of House Committee on Foreign Affairs, was the discussant of the presented papers. He said that some presentation were lacking depth and were merely ceremonial. During the question and answer session that followed, many participants offered their candid criticism of the speakers and the issues

The Ambassador's Reception

The newly arrived US ambassador to Nigeria invited the conference participants to a reception at his residence where the participants spent a fruitful time with Ambassador Campbell and his staff.

Shari'ah, Women and Minorities

The second day of the conference started with a panel on Shari'ah, women and Minorities. Professor Margot Badran of Northwestern University presented her paper on "The Ongoing Tafsir on Men and Women: Constructions and Practices of Democracy and Social Justice". She said that while we tend to think of the women's rights in Islam as a result of Islam's intersection with modernity, there have been people in the Islamic community calling for greater women's rights since Islam's beginning. Saudatu Mahadi, Secretary General of WRAPA, Abuja addressed the issue of "Women and Shari'ah". Dr. Philip Ostein of the Faculty of Law, University of Jos, addressed "The Implementation of Shari'ah in Democratic Nigeria: A Plea for Deeper Study of Its History". The Sudanese Thinker



Discussions were frank, open, and illuminating

Muhammad Abulqasim Haj-Hamad called for the critical evaluations of Shari'ah treatment of women and for freeing the laws of Arab tribal traditions and biblical influences that do not have a firm basis in the Qur'anic viewpoint. Several Nigerian women rights activists also commented that while Shari'ah does give equal provision to women, often the implementation does not.

Shari'ah: Rights, Economy and Society

Following a lunch banquet, the afternoon session started with a presentation by Professor Mohamed Al Hasan Biraima, director of the Institute of Islamization of Knowledge, University of Gezira, Sudan, who addressed "The Role of Freedom in True Implementation of Shari'ah Goals". Those goals (maqasid al-shari'ah) are for the securing of "self, wealth, children, and the mind (knowledge)". He said that we often focus on the detailed legal aspects of Shari'ah, but Shari'ah law must also encourage people to be better Muslims. Professor Aminu S. Mika'ilu, the former Vice Chancellor of Danfodio University, Sokoto, spoke on "Shari'ah: The Socio-Economic Perspective". He spoke of three requirements:

In addition to eliminating interest (riba), it is necessary to build institutions for collection of zakah. This was responsible for most of the failing implementations of shari'ah in Nigerian states. Such a system would require a significant amount

of resources in the beginning, but will be immensely beneficial in the end. He added that states must, in implementing Shari'ah, bear in mind their duty to ensure full employment. "In the states that practice Shari'ah, you find the highest level of unemployment, illiteracy and disorganization."

Professor Muhammad Tabiu of the Faculty of Law, Bayero University, Kano addressed "Shari'ah and Human Rights", Malam Salisu Shehu of the Faculty of Education, Bayero University addressed the issue of "Shari'ah, Education and Social Orientation." Professor Tijani Al Miskin of the University of Maiduguri initiated the discussion.

The Impact of Shari'ah Implementation

The last session was about the impact of Shari'ah implementation. Professor Ishaq Oloyede, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, presented a paper on "Private Implementation of Shari'ah in Southwest Nigeria". Ishaq Kunle Sanni presented a paper on "Independent Shari'ah Courts in Oyo State." Malam Muhammad Babangida Muhammad presented a paper on "The Impact of Shari'ah Implementation", Hajji Bilkisu Yusuf addressed the issue of "Media Reporting about Shari'ah". Dr. Baffa Aliyu Umar of the Department of Sociology, Bayero University presented a paper on "Socio-Economic Impact of Shari'ah Implementation in Nigeria". Muzamil Sani was the lead discussant of the session.

Working Groups

The conference participants were divided into the five working groups:

- 1- Politics and Good Governance
- 2- Economics and Finance
- 3- Women's rights
- 4- Justice, Legal System, and Punishments

5- Minority Rights.

The participants spent five hours in these workshops. During these brainstorming sessions, participants developed recommendations in light of the conference panels and discussions. The groups adopted several recommendations and suggested some proactive steps for follow-up after the conference.

