The European Muslim Union

Documentation of the Skopje Gathering, May 2010
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Both ‘European and Muslim’

Skopje, the tradition-steeped capital of Macedonia was the scene for this year’s EMU gathering from 28 to 30 May 2010.

On the evening of Friday 28 May, the President of the Humanitarian Organisation “El Hilal”, Behidjudin Shehabi, and the President of the EMU, Abu Bakr Rieger, greeted around 120 invited guests from all over the Balkans, Russia and West Europe.

The keynote lecture on “The Significance of the Balkans for European Muslims” was given by the Honorary President of the EMU, Prof Nevzat Yalcintas. Dr Yalcintas outlined the traditions of Islam in the region from the past to the present and pointed out the growing potential and significance of the millions of European Muslims.

On Saturday 29 May, the Ambassador of Turkey in Skopje, H.E. Hakan Okcal received the guests in a welcoming speech. Abu Bakr Rieger then presented the main theme of the conference. “The European Muslims do not have an identity crisis and are themselves a proof that there is no contradiction in being both ‘European and Muslim’.”

“Islam is not in itself a culture,” he said, “but rather filters existing cultures and produces new, positive cultural relations and connections. The Muslims who speak European languages today represent a constantly growing potential from Kazan to Granada,” Rieger added.

Talks and lectures from the conference, under the title, “Islam beyond Immigration”, are presented here and documented in detail. The talks and lectures deal with the legal situation of the Muslims in Europe, the role of the mosques, the current financial crisis and the identity of European Muslims.

On Sunday 30 May, comments and suggestions on various subjects including, media, women, economics and youth exchange, amongst others, were received by the EMU Board from the European Muslims, Imams and NGOs present at the conference. The subsequent workshop dealt with a mutual exchange of experiences, the presentation of successful projects and the coordination of joint activities.
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Muslims of Europe: confident, at ease and clear

Final Declaration of the 2010 Gathering of the European Muslim Union

The final message of the 2010 Gathering of the European Muslim Union Foundation (EMU) was:

1. Islam is at home in Europe. Islam is part of the culture, history and civilisation of the continent. Islam and Muslims cannot be defined as an alien, foreign or merely immigrant phenomenon in Europe. The existence of entire indigenous Muslim nations and peoples in the Balkans is proof of this fact. Eight hundred years of Islamic rule in Spain and Portugal represent a heritage that has shaped European and Western civilisation.

We, the Muslims of Europe are confident of, at ease with and clear as to our identity both as Europeans and as Muslims. There is no contradiction between these two aspects of our identity.

2. The EMU Foundation focuses on implementing social activities and programmes in Europe that are of benefit to both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The EMU Foundation seeks to promote the capability of Muslims and their participation in the common prosperity and welfare of Europe. The EMU Foundation intends to further projects that provide a remedy to the current financial system. Members of the EMU Foundation in Europe are already putting into practice market models, conducting them according to Islamic regulations of trade and as a means of da’wah, and by so doing, investigating the capacity of Islam to provide valid alternatives and solutions to the present financial and economic crisis.

3. The EMU Foundation is concerned with the role of mosques in European countries and works towards excellence in management, services, accounting, education and social programmes among the mosques of Europe – addressing in this way not only the Muslim community but also the surrounding society.

The 2010 Gathering of the EMU Foundation in Skopje emphasises the role of the imam as a model of excellence of character and personal conduct; that he should be a model teacher and guide to be imitated and followed through his lessons and khutbas.

4. The EMU Foundation seeks to support educational projects and initiatives in Europe in order to fulfil the educational needs of our children and youth. In this respect the EMU Foundation gives its full support to the establishment of an educational cen-
tre for youth in the historic Muslim market of the city of Skopje, under the auspices of our Macedonian member and cooperation partner, the humanitarian organisation, “El Hilal”.

The EMU Foundation is equally committed to support the efforts and initiatives directed at protecting the Islamic architectural heritage of the city of Skopje.

5. The EMU Foundation seeks to support media projects that give a voice to the Muslims in Europe as well as training young Muslims in the professional skills of journalism, public relations and audio-visual communication.

6. The EMU Foundation agrees to raise issues specific to Muslim women in Europe, their rights and concerns, and to promote the participation of more Muslim women and Muslim women’s organisations in EMU activities.

7. The EMU Foundation stands for cooperation and mutual support between the indigenous Muslims of Europe; those who belong to the regions where Islam has been present for hundreds of years those who accepted Islam recently as well as the immigrant Muslim communities of Europe. The EMU Foundation regards solidarity between Muslims – beyond racial and national origin – an essential feature of the Muslim community.

The EMU Foundation will continue to maintain contact with, and visits to, Muslim communities all over Europe with the aim of strengthening brotherhood and cooperation.

Skopje, Macedonia, Sunday 30 May 2010
Dear ambassador, dear guests, dear brothers and sisters in Islam.

As-Salaam ‘alaykum.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today in Macedonia, in the honourable capital of this country, Skopje.

I want to explain very briefly the structure of the EMU to you. The EMU Foundation was founded on 13 May 2005 in Istanbul, at the suggestion of our honorary president, Professor Yalcintas. Dr Yalcintas was very much aware at that time that the Muslims of Europe had significant potential. So he asked me to promote the idea of a network of European Muslim communities, of European Muslim NGOs and businesses. I had the honour of starting this work, at the beginning very small, but with the help of Allah, now growing by the month.

Our foundation is based and registered in Spain, in Granada, Al-Andalus. We have our administrative headquarters in Strasbourg, France, a key city of Europe, as you are all aware. And we have a working team in Europe, with whom we work, create and promote activities on a daily basis. We received strong support from Spain; with Dr Haji Abdalhasib Castiñeira now working with us in the EMU. He speaks perfect Arabic and I can also say, without exaggerating his importance, that he is one of the great ‘alims [Islamic scholars] of Europe.

Leaving the structural perspective and moving towards the real intention of the EMU; clearly we want to connect all the Muslims of Europe. We have been travelling since the inception of the EMU all over Europe, a wonderful task. In fact, some of the highest points of my life occurred on these journeys.

Just to give you some idea of the nature of our work, we visited Kosovo with our local representative, Dr Xhabir Hamiti. I have been in Mitrovica, in Prizren and in Pristina. Together with Prof Dr Yalcintas, we went to Bosnia and saw Sarajevo and Mostar. We have been in Russia, where we had an unforgettable meeting while working with Brother Abdulvakhid Niyazov. We have been Tatarstan. We have been to Hungary, which included a very wonderful visit to Budapest. We have been in England and in France, to name but a few.

So you see, being the president of EMU is a wonderful position because Allah puts you on a journey. I have met so many wonderful people in all of these places, and could easily gather enough material for a Hollywood movie; All those who know the honourable Mufti of Western Thrace, know that his life contains enough material for a long film and that he is one of the emblems of Islam in Europe.

I have been asked to speak a little about the general idea of this conference. I think we are now experiencing one of its main ideas. I feel that already a strong message will come out from Skopje to Europe. And it is this; that Islam is not a culture. Islam filters culture. Islam creates culture, but is not in itself a culture. That is why I can be an Albanian, German, French, English, Swiss, or Italian Muslim but without having to negate or to reject my own culture.

Up until today, in my case, I have been an admirer of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, one of the greatest poets of Europe, and I can quote him also. In the 19th century, quite a difficult time for Islam in Europe, he made a very famous statement; namely that, “If Islam means obedience to God, we all live and die in Islam.”

I want also to state firmly that we do not believe that Islam is a kind of radical theology. Why is that? This is because, in my knowledge and ex-
perience, Islam is always connected with culture. Islam has always been connected with life and always connected with tradition. It is not a theology, or an ideology you can disconnect from the place where people live. That in itself is a balance. As such, we respect the great tradition of Islam in Europe – as we have seen it in Tatarstan, here, in Al-Andalus and many other places in Europe.

You can see, that the meaning of this conference is demonstrated by its very programme; yesterday we had a feast whose meaning was very simple, how wonderful it is to be a Muslim. It is wonderful to have brothers and sisters, and the fact is that we are all connected. It is wonderful that we are not lonely. It is wonderful that we have no fear through having a revelation, a positive outlook and no resentment. We are not against anyone. In reality, we are together here to celebrate and to praise Allah, subhana wa ta’ala. This is purely positive, with no negativity.

Today we have something very important to offer. We will indicate to the European people – a fact sometimes forgotten – that we Europeans have an intellect inspired by Islam. Allah has given us brains. We can think. We can argue. We are not living in the past, nor yet can say today how the future will look.

We use our intellect here and now and listen to other thinkers. We listen to people of knowledge. We desire to learn about the situation of the human being. This is a knowledge that can be shared with everyone in Europe because Allah ta’ala has given us something. You need intellect. You may be a simple man or you can be a professor. You will find knowledge and answers in Islam. If you allow me, I want to briefly indicate three fundamental aspects, which we – as the EMU – espouse:

1.) We are clear as to our identity.  
2.) We have clarity as to what Islam is.  
3.) We are absolutely clear about the time we are living in.

Let me speak briefly about what having clarity over our identity means. We are European Muslims. This is very simple and easy to understand. But, it is also the beginning of a journey.

When I became Muslim, I was very much a German. I said to my teacher; “Look, I am a German and I am Muslim. But, all these Arabs, Turks, Indonesians … I don’t know, I am not sure.” My teacher did something very wise in saying; “I think, the best thing for you is to go on hajj.” He sent me on hajj. I left Germany as a German, with my tie, my passport, my money and my identity, and I went to Makka. When I came back to Spain, to Granada, an old friend of mine received me at the railway station. When he saw me, he said: “Subhanallah! Abu Bakr, you have changed!” And an older companion of his interjected; “Well, how would you look after meeting one and a half million buffalos?”

In other words: I left as a German and came back as a Muslim.

There is another bit of the journey which we here are all familiar with, but that has to be mentioned, and that is; the highest understanding of identity – which you discover by being on the path. If you study the important scholars of tasawwuf in any tradition, you realise that they teach you something very simple. It sounds very simple; the more you give up your identity and the more you reduce your nafs, the more Allah, subhana wa ta’ala, appears.

Although it sounds simple, it took European philosophy – Nietzsche, Heidegger, Schiller and many of the European philosophers – centuries to discover this reality. If you examine European philosophy, you will find it is a search for unity, a search for tawhid. Identity is a journey. Its start is where you are from – your father, your mother, your family, your tribe and your situation – but you discover at the end of the journey that there is only One, only Allah, insha’Allah. Therefore, you are gathered and unified with the human beings from all over the world.

The second point I want to mention briefly is that we are clear as to what the deen is. We have clarity about Islam. Islam is not complicated. I am not a professor, but I understood in a very short time what it means to be a Muslim; that you have to say the shahada, that you have to pray, that you have to go on hajj, that you have to pay the zakat. This is not difficult to understand and so even I understood it.

Recently, at a press conference, I was asked: “Mr Rieger, are you a liberal or a conservative Muslim?” I said: “As I am not in politics, I do not use political terminology. I am a lawyer and I can only say very simply, maybe too simply, that I pray five times a day. It is neither liberal to pray only one time, nor is it conservative to pray ten times. You may pray correctly. It is not liberal to pay 0.5 per cent in zakat, neither is it conservative to pay 20 per cent. You can only pay the zakat correctly.”
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We believe that this is the simple basis of the deen, of Islam, and on it there gathers more than one billion people, from all over the world. This is the clarity of Islam. There is no argument about the ‘ibadat, the five pillars of Islam. We know that Islam never did have anything to do with extremes; when people stay together and when there is jama’at [community]. Our message is – as is that of the EMU; be careful of people who are alone. Don’t trust people who are in small groups, but rather stay with the jama’at. Despite the difficulties and all the problems, we are nevertheless the majority of the Muslims. And try to act with them as best you can.

On all these journeys all over Europe, I have met ‘ulama and great people of Islam, here in Europe. Let’s stay with them and if we have questions, let’s ask them. For centuries they have stood for a middle path, for the sirat al-mustaqim. And they are accessible. They have not disappeared.

The third and last thing I want to speak about, and it is specifically my concern – as it is the concern of all of us – and that is that we live in the here and now; we live today. I believe that if we use our intellect and knowledge of Islam, we will be best prepared for the time we live in. This moment has its priorities and we all know what these are; they are the economy, its money and financial transactions which presently dominate us, wherever we are from – whether Muslims or not. It is logical that we ask Allah, subhanahu wa ta’ala, about this; Does Allah in fact comment on the world of commerce? Does He state anything about financial transactions? Is He in any way aware about the economical dimension of the human being? Is He in any way aware about the greed that we may have, and so on?” And of course, the answer is; “Yes, He is.”

When I had just become a Muslim, in the very early days, I found an ayat in Surat al-Baqara (275), where Allah says, “I forbid usury and I allow trade.” A very simple statement, which if you analyse deeply, helps us understand the world in which we live today.

As we are all aware, the world has again come to a point of ‘financial crisis.’ At this point, in Europe, we are all in the same boat, whether Muslim, Christian or Jew. If you go back in the European tradition, you end up in Greece. If you open the famous book entitled ‘Politeia’, its author Aristotle – founder of political sciences in Europe – warns his fellow Greeks. He says; “The worst, the most dramatic and negative thing that can happen to a community is usury.”

This is in the ‘Politeia’. And of course, this Greek understanding of financial transactions, the old traditional knowledge of Europe, is confirmed by Allah ta’ala in the Qur’an. Allah gives us very clear instructions; not to practice usury but to allow trade. As Europeans, we have to think about this and discuss its meanings.

In the time we are in, we have to discuss with all Europeans, not just with Muslims, how we might work together towards a conclusive answer and how we might set limits in the financial world for the good of creation. We believe, as Muslims, because we have received instruction from Allah, subhanna wa ta’ala, that we can neither accept, nor allow usury. In the same way we can in no way accept the creation of money in a limitless manner – causing as it does clear problems for all of us in Europe.

I mention this because, sometimes, we Muslims are presented as very religious people and a bit old-fashioned. Not so. We are living here and now. We act now. On Sunday, we will discuss options, possibilities and dimensions of our work together, which will facilitate survival in this difficult time that Allah has put us in. We are brothers in this and our aim is to bring good things to the Europeans. We will talk in more detail later about our understanding of the situation.

I believe, along with the professor that it is not about us personally, rather that we are just symbols of this process, not the end of the story but just a small chapter in the story. However, I do believe that we now have three large and growing groups in Europe that will play a significant role:
1.) The great community of the native European Muslims – i.e. in Tatarstan, Russia, Al-Andalus and the Balkans. It is a growing reality, consisting of neither immigrants nor foreigners.

2.) There is a whole group like myself and brothers like Malik here from Spain, or Amir from Russia. In a time in which nobody spoke about Islam, we converted to Islam. And I remember that our parents looked at us and asked: “Why? Are you mad? Why are you doing this?”

They did not understand immediately, and now we are parents ourselves, with children, who are European Muslims. In Germany we have a community, which started with just a couple of men, but now all of us have children. They in turn will marry and have children themselves, who will say; “We were born in Islam, we are Muslims!”

3.) But also there is a third group important to me, and I do not want the EMU to be perceived as an organisation which does not honour, for example, the earlier Turks who moved to Germany; workers and simple people who worked twenty hours a day fisabilillah to open a mosque. We do not speak badly about any immigrant community in Europe, because all of them did something for Islam in Europe.

And again, they also have children now. I have friends in Germany, with Turkish, Bosnian, Moroccan or Syrian fathers who speak better German than I do. They have no dialect, and speak High German. They went to German schools and universities. And since I believe that the identity of Europeans is defined by the fact that they speak a European language, naturally they are Europeans too. The moment you live in a European country and you learn Macedonian, Albanian, Bosnian, German, French or English – and you speak it well – then you are part of the community and of the society. The number of these people, if you reflect on the matter, is growing again.

Islam is in Europe. Europe’s Muslims have a significant role to play. We do not have a crisis of identity and we are clear about the deen, about Islam and about our future. We have something to give the Europeans and something to share with them.

Our approach is purely positive and I invite everybody here to work with us – not by becoming a party member – The EMU is not a club for which you will have to fill out a form. This is not our role. We are a foundation and we are doing civil work.

We simply want to bring our people together. We have themes, obligations and ideas and we want to form groups to carry them out. We want to work for good, for the social and cultural welfare of the Muslims in Europe. Everybody is invited to join any of our programmes.

We ask Allah to give this meeting success in this and I ask Allah particularly to give our honorary president, Prof. Yalçın, strong health in the hope that he stays restless and in the state of a frequent traveller.

I want to ask Allah to give ease to the Mufti of Western Thrace and to reward him for his holding on to Islam in such a difficult time when no one in Europe cared about his situation. He is a reminder to all of our young people to stay with Allah and our Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and give him peace, in difficult times.

I especially want to thank the Turkish ambassador in Macedonia for coming here. This is an honour for us and indicates that the EMU is working with governments and not against them. Thank you very much for your presence.
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The Significance of the Balkans for the European Muslims

By Prof Dr Nevzat Yağcıntas, honorary EMU president

Islam today, with its European history, its socio-political structure, culture and civilisation, is an integral part of the life of the European people. In this article we shall focus on Islam and its real existence in the Balkan Peninsula, its profound and unbroken connection to the past and its relations with this region.