The Banquet

Dr. Usman Bugaje, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee at the National Assembly, gave the keynote speech at the conference banquet. Aly R. Abuzaakuk, CSID program officer, introduced the speaker as an enlightened Muslim whose concerns extend beyond Nigeria to include the world at large. Dr. Bugaje gave an illuminating speech in which he touched upon the role of



Usman Bugaje, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee

Muslims living in a global world and emphasized the need for communication between Muslims and non-Muslims and between Muslims themselves. Muslims should understand the context in which they implement

Shari'ah, and develop a thorough understanding of Shari'ah. Muslims must equip themselves to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The conference successfully engaged Muslim scholars, from Nigeria and abroad, on the key question of what Shari'ah really means, and how an enlightened implementation of Shari'ah can lead to a better society and a better life for all Nigerians.

Note: A conference report is being prepared and conference papers, communique, and proceedings will be available on the CSID website: www.islam-democracy.org

Dimensions of National Security

By **Antony T. Sullivan**
CSID Board Member

Currently, the United States confronts unique geostrategic challenges. The admiration that America once enjoyed on the world stage has been shattered. That reality is hardly conducive to American success in the war against terrorism, or to the advancement of U.S. national interests. Throughout much of the world, one now encounters deep, visceral, and consuming anger toward the U.S. The truth is that the news for the United States on the national security front is very bad.

Why?

The war in Iraq appears unwinnable militarily. Unless, perhaps, some 300,000 U.S. troops are dispatched to occupy Iraq for several years. That is politically and militarily impossible.

In Iraq, the United States is now caught in a geostrategic trap. If the U.S. withdraws from Iraq, civil war, or chaos, is likely to ensue. Destabilization elsewhere (Turkey, Iran, Syria) will more than likely result. However, if the U.S. stays in Iraq, it will continue to bleed. Resistance to what most Iraqis now regard as an American occupation will steadily increase, and radicalization in Iraq and across the Muslim world will deepen.

Iraq now risks becoming a viral breeding ground for a new generation of extremists. Kidnappings and car bombings have become almost daily occurrences. Surely, these developments do not contribute to U.S. national security, or enhance the effectiveness of the war against

terrorism.

Because of the territorial expansionism of Israel especially under the Sharon government, radicalization is spreading not only in the West Bank and Gaza but also in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and elsewhere.



Wathiq Khuzale/Getty Images

Explosions and violence are becoming daily occurrences and threatening to destabilize the future of Iraq and the region.

Such radicalization can hardly be considered a contribution to U.S. national security, or helpful in the war against terrorism.

The truth is that American national security is eroding. It must be stated clearly: the United States is losing the war against terrorism. And it will continue to lose that war, and American national security will continue to be compromised, until and unless changes are made in U.S. foreign policy.

What is to be done?

First, the U.S. must recognize the nature of the war in which it is involved.

In fact, this is not a war against terrorism, which is a tactic, not a capital or country. Rather, it is a war against a worldwide Islamic insurgency. Tactics appropriate to law enforcement are not appropriate here. Rather, special operations, and greatly improved intelligence capabilities,

combined with initiatives of such non-governmental organizations as the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy and the International Institute for Political and Economic Studies sponsored by The Fund for American Studies, should be the order of the day.

Moreover, the United States must understand the motivations of its enemy. To understand is not to condone. Rather, understanding is a weapon to enable the U.S. to combat its enemy more effectively. Unless we understand how our enemy thinks, we will have no chance of winning the war against terrorism.

Al-Qaida is not fighting America because of "what it is," or because it enjoys free speech and practices democracy. Co-ed Ivy League universities, an independent judiciary, and bikini-clad sunbathers are not inspiring Muslim fundamentalists to fly aircraft into buildings.

If not, what is?

The answer is simple. It is very specific U.S. policies that enrage almost all Muslims—whether they support the tactics of al-Qaida or not—that are fueling the international Islamic insurgency against

us. Unless a major policy reassessment is undertaken, we are likely to face a war without end. Unending war is surely not good for American national security.

What are the U.S. policies that so enrage Muslims?

- ◆ The American military presence in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf.
- ◆ The American occupation of Iraq.
- ◆ The U.S. occupation of Afghanistan.
- ◆ U.S. support for the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- ◆ U.S. support for India in Muslim Kashmir, Russia in Muslim Chechnya, and Peking in Western Muslim China.
- ◆ Perceived U.S. pressure on Arab oil producers to sell oil at below-market prices.
- ◆ U.S. support, ever since the end of World War II, for repressive governments

which appear to be stable.