First of all we would like to clarify what the word ‘Balkans’ refers to. A short description might state that it is a region south of the basin of the river Danube that stretches down to and taps off into the Mediterranean, with the Adriatic Sea to its West and the Black Sea region, the Straits of the Bosphorus and the Aegean Sea to its East.

The following countries are to be found in this region – viewed clockwise: Romania, Bulgaria, the Thrace region of Turkey, Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Of the aforementioned countries, Romania and Bulgaria are fulltime members of the European Union and Croatia and Turkey have ongoing accession negotiations. The region covers an area of 800 km² and has a population of 75 million.

All the countries in the region aspire to enter the European Union (EU). When referring to the region, the EU uses the term “Southeast Europe” while the term “Balkans” which correctly describes the region’s history, its socio-political features, population structure and geography is deliberately not used. This fact sheds doubt on the EU policy of expansion and in some countries is perceived as European chauvinism and expansionism. The term “Balkans” is a geographical term, which means “a woody and mountainous region” and it utterly reflects the topographic characteristics of the region itself.

The introduction of Islam to the Balkans

Islam, that appeared first in the Hijaz, in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, started its rapid expansion into Asia, Africa and Europe during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and especially during the time of the four Caliphs. When Islam arrived in Europe people became acquainted with the true faith in the following stages:

The expansion of Islam from Gibraltar to Spain; In the year 711, Tariq bin Ziyad with his Islamic army of 7,000 soldiers crossed the sea through the Straits which were later named after him to Spain – from Africa to Europe – and laid the foundation for the 800-year-long Islamic civilisation and reign. The Muslims extended their control by crossing the Pyrenees Mountains, their advance finally being stopped at the battle of Poitiers in France in 732.

Muslims managed to maintain their Islamic reign and culture in the South of Europe by way of Sicily. Italian art, culture and government adopted many Islamic elements, which sowed the first seeds of the renaissance. Muslim merchants and announcers (people tasked by the Prophet to spread knowledge without forcing others to accept it) left from Sicily and North Africa to introduce Islam to the South of Europe.

The introduction of Islam and Muslims through Russia to Eastern Europe was effected mainly through the regions of Poland, Romania and Dobrocha, the so called “Eastern gate”.

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The amazing introduction and establishment of Islam in Europe through the Ottomans in such a short period of time was in general achieved through conquests and the establishment of a righteous and just system of governance.

Islam started to spread in the Balkans when the son of the Ottoman Sultan Orhan Gazi, Sulaiman Pasha crossed the Marmara Sea through the Dardanelles and started to conquer the Thrace region in 1354. The Ottoman Islamic army aimed to reach the centre of Europe and had to follow the course of the River Danube in order to achieve this.

Ottoman Muslims followed this trail and after numerous victories managed to spread Islam. There is no doubt that the Balkans was familiar with Islam before the arrival of the Ottoman Muslims. Muslim announcers from Sicily and North Africa had already introduced Islam there. In order to prevent the announcers, only locally effective and relatively small in number, from spreading the teachings of Islam, the Pope urged the kings of the Christian Balkan countries to banish them from their countries.

From the above, we can see that it was during the reign of the Ottomans that Islam made a greater impact, rooting itself in Europe. Ottoman conquests opened the path to Islamic teachings and brought freedom to Islam as well as to other religions. The meaning of the Turkish word conquest (fetih) is “opening” and in this context it means opening the territory for the liberation of Islam. It is a well-known fact however that there is no religious coercion in Islam, clearly stated in a verse of the Qur’an. Islam spread in the Balkan countries in the spirit of peace and freedom. The main reasons
for the above originate from the noble principles of Islam, its belief in “one God”, respect and tolerance for other religions as well justice and equality. The Islamic belief in “oneness” appealed to the Bosnians and in particular members of the “Bogomil” sect, who also honoured “One God”, and who soon embraced Islam.

Furthermore, in accordance with Islamic teachings, peasants who worked as serfs for their feudal lords, gained rights to their own land, and by paying taxes on the proceeds of that land attained a better standard of living – which in turn made the expansion of Islam easier.

The voluntary conversion of people to Islam prompted the Papacy to try to stop the Ottoman forces and drive them out of the Balkans, persuading the Christian countries to form an alliance and attack the Ottomans with large armies. Bloody battles ensued and brought a halt to the expansion of Islamic territory, but none of these efforts prevented Islam from expanding throughout the region of the Danube to the borders of Ukraine.

Victories believed to be pre-ordained for Islam and for Muslims glorifying the name of the God Almighty in their earnest intention to spread the last religious announcement, their awareness that martyrdom accorded them an honourable place in the presence of the Creator, all undoubtedly added to the might of the Muslims.

When one analyses the details of the battle of Kosovo that took place in 1389, when Sultan Murad managed to defeat the Pope’s crusader army, one recognises the influence of the purity of Islamic beliefs on the victory itself. The crusader army outnumbered the Ottoman Islamic army and some of the commanders of Sultan Murad Hudavendigar argued that this made the battle difficult to justify. However at the war council, Ali Pasha Vizier read the verse from the Qur’an, which asks; “How many a small force has triumphed over a much greater one by Allah’s permission?” lifting their faith and willpower and boosting their moral.

Just before the start of the battle, Sultan Murad Hudavendigar prostrated in prayer and in tears made a supplication saying; “O Almighty God, make the Islamic army victorious, You Who have made me a soldier of God, grant me martyrdom in this battle.”
The Eastern issue
With the conquest of Istanbul by Fatih Sultan Mehmed in 1453 and the end of the conquests in the Balkans, a new era was ushered in throughout the Ottoman territories which was also named “the Ottoman Peace”. Fatih and his sultans, apart from the conquests, issued imperial edicts guaranteeing the safety of property, life, the protection of chastity and freedom of religion to the non-Muslim population – announcing the complete freedom of their culture, customs and religious worship and also accepting and safeguarding the existence and function of the churches and synagogues.

This is why, during the 600 years of Ottoman Muslim government until today, all Balkan nations have preserved their religions, languages, culture and customs and also their identities.

When the Ottoman Islamic government gained strength and stability, the countries subject to the crusader spirit started discussing how to destroy the Ottoman Turks, weaken the Islamic strength and drive the Muslims out of the Balkans. Ultimately, they devised a plan named, “the Oriental Issue”. The essence of this plan was, “to drive the Ottoman Turks out of the Balkans and in a second stage, remove them from Constantinople and banish them to the Middle Eastern steppes.”

In order to achieve this goal, they initiated various strategic and tactical acts of provocation in the Balkans. Finally, in 1912, after the Balkan Wars, the Balkans detached themselves from the Ottoman Empire.

The region faced bloodshed, massacres and calamities. People started migrating to Turkey. Those who migrated were not just Rumelian Turks (those living in the European part of the Ottoman Empire). In the face of great loss and oppression, a large number of Albanian, Bosniak, Goran and Pomak Muslims also moved to Turkey.

The number of the above-mentioned immigrants is larger than the number of those currently living in their respective countries. Turkey is still considered to be their homeland. Turks have not forgotten their fellow Muslims in the Balkans and have always shown interest in their problems.

Balkan Muslims today
The Balkans is still home to the oldest established Muslim population in Europe. After the Balkan wars in 1912, many independent and self-governing countries were established. People have always migrated from these countries to Turkey. However, apart from all these waves of immigration there are still populations who have managed to preserve their religion, customs and identity even though they are a minority.

After the Second World War, the Balkan countries, with the exception of Greece, fell under the hegemony of dictatorial communist regimes. Communism embodying the principle of “atheism” was against the existence and practice of any religion. This principle applied to all religions including Islam. They demolished or closed down the mosques. Because Turkey was part of the free world and was a NATO member, the communists turned against the Muslim Turks living in the Balkans.

After the death of President Tito, Yugoslavia disintegrated. Certain fanatical Serbian organisations and gangs took arms against our Muslim Bosnian brothers and committed acts of genocide. 250 thousand Bosnians and other fellow Muslims were killed. They raped tens of thousands of innocent and chaste women. They viciously killed 8 thousand men of all ages in Srebrenica alone. The great hero and intellectual Alija Izetbegovic and his followers faced days, months and years of difficulty. These enemies of Islam attacked Kosovo as well. Muslims in Kosovo, mainly the Albanian Muslims, faced grave losses. NATO air forces reacted and peace was restored. Serbian leaders who led those gangs now face prosecution as war criminals.

During these frightful acts of genocide, Turkey extended a helping hand to her fellow Muslim brothers and sisters and helped a great number of refugees.

The current situation
Peace reigns throughout the Balkan countries and amongst our fellow Muslims today. Bosnia and Kosovo are trying to heal their wounds and are working hard to obtain permanent peace in their countries. Turkish diplomacy is trying its best to assist them as much as possible.

After the arrest of the Serbian war criminals, Serbian and Bosnian leaders came together under the chairmanship of the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Prof Ahmet Davutoglu.

The two countries decided to officially recognise each other and establish diplomatic offices in the respective capitals. There is no doubt that it is our, as well as the obligation of all peace loving people in the world, to help the Balkan countries that suffered genocide – and especially our fellow Muslims who were the real victims of this event. Turkey is making all the necessary efforts in
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There is a significant number of Muslims living in the Balkan countries today. The following statistics come from a recognised source.

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<th>Number of Muslims (2010)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
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<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>800,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>250,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>50,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>120,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>600,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey (Thrace region)</td>
<td>10,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20,620,000</strong></td>
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this direction. According to statistics, around 21 million Muslims currently live in the Balkans. If we take into consideration the natural rate of population growth, we can firmly state that this number will grow even more. Even if we exclude the 10 million Muslims who live in the Thrace region of Turkey, the number of Muslims who live in the Balkans still numbers 11 million – a number not to be taken lightly. Thus the Balkans will have a significant contribution to make with respect to the total population of Muslims living in Europe. We should always take this fact into consideration.

**Conclusions**

Muslims living in the Balkans faced many problems after the departure of the Ottomans from this region and have suffered a lot. The memories of the Bosnian and Kosovo tragedies are still fresh in our minds. Islamic traditions existed for a long time in these territories and many legacies of Islamic culture and civilisation are still to be seen. We have to restore them to their former glory and make them functional again. In particular, we should teach the new generations about Islamic knowledge, something neglected for a long time, together with the fundamentals of the Islamic faith, the principles of worship and culture. We should also strengthen the communication between the Balkan Muslims communities and those living in other countries.
The Balkans nowadays and throughout history has formed a complex structure, from the geopolitical, cultural and historical point of view. What I would like to address on this occasion, refers to the existing, Islamic architectonic heritage, as well as culture, introduced to this region with the arrival of the Ottomans, in the 14th century.

To begin with, I would like to look at the terminology of what I mean by “Islamic architecture”. I simply point out that for the scope of this paper, it is reduced to those segments relating to socio-cultural, political, and aesthetic values, all within the connotation of the Islamic building heritage. Primarily, I recognise it through the religious structures, namely the mosques and tekjes, being focal points of the spiritual tradition and doctrine since the times and the continuity of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and up until the present day.

In fact, in the wider context of architectonic and aesthetic shaping of public space in the Balkans, the contribution of the Ottomans is far greater (especially within urban areas). As such, in the Balkans we find many buildings whose purpose simply portrays the high civil achievements reached by the rulers. According to their basic functional characteristics, I classify these as infrastructural, economic, or religious.

The second momentum, which also needs a short terminological note, refers to the phrase “cultural heritage”. Without going deep into the complexity of this structural unit, not to mention pragmatic aspects, I would simply emphasise that I do not evaluate it only from the administrative and institutional point of view. On the contrary, I will try to encompass the totality of what is essentially within the individual as well as within the collective system of values from which this cultural heritage emerged.

What then does this cultural heritage represent? How can one realise and rightfully treat the reflection of the identity of the European Muslims? It is quite evident that the Islamic religious structures in the Balkans are the most recognizable and portray the contours of an epoch, of a distinctiveness and self-consciousness. At the same time, they express the contours of a complexity, interconnectivity, and present-day reality, part of the multicultural and multi-confessional setting, which is the Balkans.

I will refer to the Old Skopje Bazaar as an outstanding example of this tendency. Generally speaking, the old bazaars from the Ottoman period represent the central focal point of the oriental city, with their role, as with the overall urban development of the cities within the Balkans, being undoubtedly positive.

In this specific case, the Bazaar vividly incorporates the stylistic and urban characteristics of an epoch, bringing an extraordinary fusion of structures, which serve the most diverse functions. But, it is the religious buildings, incorporated within the Bazaar, that are the most recognizable, and the ones that particularly bring a great feeling of calmness, peace, and harmony. Such religious structures represent a remarkable symbiosis of the mystical and doctrinal elements of European Islam, incorporating both a universal as well as a functionally adjusted architectonic, or more broadly speaking, a cultural aspect. The challenge lies in understanding their role in articulating the contemporary cultural, social, political and aesthetic relations, not only within the Balkans, but in Europe as well.
mosque, as an integral, constitutive element of the traditional urban landscape in the Balkans, represents a key piece of European-Oriental expression, with the minaret representing the vertical emphasis of the aesthetic, and the Bazaar, its spatial composition.

Hence, the Old Skopje Bazaar genuinely expresses the philosophy and the doctrine of European Islam, offering both openness, and style within a space that is in harmony with its geographical positioning and overall functionality.

But Islamic architecture goes even further in its brilliance. I base this statement on two additional features, again in relation to the composition of the Old Skopje Bazaar. In the first case, I focus upon another important cultural monument: the Mustafa Pasha Mosque.

In many ways, it represents a genuine example of architectonic creativity and spatial harmony. But in contrast to what I said earlier; namely, that mosques represent a central and vertical focal point in the Bazaar, this time, we witness a slight exception from such a principle.

To be more precise, the Mustafa Pasha Mosque, is firstly released from the communicational north-south positioning and so, instead of being within the central Bazaar area, it appears this time as a communication point, dominant above, yet connecting the Old Skopje Bazaar-Skopje Fortress (Kale) axis.

The second interesting feature is the fact that within its monumental form, it manifests not only a spatial openness (most explicitly throughout its central dome), but at the same time, a symbiosis of cultural and historic
styles, from the Byzantine to more ancient ones. The entrance section of the mosque best exemplifies this cultural and historic positioning and represents a qualitatively new momentum in the Islamic architectural tradition.

Finally, I will indicate another exceptional construction; the Harabati Baba Tekje, in Tetovo. In this case, we have a stylistically exceptional composition that stands outside the framework of the urban location concept I mentioned, on the contrary capturing the essence of Islamic mysticism, peace, and spiritual purity. If this case, it is a relatively enclosed (fenced) architectural composition, where the central spatial role is given to the shadrvan, an expressively social component of the complex – another expression of the progressive element of Islamic doctrine and philosophy.

Starting with these three monuments, what becomes immediately clear is their exceptional importance and, within a greater societal context, the need for these structures to be adequately protected. It is not an easy job at all. One has to start from the understanding that the protection of cultural and historic heritage of architectural nature is a continuous and foremost “a living process”.

It is not exclusive to any party. The Islamic culture in the Balkans, being a constitutive part of contemporary European culture, actually conforms its own “living sintagma”. Where then is the right balance? I would indicate the heart of man; half the way is inside every individual who lives and constantly discovers his/her spiritual self, through the wisdom of the Almighty.

The essential need for protection of the Islamic architectural cultural and historic heritage in the Balkans, alongside that of other congregations, seems not to be adequately articulated. In view of our recent past, religion is most likely to be affected by a variety of short-term political manipulations.

Therefore, as believers, no matter to which congregation we belong, we must not allow the recent tragic situation to repeat itself, since when emotions boil in the Balkans, religious buildings suffer, and most evidently, Islamic ones.

In that respect, I take advantage of this opportunity, to emphasise the constructive role taken by the Republic of Turkey, especially when it comes to the Islamic architectural heritage of the Balkans. It is a positive example for all of us and an inspiration for the future. Only with such a degree of self-consciousness will we succeed, and preserve these authentic and genuine attributes of European Islam, that on the one hand symbolise a progressive spiritual activity, and on the other, the fascinating multicultural societal context of the Balkans.

In the end, I am happy in the knowledge that we have the necessary capacity and wisdom from the Almighty to guide us, through all the difficulties and trials that have been and may yet occur in this pivotal region.

I thank you for your attention.
The investment's potential for sustainable economic development and growth in Balkan countries
By Prof Dr Hüner Sencan, Rector of the International Balkan University

In recent years the Balkan region has emerged as one of the best destinations for direct foreign investment (FDI), with the region attracting the attention of foreign investors. It is expected that countries of this region will enjoy membership in the EU within five to ten years. As has been demonstrated in the economic booms of recently acceded, EU member countries, the period leading up to full EU integration is a strategic time for forward-looking investors to maximise their opportunity.