Graham Fuller, a former Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council at CIA, maintains that prospects for success in the war against terrorism are slight. Fuller writes: "I anticipate a worsening of the relationship between international Islam and the United States, based on several factors: ultimately inconclusive results from the War Against Terrorism, [the War's] probable failure to end

"America seems to be ubiquitous in the Islamic world, occupying territory, exploiting resources, and attempting to impose cultural values."

terrorism, and... the greatly increased resentment across the Muslim world [against the U.S.] as [the War's] outcome. This process may well result in more terrorism against Americans specifically... Such a situation will place the United States in a deeply defensive position across the Muslim world."

What is the bottom line?

Unless major changes are made in the way the United States relates to the Muslim world, hatred of the U.S. across the world is likely to continue to metastasize. Little inducement will exist for countries to collaborate with the United States. And U.S. national security will continue to be undermined. Reassessment of U.S. policy toward the Islamic world should be a high priority for the incoming Bush administration. ■

CSID Events in October

By Layla Sein - CSID Conference Coordinator

CSID launched its Monthly Lecture Series on October 27th. The first lecture was given by Professor Louis J. Cantori, member of CSID Board of Directors, on "Islam, Democracy & Development: Why Islam is not the Problem." Professor Cantori discussed the differences between the concepts of liberal democracy and republican democracy. In so doing, he stated that democracy does not come in "one size fits all," and that the culture or nature of society has to be consistent with democracy if it is going to work. Cantori recommended that Islam be included in the republican democracy model and should not be excluded from the reformists' agenda.

In celebration of Ramadan, CSID held a community Iftaar Dinner on Friday, October 29, 2004, which included a debate

on "How to Improve the Image of Islam in the United States." The Iftaar was well attended (over 100 people) by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Misrepresentations and distortions of Islam in the media were examined by two invited speakers: Ms. Anisa Mehdi, documentary film producer and journalist who reports on religion and the arts; and the Chair of CSID's board of directors, Dr. Abdulaziz Sachedina.

Ms. Mehdi suggested that Muslims become more involved in such fields as business and the arts so that coverage of Islam and Muslims could appear in different sections of the newspaper. She

added that the proper use of language would also improve the image of Islam. Dr. Sachedina stressed the important role that academia plays in correcting the image of Islam since academics are called upon by policy makers for expert advice,



A standing room only listened attentively to both Ms. Mehdi and Prof. Sachedina.

and commentaries. He noted that the new trend in academia is to seek Muslim scholars to teach Islamic studies. He added that Muslims can improve the image of Islam by being more vocal against oppressive regimes in the Muslim world since these regimes breed violence. ■

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

By Asma Afsaruddin
CSID Board Member

Political rights for women are usually assumed to have been born in the modern period and as a consequence of the rise of the modern nation-state. Prominent among such rights is the right to vote and hold public office, the most graphic indicators of modern participatory citizenship on a par with that of men. Foundational discourses concerning most religions and civilizations do not emphasize, if acknowledge at all, the existence of public, political space for women in the pre-modern period. For Muslim women, however, it can be persuasively argued that there has been such a recognized space from the very inception of Islam. Early historical and biographical sources contain valuable information that lends much support to this position.

For example, the early converts to Islam personally had to make a pledge of allegiance to the Prophet Muhammad, which signaled their formal entry into the Muslim polity. This pledge, known in Arabic as bay'a, was required equally of men and women. The fact that the Prophet took the bay'a from all the faithful, regardless of gender, as a prelude to membership in the Islamic polity is pregnant with political ramifications for the contemporary period. The practice of proffering bay'a to the political leader (or withholding it to express one's disapproval) remained standard procedure throughout the medieval period, even though it became more or less pro-forma after the first century of Islam. Modernist Muslims today see in the bay'a an early precursor of the electoral vote, by means of which their predecessors registered their approval of the community's leader. On the basis of this historical precedent,

modernists argue that Islam from the very beginning had recognized the right of women to "vote" by means of the bay'a and thus their right to take part in political decision-making alongside men.