According to studies on investment opportunities for sustainable economic development and growth in the Balkan countries, different areas emerge as potential economic sectors for investment. For this discussion, we will here explore only the main sectors mentioned by those surveys. The sectors that will be explored and mentioned as having important investment potential in this region are; agriculture, the food processing industry, the timber and wood processing industry, tourism, and the manufacture of car parts.

The Balkan region offers opportunities in agriculture and food processing through its favourable climate and its low-cost, rural labour force. Still using traditional methods, this region’s fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products are cultivated using few artificial additives, chemicals, or pesticides. All countries in the region have a high level of fragmentation in the food and beverage than say in the automotive components industry, a fact that is demonstrated through smaller and more frequent investments.

That is why this sector proves to be the main opportunity for new investors in the Balkan region. Individual countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, offer some advantage in the wood processing industry. The next most important sector in the Balkans is tourism. This region, as a land of different religions and cultures, has been a bridge between East and West, and as such offers considerable opportunities for investors in tourism. Despite global overcapacity in vehicle production, significant investments have occurred during the past five years in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in the pre-accession countries that subsequently joined the EU.

The question now facing the Western Balkans is how to leverage the movement of capital that appears to be migrating from the Central European Countries (CECs) toward some of the South East European Countries (SEECs).

Introduction
The purpose of this study is to conduct an analytical view of the relationship between potential investment and sustainable economic development in the Balkan countries. In doing so, the study will reveal the specific sector in each country that is ripe for investment.

The paper is in two parts. The first part, through an examination of individual countries, explores the advantages and disadvantages of each country, while the second part focuses on specific sectors and the countries that offer the best investment possibilities in each sector.

Regional Background
The Balkan countries, with a population of 20 million, represent a relevant region for foreign investors, especially bearing in mind the ethnic and the cultural diversity of the region. For the purpose of this conference, it is important to note the fact that, more than half of the population are Muslims, despite the fact that migration con-
tinues. The wars may have ended and EU policies on immigration become increasingly strict, but the “western dream” still exerts a powerful force of attraction on the people of the Balkans.

This is particularly noticeable in Kosovo and Bosnia where unemployment affects 40 per cent of the working-age population. The brain drain, primarily among young graduates, is compromising the future of this region and in recent years there has been an increase in the number of migrants being forcibly repatriated under readmission agreements signed by all the Balkan countries with the EU. The Balkan region is characterised by its crucial geopolitical position, direct neighbour with the European Union (EU) and a bridge to the Middle East and Central Asia.

Macedonia has enjoyed official candidate status since 2005, while four countries; Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, have engaged in the ‘Stabilisation and Association’ process. Kosovo is presently in the state-building process and at the starting point of EU access.

These countries all benefit from specific European policies, in particular under the Stability Pact for South East Europe, with the EU taking on growing civil and military responsibilities in post conflict management, primarily in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

The Agriculture and Food processing industry
The importance of agriculture to the economy is both deep and diverse. Primary production from agriculture, hunting and forestry has increased as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with more than 40 per cent of the population in the Balkan countries living in rural areas. In the last few years, in all the Balkan countries, mechanisation and use of fertilisers has increased. In the past, drainage and the irrigation of land were important throughout the Balkans, drainage being more extensive in areas such as Vojvodina and Macedonia. In the last few years, important investment has been made in the agricultural sector in Kosovo.

Macedonia and Kosovo have some advantage in agriculture, comprised as they are of fertile soils, a range of favourable microclimatic features and natural highland pastures convenient for the production certain crops, horticultural produce and lamb.

In Macedonia, about 49 percent of the total area, equivalent to 1.27 million ha, is agricultural land, which includes about 700,000 ha of pastureland. A further 37 percent of the country (950,000 ha) is forest. Most of the cultivable land (82 percent or 461,000 ha) is used for production of cereals and vegetables, with 26,000 ha (5 percent of the cultivable land) vineyards, 15,000 ha (or 3 percent) orchards and the remaining 58,000 ha (10 percent) meadows. Around 1 percent of the total agricultural land consists of swamp and fishponds.

Kosovo is well endowed with agricultural land. Out of a total surface of 1.1 million ha, 588,000 ha, or 53 percent, is cultivable land. With some 60 percent of the population living in rural areas and mostly working in agriculture, Kosovo has a long agricultural tradition. Currently, the agriculture sector contributes 19 percent to the GDP and is the main source of income for the majority of the population. It is one of the most important employment providers in Kosovo accounting for 16 percent of the value of exports.

The foodprocessing sector has faced a major challenge with the arrival of several international supermarkets in Serbia in 2002 and 2003. This has been the single most significant factor affecting food production, processing and retailing industries and will have a profound impact on agriculture. The first 6,000 m² foreign supermarket opened on the outskirts of Belgrade in December 2002, with at least another three hypermarkets of about 15,000 m² by the end of 2003. It is expected that all towns with populations of more than 30,000 will have supermarkets within five years (provided that the respective local economies are sufficiently buoyant), posing a significant challenge to Serbian producers, processors and retailers. Such facts indicate that Serbia offers the best opportunities in the food and beverage processing industry.

The wood processing industry
Bosnia and Herzegovina has a long tradition in forestry and wood processing, going back to the second half of the 19th century. The abundance of both hard and softwood as well as the low-cost, skilled labour force, together with manufacturing facilities with capacity for various wood products, timber and furniture production that exceeds domestic demand, makes this sector export-orientated. Currently, the largest markets for these producers are Germany, Croatia, Serbia, Italy and the UK, but the potential to export to other countries is vast. Forests cover about 27 thousand km². State-owned forest accounts for around four fifths of this amount, al-
though this share should decrease as restitution issues are resolved.

The standing volume of timber is estimated at more that 300 million cubic metres, with an annual growth in the region of 10 million m³. About half of the growing stock is coniferous, while the main broad leaf species are oak and beech, while more specialised woods include walnut, apple and cherry.

**Tourism**

Albania and Montenegro have some advantage for investors in tourism because of their being on the Adriatic coast. Many ruins and rich vestiges of Albanian and Montenegrin history await visitors. There are many notable tourist attractions. Additionally, their coastline has become increasingly popular with tourists due to their relatively unspoiled beauty and amazing beaches.

Albania’s northern Adriatic coast begins in the delta of Vlora, near the city of Shkodra. The Adriatic coastline offers countless opportunities for outdoor recreation. The Ionian coast begins in Vlora and continues southward towards Greece, ending at the Cape of Stillo. It is a coastline marked for its rugged beauty and, although rocky, offers many opportunities for kayaking, swimming, and other forms of outdoor recreation.

Montenegro has a longer history of investment in this sector and as a result offers a more elite tourism, while on the other hand, Albania offers more potential and greater choice for investors looking to invest in tourism in the future.

**Automotive components**

A review of the FDI automotive component projects in the Balkans, reveals that only two of the countries under review in this paper have investments in the manufacturing of car parts; namely, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

In recent years, Macedonia also made some efforts in this sector, through offering economic free zones for investment in the manufacturing of car parts. As a result of the significant effort made by the Macedonian government, we now have an important Foreign Investment project earmarked for one such zone by “Johnson Controls”. Johnson Controls, the global leader in the production of seats, batteries, and other automotive interior parts will start operations in Macedonia once the technical specifications of its 6,000 m² factory building are completed. The first phase of the investment is estimated at 9 million euros, with the company expected to hire 500 mechanical engineers initially.

A second important investment project in the Macedonian free zone Skopje 1, secured in 2009, is an investment made by the Italian company “TeknoHose”. The company, which produces armoured, high-pressure rubber hoses for the automobile industry, will invest 10 million euros in a factory employing 150 people.

Bearing these facts in mind, we can conclude that all three of the countries – Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia – have attained a comparative advantage in the production of car parts and for the automotive industry as a whole.

**Specific features**

Albania. With its developing market economy, Albania offers many opportunities for investors, with property and labour costs being low, the young and educated population is ready to work, while tariffs and other legal restrictions remain low and in many cases are being eliminated. Albania’s location offers notable trade potential, especially with EU markets – it shares a border with Greece and is just across the Adriatic Sea from Italy. Albania has also entered into free trade agreements with all the Balkan countries, creating the opportunity for trade throughout the region.

The Albanian economy in recent years has experienced an economic growth in real terms of approximately 56 per cent. Growth in 2007 is estimated to remain strong at 6 percent, supported by an improved performance and a growth in industry and also by a notable growth of exports and direct foreign investment. Such growth goes hand in hand with improvements in infrastructure, technological innovation in various sectors, as well as a remarkable development in human capacity.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina offers a strong human and resource base, a long industrial tradition as well as a favourable business environment, all of which enable sustainable and profitable investment in various value added, and particularly export oriented businesses.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has also entered into free trade agreements with all the Balkan countries, creating the opportunity for trade throughout the region.