Early authorities, like Ibn Sa'd (d. 845), record numerous instances of women's public activities during and after the time of the Prophet. These included transmission of Qur'anic verses and the sayings of the Prophet, running makeshift hospitals in the mosque at Medina, tending to the wounded on the battlefield and sometimes even fighting shoulder to shoulder with their male co-religionists. It is well-known that women served as prayer leaders as well, usually over other women.

“the early record shows that Islamic principles of egalitarianism and reverence for learning allowed women considerable access to the public sphere”

But Ibn Sa'd records one instance in which a woman, Umm Waraqa, was appointed the prayer leader over her entire, mixed household by the Prophet. The Prophet's widow, 'Aisha bint Abi Bakr, gave a public speech in the mosque at Medina after the assassination of the third caliph, 'Uthman (d. 656) and led an army against his presumed assassins. The second caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khattab (d. 644) appointed a woman, Shifa' bint 'Abdallah, as the public inspector of markets in Medina,

roughly equivalent to today's office of a city mayor. Throughout the pre-modern period, wealthy women continued to endow charitable foundations and establish institutions of higher learning, a consequence of their ability to inherit and freely dispose of their wealth. Women also played an active role in religious scholarship. The fifteenth century Mamluk scholars Ibn Hajar and al-Sakhawi gratefully included the names of their female teachers in their lists of prominent scholars of their day and testified to their extensive learning. The list of documented female public activities could go on, but the point has been made. There is nothing in Islamic belief and history that inveighs against women's participation in the public sphere, including the political realm. If anything, the early record shows that Islamic principles of egalitarianism and reverence for learning allowed women considerable access to the public sphere. The later gradual and relentless attrition in the public rights of women is a consequence of culturally conditioned, androcentric interpretations of the religious law, whose effects are still with us today.

When some ostensibly Muslim countries today attempt to deny women their political rights and restrict their participation in public life in the name of a reified Islam, truth is better served by invoking the Islamic polity's venerable track record of empowering women in both the private and public realms. It remains the responsibility of Muslims everywhere to challenge the ahistorical obscurantism that continues to limit Muslim women's political rights and citizenship today in various Islamic societies. ■

Workshop on connecting Islam & Democracy in Morocco

By Aly Abuzaakuk
CSID Program Officer

The Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (CSID) in cooperation with Street Law, Inc. has successfully concluded the first seminar of their joint program on "Connecting Islam and Democracy" in Casablanca on 7-9 October 2004. The seminar was hosted locally by "The Citizenship Forum" of Casablanca, Morocco. It was attended by a selected group of 23 religious, political, educational and community leaders from Algeria (11 participants including 4 women) and from Morocco (12 participants including 3 women). The objective of the project - which will continue for 16 months and is going to include Egypt and Jordan- is to develop materials and strategies that show the connection between Islamic and democratic principals. As a result of this project, we envision that the participants will be better able to discuss Islam and Democracy with their constituencies.

CSID and Street Law have selected a group of civil society leaders from Algeria and Morocco and invited them to attend the orientation and planning Seminar in Morocco. A similar orientation and planning Seminar for Jordan and Egypt will be held in Amman Jordan on December 10-12, 2004.

The seminar started on Thursday afternoon by welcoming remarks and a brief introduction from the three organizers; Dr. Mokhtar Benabdellaoui, Director of



24 NGO and political leaders and democracy activists from Algeria and Morocco attended the 3-day seminar

Citizenship Forum, Dr. Radwan Masmoudi, President of CSID, and Dr. Edward O'Brien, Executive Director of Street Law. The Moroccan TV, Radio and press attended and covered the opening session.

The first session was dedicated to explaining the goals and objectives of "Connecting Islam and Democracy" project and the objectives of the orientation seminar. The participants discussed the major themes of the seminar: The principles of democracy and their compatibility with Islamic values, awareness of contemporary issues related to Islam and democracy, planning for the introduction of the program and the dissemination of its ideas in the two countries.

The issues that were introduced in the

seminar sessions were:

- ◆ The principles of democracy
- ◆ The structure of democratic government
- ◆ Citizen participation
- ◆ Checking the abuse of power
- ◆ Human rights and freedom of expression
- ◆ Human rights and equality

Upon completion of the seminars, two people from each country will continue to work with Street Law and CSID to write new textbook materials for everyday citizen that show the connection between Islam and Democracy. A facilitators' guide that can be used by community leaders will accompany the materials. The remaining seminar participants will have input into the materials and will be asked to commit to implementing strategies that promote discussions about Islam and Democracy ■



Participants from both countries engaged in thoughtful discussions about the textbooks and the training program for their constituents.