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foreign languages spoken, their highly motivated and competitive workforce is a crucial guarantee for successful investment.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has become an ideal location to invest in, with a number of investment opportunities in various sectors. The economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina remains one of the fastest growing in Europe, offering potential investors significant opportunities for penetration into a wider regional market and of running their business on a world scale, since Bosnia and Herzegovina is a signatory to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), which provides free access to this consumer market with over 50 million people. Bosnia and Herzegovina also has free trade agreements with Turkey, as well as preferential export regimes with the European Union, USA, Japan, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Norway, New Zealand, Russia and Iran.

Kosovo
In recent years, Kosovo has made an outstanding progress in establishing the foundations of a modern market-oriented economy. Kosovo’s real economic growth in 2007 was estimated by the IMF to be over 3.5 percent, out-performing the 3.1 percent growth of the previous year. The really good news is that the main engine behind this growth is the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector, which is gradually becoming the backbone of the economy of Kosovo. The macroeconomic stability is maintained with an inflation rate of below 2 percent and a continued increase in exports. The inflow of FDI is also rising. Estimations indicate that in 2007 alone, some 300 million euros were invested in Kosovo.

Great investment opportunities will also be available in the years to come. The Government of Kosovo is planning to proceed with a project for the construction of a new power plant “Kosova C”, with investment amounting to 3.5 billion euros.

The privatisation process is set to continue, offering great opportunities in the sectors of agriculture, tourism, energy, mining, and metal processing.

Kosovo is planning to invest 1.3 billion Euros in the construction of new highways to Albania, Serbia, and Macedonia, and has recently announced the privatisation of the mobile telephone network operator “Vala”.

Macedonia
The Republic of Macedonia is rapidly advancing on the path of political and economic reforms towards strengthening its democratic society and its open market economy. The result is political and macroeconomic stability providing much room for growth. The economic performance of the Macedonian economy is expressed through a stable GDP growth of around 5 per cent, a low inflation rate of 23 per cent on average, fiscal discipline confirmed by international financial institutions as well as a well-functioning coordination between fiscal and monetary policy.

The financial system consists of the National Bank of Republic of Macedonia as a central bank, commercial banks, saving houses, exchange offices, insurances, financial lease, brokerage and swift money transfer companies, together with the Macedonian securities exchange market.

Macedonia is a unique blend of ancient and modern, offering a rich multicultural experience. In a period of less than an hour one can enjoy medieval monasteries, churches, mosques, vineyards, bazaars and space-age shopping centres. The country’s mild Mediterranean climate is reflected in people’s lifestyles, making Macedonian citizens cheerful, easy going and welcoming to people from all countries and backgrounds.

Montenegro
After a decade of internal and exter-
nal political and economic shocks, in recent years Montenegro has undertaken an ambitious program of wide-reaching economic reform in an effort to promote growth and raise living standards. For several years in a row, the growth in the GDP has been significant, reaching 8.6 per cent in 2006 and 10.7 per cent in 2007, according to ‘Monstat’.

For two years in a row, Montenegro has recorded the highest FDI per capita in Europe (1,100 euros). According to the Canadian Fraser Institute, Montenegro is the leader in economic freedom in the region ranked 58 out of 141, while Croatia is 90, Macedonia 84, Slovenia 88 and Bosnia and Herzegovina 105.

The 2008 Competitiveness Report released by the World Economic Forum, ranked Montenegro 65, while Bulgaria was 76, Serbia 85, Macedonia 89 and Bosnia and Herzegovina 107. In the latest Standard and Poor report, Montenegro received a long-term BB+ and a short-term B sovereign rating, being one of only a few countries that maintained the same mark from the previous year.

Montenegro is safe and stable, with a growing trend for direct foreign investment and economic freedom as well as dynamic economic development. As a consequence, the business environment continues to improve. It is open and it is this openness that compensates for the size of the local market.

Free markets today are more attractive to investors, especially when there are no restrictions on remit profit, dividend or interest. Add a strong currency – Montenegro is using the euro – and a favourable tax climate, with the lowest corporate tax rate in Europe at 9 per cent, a personal income tax of 12 per cent and VAT of 7 per cent and 17 per cent and Montenegro is an attractive proposition. All rates are flat.

Serbia
Over the past five years of extensive political and economic reform, Serbia has developed into a stable democratic country with a fast growing market economy. Western-oriented, democratic political parties have the support of the majority of citizens and the Government is shaping an attractive environment for doing business, while legislative activities are increasingly bringing the legal framework in line with EU regulations.

As a member of the International Monetary Fund, Serbia exercises a sound and consistent economic policy resulting in strong economic growth, state budget surplus, and rapid export expansion. The country’s progress is fully supported by leading international development institutions, such as the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, while the process of EU and WTO accession is under way.

Foreign companies in Serbia are guaranteed equal legal treatment to local ones. They are allowed to invest in any industry and freely transfer all financial and other assets, including profits and dividends. A foreign investor can buy real estate, under the condition of reciprocity and can lease building land for up to 99 years. Investment projects in Serbia are insured by all major national and international investment and export insurance agencies. The protection of foreign capital is further safeguarded by Bilateral Investment Treaties signed between Serbia and 32 other countries.

Conclusion
Foreign investments have come to occupy centre stage in the development policy of the Balkan countries with most governments seeking to maximise foreign investment inflows with liberal policies and a variety of incentives. Foreign investments are expected to contribute directly and indirectly by generating output, employment and foreign exchange, as well as by fostering learning and technological capacity. To maximise the effect of foreign investment, the Balkan countries have to take some unique and proactive decisions, as a strategy for the entire region:

Firstly, the benefits of foreign investment in terms of technology, employment, wages and overall learning processes can be seized, only if they are part of a larger socio-economic strategy.

Secondly, since the beginning of the 1990s, when countries from this region changed their economic system from centralised State planning to the free market economic model, the policymakers of these countries have however been focused solely on macroeconomic stabilisation as the basis for competitiveness, ignoring regional and sectoral policies. This approach has to change in the future. Countries from this region must discover and promote their comparative advantages.

Last but not least, despite its importance, it is important not to over-emphasise the potential of foreign investment. Even a coherent and long-term strategy based on foreign investment can be no substitute for a long-term national development strategy. Foreign investment alone will not solve the structural socio-economic problems of the region.
The False Definition of Europe as a Christian Entity and the Essential Muslim Component in Europe's Identity
A contemporary philosophical debate by Prof Dr Ferid Muhic

Allow me at the outset to thank the EMU Foundation, Prof. Nevzat Yalçın-tas, its Honorary President, the EMU President, Abu Bakr Rieger, and Malik Sezgin, the Secretary General in particular, for inviting me to speak at this prestigious gathering on a timely topic of great importance to Europeans, important to both of its essential components; the Muslim and non-Muslim citizens alike.

Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after. The most important thing in science, as well as in life, is to understand what we are really looking for, what it is we are after! I ask you to keep this in mind.

Nowadays, we often hear the questions; could Europe accept being a land for Islam as well? Do Muslims constitute a significant demographic, intellectual and cultural component of the continent? And, as a continent or geographic entity, does Europe belong partly to the Muslim world? In other words, does Europe have a Muslim identity as well, besides its distinctive Christian identity? Can we in fact say that Europe is a Christian-Muslim continent?

Given that Islam today is the second largest faith in Europe, and given that our present-day civilisation is not without strong Muslim roots, whether in the realm of science, philosophy, or the humanities, would it not therefore be appropriate to qualify this civilisation as "Muslim-Christian"? Would it not be right to admit that Islam and the Muslims constitute one of the key components of Europe?

European culture is far from being monolithic. The general view, accepted as a self evident fact, is that what we call European culture was laid down by the Greeks, strengthened by the Romans, stabilised by Christianity, reformed and modernised through the 15th century Renaissance and Reformation and globalised by successive European empires between the 16th and 20th centuries. Not a word about Islam or Muslim influence.

To make this crypto-mythology simple, the description of Europe’s identity was simplified into the standard binomic conflict of ‘civilization versus barbarism’, gradually transformed into the battle of Good against Evil and finally equated with the confrontation of West against East, where “West” stands for Christian Europe, and “East” – soon replaced with “Orient” – as synonym for “Muslim”. The brilliant book of Edward Said, “Orientalism, Western Conceptions about the Orient” (1978, 1989) disclosed, down to the tiniest details, this huge and systematic ideological project aimed to smuggle in the story of perennial differences of a “centrally placed superior Western/Christian culture and man, in opposition to the Oriental, as an inferior periphery, marked by the absence of culture or civilisation through the complete lack of rational capacity and logical thinking characteristic of the Muslim peoples!”

An extremely valuable contribution for an objective and correct understanding of Muslims as an integral element of European identity is to be found in Mahmoud Mamdani’s excellent book, “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim” (2004); an allegory of the notoriously racist response by General Phil Sheridan to the Commanche chief Toch-a-way’s saying, “Me, good Indian!” namely;
“The only good Indians I ever saw were dead!”[1]

Let me make a brief analysis of the notion “West/Western”, as proposed by Western and specifically Christian men of science, since it illustrates the ideological character of this paradigm, demonstrating a complete lack of rational competence and the absence of logical thinking by its authors. The history of civilisation of “the West” came to a triumphant climax in the period of European colonialism and imperialism. Geographically defined, the notion suggests spatial division on a line of cultural identity, so that European identity would be Western, Christian and civilised, while non-European, Asian, African would be Oriental, Muslim and uncivilised. How do we distinguish the West from the East geographically? By the zero meridian. And where is it to be found? In Greenwich, a suburb of the city of London!

So, geographically, everything east of London is eastern, or oriental, not to mention France, Germany, Italy… Aha, I see, they mean it metaphorically, meaning philosophy, democracy, morality, logic, mathematics, arts and science? So, were those invented and developed in the western hemisphere, to the west of Greenwich? No, they all came to Western Europe from the region of the Balkans or from the eastern coasts of Anatolya! Orpheus, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Phidia, Solon, Poliklet, Pericles, Alcibiades, to name a few, were all born and lived and died very far to the East, mostly in the wonderful peninsula of the Balkans, and on the islands and coasts of the Ionian Sea, very far from London and the zero meridian at Greenwich.

No, no, they must have meant spiritually, since Christianity is Western, and Islam is an Oriental religion! Is that so? But Judaism, Christianity and Islam came from the same courtyard, so to speak! Abraham, Ibrahim or Avraam was the father of the Jews and the Arabs, as he was the prophet of God, sent to all three religions! And it did not all start in the West London, nor even the easternmost part of Europe, but in Asia!

And as for the myth of the self-made identity of Europe, the truth is that even the glorious tradition of philosophy, science, arts and humanistic inspirations originated in Africa and Asia (Egypt and Babylon, only later coming to Western Europe from the regions of the Balkans and Anatolya), as Martin Bernal demonstrated in his famous book “Black Athena” (1987). So, the presentation of “Greece” as the self-made cradle of European philosophy, politics and the spiritual virtues (ethics and aesthetics included) is an intellectual fraud and conspiracy, little more than an ideologically-motivated project fabricated in the period between 1785-1985.

The decisive influence of Egypt, although completely ignored and overlooked, was so strong that all the “polis” on the islands, as well as those located in the European peninsula of the Balkans and of Asia Minor (Anatolia) were intellectual colonies of Egypt and Babylon. Pythagoras, Plato, Archimedes, Herodot and many others went to Egypt, the spring of knowledge in all sciences and the cradle of the highest wisdom in philosophy. There was no “Greece” as a state, not at that time, and not until 1838, and even then, only in a very reduced area much smaller than it is today.

The Euro-centric view was also typical for generations of poets and philosophers from Europe. Two references are particularly enlightening in this respect; the vision of Paul Valéry, the poet and essayist, and that of Edmund Husserl, the philosopher.

Paul Valéry in his essay ‘The European’ [‘L’Européen’], wrote in 1924; “Wherever the names Caesar, Gaius, Trajan and Virgil, wherever the names of Jesus Christ, Moses and St. Paul, wherever the names Heraclitus, Aristotle, Plato and Euclid have a significance and carry weight, that is where Europe is … It is remarkable that the people of Europe are not defined by race, nor by language or customs, but by desires and breadth of will (…).”

On the grounds of such fabrications, we can indeed imagine, like Valéry, a cultural identity of Europe as being the remarkable expansion of a unity, achieved by the Roman Empire, Greek thought, Roman law and the Bible, in total absence of the Qur’an, Islam and the Muslims!

We could go still further in our search for Europe’s imaginary conceptual heart. It is what Edmund Husserl proposes in his famous Vienna lecture of May 1935, entitled ‘Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity.’ Following an uncritically ideologically fabricated myth, he sees the origin of the spiritual idea of Europe as being in Greece. Such returns to the sources of the “spiritual form of Europe” are necessary and enlightening. They give us powerful threads to the cultural identity of Europe across two millennia. That all the national cultures draw mainly – but not exclusively – on the same original sources largely explains the cultural unity of Europe over the course of time. But they can and must be complemented by an analysis of European national cultures themselves and the close and complex relation-
ships between those highly diverse cultures with a strong and permanent Muslim influence, which ensure the cultural unity of Europe.

As we can see, no part of the modern European identity originated from Western part of Europe, nor even from the Western hemisphere, for that matter. Western regions of Europe only adopted and adapted cultural elements, all borrowed from the East, (the Orient!) and through their expansive power and imperial politics went on to influence the global cultural situation.

Geographically, culturally, and religiously speaking, the words “West” and “Western”, when intended to describe the reality of Europe, are totally empty words, completely deprived of any meaning.

“West” is not the correct antonym or opposite to the notion of “Orient”, since it combines two different languages – English and Latin – in a pejorative connotation for that matter. The lexically correct antonym to “Orient” should be “Occident”, and I suggest that as a description of its imperialist and colonial practice, the word might be pronounced as “Accident”!

The lack of authentic proofs stimulated the imagination of many European politicians to produce a great number of legal and bureaucratic texts in order to support the acceptance of this crypto-mythological construction, completely ignoring, to this very day, the Muslim factor. Even minor proposals, such as that of Luxembourg in providing access to European Union Institution Libraries (3/7/95), are justified as, “an important contribution (...) to fostering the spirit of European cohesion and identity in a way which will strengthen the sense of a common European identity amongst all the citizens of the Union.”

We could go further in our search for Europe’s conceptual heart, into what Edmund Husserl proposes in his famous Vienna lecture of May 1935,
entitled ‘Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity’. He sees the origin of the spiritual idea of Europe as being in Greece, where a handful of men initiated a radical discussion on all aspects of cultural life in their own nation and among their neighbours.’

In reality, instead of such a monolithic picture, the identity of Europe might be better described as a series of overlapping cultures. Whether it is a question of North as opposed to South; West as opposed to East; Christianity as opposed to Islam; Protestantism as opposed to Catholicism: many have claimed to have identified the cultural fault lines across the continent. ‘Opposed’, but also composed of; there have been many cultural innovations and movements, often at odds with each other.

And since the fact that Islam has been an integral component of European identity going back to the seventh century and lasting in continuo ever since, it is clear that, “Europe and Islam have a shared history and therefore, a shared identity”, to quote His Excellency Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference at the Center for Dialogue.

Thus, the questions of “European culture”, “European identity” or “European values” and so on, are far more complex than seem to be. To put it clearly and straightforwardly, it means that any serious historical, cultural, and socio-political understanding of contemporary Europe as well as the regional, continental and global situation, reality and perspectives, must be interpreted with a view to the presence of Muslims as one of the key factors, and the influence of Islam as an extremely important fact. But allow me to remind us all; there is more to the truth than just the facts.

Looking for the truth in a far more complex context, then we see these relationships stand out as an obvious example of a centuries-old yet constructive process of give-and-take among cultures and civilisations. It could safely be said that the interaction between Islamic civilisation and that of the West is “historically” unique and unprecedented, given its scope, depth and duration. The geographic proximity, the openness of spirit, the intertwined relations and the meeting of common interests played a central role in forging these relationships.

Since its very inception, Islam was at the doors of Europe. Merely twelve years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and give him grace, Muslims were in Armenia, Georgia, Daghestan and elsewhere, including parts of the would-be Byzantine Empire. Less than eighty years later, Muslims were in Spain. Twelve years after that, they were in the southern regions of France, and in almost all the islands of the Mediterranean Sea, from Cyprus to Sicily, from Mallorca to Rhodes, including Malta and others. Vast territories in Eastern and Southern Europe came under Islamic rule for over 500 years, ending only at the beginning of the 20th Century.

The presence of Muslims in Spain lasted almost eight centuries. Their presence there marked the history of Europe and played a glorious role in disseminating science and knowledge as well as the lofty values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. It suffices to say that Islamic civilisation not only contributed to the advent of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in Europe, but also directly shaped their most important parts, as well as fortifying their essential concepts. This contribution alone speaks volumes.