Defining & Establishing Justice in Muslim Societies

By Layla Sein
CSID Conference Coordinator

The Center for Islam and Democracy (CSID) held its Fifth Annual Conference in Washington, DC on May 28 – 29, 2004. Twenty seven presentations examining the concept of justice in Muslim societies were highlighted in seven panel sessions. CSID inaugurated an Open Forum for Muslim Democrats from Muslim world. About 200 scholars, diplomats, government officials, democracy professionals and academicians attended the conference.

The Conference Chair, Dr. Akbar S. Ahmed, the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University, welcomed the guests and encouraged frank and honest discussions. CSID President, Dr. Radwan Masmoudi, underscored the need to establish justice in the Muslim world and the world at large. He hoped that this conference would help shed light on what justice really means and how it can be strengthened. He stated that “justice cannot endure under authoritarian rulers, and the dream of a ‘just oppressor’ (al-mustabid al-adil) is obsolete and toxic.”

Session One - Political Foundations of Justice:

Kamran A. Bokhari, Howard University, Washington, DC, explored the “correlation between the lack of an Islamic political system capable of dispensing justice and the (current) general state of poverty of thought among Islamists.”

Imad ad-Dean Ahmad, Minaret of Freedom Institute, MD, highlighted the need to understand why “sound governance

must incorporate *Shurah* and *Ijma* while respecting justice as both a means and a goal.”

Abdel-Fattah Mady, Claremont Graduate University, CA, further reinforced the need to understand the role of Islamic law (Shari’ah) in Muslim societies and in establishing justice among Muslims and non Muslims alike.

Session Two - Economic Justice:

Paul Sullivan, National Defense University, VA, began by saying that “Muslims know [democracy] in their hearts. The people in these countries desire democracy because they have done without it for so long.” As an economist, Dr. Sullivan argued that the absence of economic justice in Arab societies is attributed mostly to poor leadership and governance.

Dr. Bart J. Ryan, Harvard University, MA, analyzed the Indonesian economy in light of the role that Islam will play in



Approximately 200 participants attended the conference’s various panels and sessions.

democratic reform.

Norman G. Kurland, J.D., the Center for Economic and Social Justice, VA, stated that there is not enough focus on justice,

and that law is often unjust. Kurland presented the “Just Third Way” as an alternative to today’s two economic paradigms: capitalism, and socialism/communism.

The Friday luncheon featured Carl Gershman, President, National Endowment for Democracy; and Alina Romanowsky, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Gershman emphasized that “American Muslims can be a force for democracy in their countries of origin.” Romanowsky described the role that America plays in supporting democratic reform in the region by initiating workshops for women hoping to run for political office.

Sessions Three - The “Ambassador’s Forum” on “Islam & Democracy.”

Four Ambassadors from four Muslim nations - Morocco, Egypt, Turkey and Jordan - analyzed democratic reforms currently underway in their countries. After the presentations, conference participants had an opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussions with the ambassadors. Ambassador Aziz Mekouar of Morocco examined the status of his country’s democratization process. He spoke about the economic and educational challenges facing Moroccan society since 70% of the population is under 25.

Ambassador M. Nabil Fahmy of Egypt talked about the need for people in the Muslim world to do more since democracy is a process that develops gradually.

In his discussion about democratic reform in Turkey, Ambassador Osman Faruk Logoglu remarked that secularism is



Ambassadors of Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and Turkey addressed the CSID conference.

a key condition for bringing about genuine democratic traditions. He stated that Turkish democracy did not come easily.

Ambassador Karim Kawar of Jordan focused primarily on Jordan's need to build the pillars of democracy: education, human rights, freedom of press, civil society, rule of law, and entrepreneurship.

The Annual Banquet consisted of a keynote address by Akbar S. Ahmed on "The US and the Muslim World at a Crossroads: A Call to Reason and Cooperation." In examining the question: "Why Must the West understand the Muslim world?" Ahmed talked about the "war on terror" and the need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of Islam. He stated that both parties must engage in a dialogue on the role of religion, democracy, justice and gender in society through conferences, seminars and the dissemination of information.

The "Dialogue of Civilizations" award was presented by CSID to Professor John L. Esposito, University Professor at Georgetown University. In his presentation on "Post 9/11 Challenges to the Dialogue of Civilizations," Esposito explained that the integration of religion in global ethnic and tribal identity, along with nationalist tendencies, is a political reality since the fall of the Soviet Union, and will lead either to a clash of civilizations or dialogue and coexistence." Professor Esposito outlined the three realities that

define the post 9/11 period as being: a global resurgence in religion, both in the public and private spheres, the de-secularization of society and an emergence of "civilizational dialogue."

CSID presented the "Muslim Democrat of the Year" award to Professor Abdolkarim Soroush. Dr. Hossein Kamali accepted the award on behalf of Professor Soroush, and read a statement on his behalf. In his statement, the noted Iranian scholar and activist said: "Justice constitutes the key to formulating such a notion of democracy that is not only compatible but rather concomitant with the teachings of Islam. We should remember the Qur'anic injunction: inna-



Akbar Ahmed, John Esposito, and Asma Afsaruddin

Allah ya'muru bi al-'adl wa al-ihs'an (al-Nahl/16:90) verily God commands justice and doing good."

Session Four - The Role of Social Organizations in Promoting Justice:

Orla Lynch, University College Cork, Ireland, stated that Islamic fundamentalism is the most significant challenge facing the West since the post-Cold War period. She argued that Islamic revivalism and activism would be a more appropriate term to describe this current phenomenon and went on to trace its history and evolution, first as a response to European colonialism and then as a by-product of the failure of Pan Arabism.

Moataz A. Fattah, Central Michigan University, outlined the methodologies and

findings of an empirical study that he conducted to determine whether attitudes of ordinary Muslim citizens obstruct democracy. Dr. Fattah characterized the prevailing attitude of his subjects toward the US as one of distrust as they felt that it was not a credible promoter of democracy.

Mr. Babak Rahimi, European University Institute, Italy, stated that Islamic democracy should be based on a model that emphasizes civil society. Rahimi explained that the significance of civil society is that it allows people and groups to participate in the affairs of state and check the power of the government.

Jennifer Bremer, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, examined the importance of Islamic philanthropy. Dr. Bremer asserted that it created a strong and independent civil society whereby the elite could challenge the authority of the state. Islamic philanthropy also enabled the upper middle class to strengthen its linkages and networks with the poor by demonstrating that society can meet their needs without interventions from the state.

Session Five - Justice for Women and Gender Equality: Asma Barlas, Ithaca College, NY, drew on her recent book "Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an". Dr. Barlas argued for a new Qur'anic hermeneutics of gender equality. She argued that since God is a just God, he cannot encourage *zulm* (oppression) against any group. Another crucial argument for gender equality was her question: How can women be equal in the eyes of God, but not in the eyes of men?

Sarah Mehta, Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, DC, spoke about the status of Muslim Indian women. She explained how Muslim women in India constitute a "double minority:" first, as Muslims in a Hindu-majority state, and second, as women subject to patriarchal religious traditions.

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Woman's Identity and the Qur'an: A New Reading

Author: Nimat Hafez Barazangi

An original and uncompromising study of the Qur'anic foundations of women's identity and agency, this book is a bold call to Muslim women and men to reread and reinterpret the Qur'an, Islam's most authoritative source, and to discover within its revelations an inherent affirmation of gender equality.

Nimat Hafez Barazangi asserts that Muslim women have been generally excluded from equal agency, from full participation in Islamic society, and thus from full and equal Islamic identity, primarily because of patriarchal readings of the Qur'an and the entire range of early Qur'anic literature. Based on her pedagogical study of the sacred text, she argues that Islamic higher learning is a basic human right, that women have equal authority to participate in the interpretation of Islamic primary sources, and that women will realize their just role in society and their potential as human beings only when they are involved in the interpretation of the Qur'an.

Consequently, a Muslim woman's relationship with God must not be dependent on her husband's or father's moral agency. Barazangi, an American Muslim of Syrian origin, is a scholar, an activist, and a concerned feminist. Her analysis of the complex interaction of gender, religion, and the power of knowledge for self-identity offers a paradigm shift in Islamic studies. She documents the historical development of Islamic thought and describes how Muslim males have arrived at the prevailing exclusionary positions.

The book offers a curricular framework for self-learning that could prepare Muslim women for an active role in citizenship and policy making in a pluralistic society and may serve as a guideline for moving toward a "gender revolution."



*Nimat Hafez Barazangi
CSID Board Member*

Sherien Sultan, International Center for Transitional Justice, NY, talked about the "gap between the rhetoric of equality and the reality of the profound inequality that exists between men and women in Muslim societies."

Michelle Carla Morelli, a consultant for the federal government, examined "how historically, Moroccan women have struggled to become active participants in their country's labor force. Moroccan women face discrimination in the workplace and home; this discrimination hinders some women from being fully accepted as true and equal employees in the labor market."

Professor Ali Mazrui, State University of New York, Binghamton, gave the Hesham Reda Memorial luncheon keynote address on Saturday. Dr. Mazrui spoke on "Pax Islamica and the Pursuit of Justice Between Force and Forgiveness." In his interpretation of the relations between the Muslim world and the West, Dr. Mazrui examined the practical and philosophical aspects of these wisdoms: tolerance and minimization of conflict; optimization of economic well-being; celebration of diversity and social justice; gender equity as a global ethic; ecological balance and respect for nature; interfaith dialogue and the pursuit of greater wisdom and justice.

Session Six - Open Forum - Voices of Muslim Democrats: Democracy activists from several countries shared their experiences while voicing their hopes, beliefs and expectations. Muslim democrats participating in this forum included Ms. Neila Charchour Hachicha – Tunisia; Ms. Fida Shehada – Palestine; Mr. Hamid Aminoddin Barra - the Philippines; Dr. Seyed Hossein Seifzadeh – Iran; Mr. Mohamed al-Yahyai – Oman; and Shaikh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf – Uzbekistan. Abdulwahab Alkebsi, of the National Endowment for Democracy, stated that "since Muslim democrats are

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American Muslim Icon Passes Away

American Muslim intellectual, activist, journalist, writer, and friend to all Muslim women, Sharifa Alkhateeb, passed away Wednesday, October 20, 2004 AD/6 Ramadhan, 1425 AH. Sharifa has been an advocate for Muslims and more specifically Muslim women nationally and internationally for the last 35 years. She was the creator, cofounder, and president of the

North American Council of Muslim Women (NACMW).

As an active and effective grassroots organizer, she was an active member of many national and international organizations, including CSID. May the Almighty God bless her soul and be pleased with her.



Sharifa Alkhateeb



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By supporting CSID, **YOU**

- ◆ **Encourage** young Muslims in the US and around the world to participate in the political process and to reject calls for destructive violence and extremism.
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all trying to reach the same goals they should coordinate their efforts." He added that CSID's promotion of forums like Voices of Muslim Democrats "could provide a unique way to develop a network through which they can work together for democracy. These forums could help develop strategies for promoting civil society, political participation, popular elections, limited government, transparency, human rights and poverty reduction."

Session Seven - Individual Rights and Responsibilities: Mary Knight, New York University, argued that individual accountability, an Islamic concept, is necessary to establish justice.

Saeed A. Khan, Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, Michigan, defined the clear lines that exist between the private and public spheres and stressed the need for the state and individuals to recognize this boundary. Khan acknowledged that before social justice can be implemented, privacy of rights and duties must be enforced.

Jack DuVall, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, Washington, DC, asserted that justice cannot be established under oppressive rule. He encouraged strategic, nonviolent campaigns to achieve support for people in repressive regimes

from the international community.

Irvin J. Borowsky, American Interfaith Institute at the National Liberty Museum, PA, began by recognizing the diversity of the American people and acknowledged that the separation of church and state allowed people to practice any religion. Borowsky emphasized the need for the followers of the Abrahamic faiths to retain pride toward each other without prejudice, and work for the mission of peace and justice.

CSID's 5th Annual Conference provided a platform for open, honest, and sincere discussions in hopes of enlightening a world that seems to be lost in a sea of uncertainty and confusion. As Professor Ahmed, stated, "In the post-9/11 cultural climate, such platforms are too far and few between." ■

Please join & support CSID.

Since 1999, CSID has worked to promote democracy, human rights, and freedom in the Muslim world and to build better relations and mutual understanding between the United States and the Muslim world.

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