Hardly had Islamic rule faded in Spain and Western Europe when the lantern of Islam started to shine in Eastern Europe under the Osmanli Devlet – or Ottoman Commonwealth, that developed from a territory of less than 5,000 km² in 1299, to the incredible vastness of 24,000,000 km² in 1699, and where in every part, it introduced the concept of life and state based on Islamic values.

Cordoba’s role was replaced by Sarajevo, which was the most liberal and tolerant city in Europe, according to Charles, Prince of Wales, in a speech delivered at the Oxford Centre of Islamic Culture in 1991. This was possible because Islam tapped on the rich resources of diversity that earned it instant acceptance from the indigenous populations.

That was the case, especially in the region of the Balkans. Organised in accordance with the supreme Islamic values, the Osmanli Devlet left all nations and ethnic groups with their own languages, schools, and religious institutions intact. Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats, Greeks, Albanians, Bulgars, Vlachs, Romanians, all preserved their language, their cultural identity, their traditions and customs as well as their right to practice freely the religion they chose, since it was all strictly protected by the highest authority of the Osmanli state; the spirit of Islam! Right after the withdrawal of the Osmanli Devlet, all these peoples were ready to create their own national states, confident in their completely intact and preserved identities!

This was definitely the most liberal and tolerant regime in history. If we compare this historic phenomenon with what
happened over the immense territory of all three Americas, namely North, Central and South America, we see that the indigenous populations were either totally exterminated, decimated or put in reservations; that their languages were completely forgotten or erased through a systematic practice of compulsory introducing English (North America), Spanish (Middle and South America) or Portuguese (Brazil) languages. The freedom of the indigenous inhabitants to practice their own religion was defined as a crime and sanctioned by law in the USA until 1972.

Even if today they were given the chance to create their own state, most of the indigenous peoples of the American continent would probably not be able to do so in next several centuries. In India, with all its ancient spiritual tradition and rich culture, after British colonial rule, the official language remains English today, not to mention the administration, politics and education. From the very first moment of French colonial rule in parts of North Africa, the French language became official by decree, and all public and state institutions organised according to the French pattern. How are we to understand these dramatic contrasts if we follow the way liberal and principles of cultural and religious tolerance have been understood?

It was not the brutality of the British, Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese peoples etc., that contrasts with the more humane character of Osmanli people. Apart from a few culturally generated differences, people tend to behave in a similar way all over the world since they are more or less the same beings. The distinguishing feature was that of Islam. The Ottoman Caliphate, the social reality, with all its complexity, was based on the religious, philosophical, social, economic, educational and legal premises of Islam. Its mind, as well as its body, its ideals and its logic, its spirit and its will, its character and its emotions were all conceptualised, organised and effected in strict respect to the fundamental postulates of Islam.

The understanding of what was lawful or forbidden, concepts of pride and shame, aesthetic standards of beauty and ugliness, criteria of truth and falsehood, the ultimate goals of science or those of education – all and every sector of the social reality and subjective reception of the world, the life of each and every individual citizen, was permeated and shaped to the tiniest detail by the Islamic world view.

It is correct to say that over the last seven centuries of its history, for at least six hundred years, the Osmanli Devlet was the most powerful Islamic state in the world, strictly founded on the key principles of Islam exemplifying through all its social, economic, philosophic, cultural and organisational aspects, the paradigmatic message of Islam. This cultural impact of Islam, actively present for well over 1,300 years on the soil of Europe, produced an integral component of European cultural identity, in fact forging an authentic Muslim identity within its Christian composition.

Therefore, to recover its Islamic legacy means for contemporary Europe the quest to regain self-respect, to re-adapt its true identity and to fully understand the integrity of all its demographic and cultural elements. The region of the Balkans is of critical importance for Europe’s future in this respect, since it was exactly here that the new Muslim identity of the autochthonous Europeans was created, in the most natural way and included the greatest number of people (probably up to 20 million).

Speaking about the toponym “The Balkans”, it should be said that it too also preserved strong elements of this negative ideological reception, remaining without good reason, the synonym for “backward, oriental, Islamic, barbaric, divided lands in permanent and irrational conflict.”

For a long historical period, more than 2,000 years, the Balkans unified and moulded Roma-Hellen-Slav communities, then to remain part of the Osmanli Devlet for more than 550 years of its most recent history. It connected all three continents known in the ancient time and as such rightfully named “Catena Mundi” – “The Clasp of the Worlds”. Everything called (as we have seen, wrongly) “Western” philosophy, arts, culture, democracy logic and science was in fact created here. And from here, much later, it spread in the rest of Europe, almost exclusively by Muslims – via Andalusia, and via the Balkans during the Osmanli Devlet. None of this evidence has been correctly recognised. We see that even today, the term “Balkans” is replaced with the epithet “South Eastern Europe.\[2\]

This is completely meaningless since it deprives the Balkans of its name as the legitimate sign of the identity, ignoring all its rich history, creative capacity, and cultural peculiarity.

Although the old Turkish term designates “a mountain chain”, its further derivation discloses incredible power and beauty. Divided in two words, “Balkan” consists of “Bal” and “Kan” – namely, “Honey” and “Blood”. The two most precious and noble substances of life, united in this syntagma, metaphorically point not only to the
sweet and healing qualities of honey, but also of life-giving liquid; the blood, which is the universal epitome of élan vital (H. Bergson), pointing rightfully to the energy, vitality, virulent and creative power of the Balkan people.

Be as it is, there is nothing in the history of the Balkans which could rightfully include any pejorative context in the name of this wonderful peninsula, nor anything to be ashamed of, while there is a plenitude of things that the whole continent would be rightfully proud of.

So I repeat the question. Are the Muslims indigenous to Europe, or do they belong to another peculiar world? For them, is Europe a host or home? But then, after all, who is indigenous to Europe, who has right to decide who the host is and who the newcomer is? What about the case of the Americas, or Australia? Obviously, we have no need even to ask the question if Europe is a Christian entity or whether it has an Islamic component? The Islamic component is an integral part of the European identity in all its aspects, from the spirit to matter, from music to architecture, from its ‘bal’ to its blood. But what is the reality with respect to the cultural heritage of Islam with the reality on the ground, its geographical borders and the demographic elements of Europe?

In this context, I would like to reiterate that Europe has never been an exclusive Christian continent. European civilisation has never been exclusively Christian or Jewish. And even these two components, let me emphasise again, in their origins are not European.

Having so stated, we can safely say that Europe and the Muslim world have shared a common existence around the Mediterranean Sea basin with their territories overlapping in many parts of Eastern Europe, the Black Sea region and the Eurasian States. Geography aside, Islamic Europe shares with non-Islamic Europe two major cultural components; their spiritual and moral legacies which hail from the Ibrahim/Abraham/Avrakam tradition, while their scientific, philosophical and intellectual references, among other things, are derived from the influences adopted, adapted and sedimented in civilisations flourishing in the region of the Balkans and Ionian coasts of Anatolya and later spread and adopted by the rest of Europe.

The permanent factor which provided the continuity of Muslim presence as an integral part of the European identity, epitomised in the eight hundred years of Al-Andalus and represented by the five hundred years of the Osmani Devlet, was the clearly defined system of state instruments which encouraged spiritual unity, founded on the principles of voluntarily shared supreme values and ultimate goals, explicitly expressed in the values of Islam.

It is of utmost importance today to reclaim the positive impact of the Muslim legacy and contribution to European identity and culture, in order to eradicate internal ethnic, cultural, and religious conflicts in the Europe, especially in regions where a high percentage or even the majority are Muslims, most notably the Balkans, as well as reducing the social and political tensions which were the outcome of misunderstanding, or even the intentional falsification of the true meaning and nature of the Islamic-Ottoman legacy.

If we are to revive and to reaffirm the meaning of European identity or goal is to regain the integrity of its historical consciousness, then we have to abandon the aberrations and the prevailing, ideologically distorted, perception of Islam and Muslims and replace it with a historically correct and more productive understanding of the true impact of Muslims as an essential and influential component of European identity.

Practical suggestions

- Developing campaigns to foster and disseminate respect for culture, religious pluralism and cultural diversity.
- Ensure freedom of religious practice without prejudice to secular laws.
- Address the root causes of terrorism, including the occupation of independent states and political conflict.
- Exert an effort to engender a positive sense of belonging and responsible citizenship among Muslim youth and give them more incentives to participate in mainstream public life.
- Review the curricula of school textbooks throughout Europe to correct untruthful and demonising perceptions about Islam.

1 “The only good Indian is a dead Indian” is a saying often invoked when inquiring too closely into the truth. These words were spoken by Theodore Roosevelt, less than 15 years before General Phil Sheridan. In January 1869, General Sheridan was in camp at Ft Cobb in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) shortly after George Custer’s fight with Black-Kettle’s Cheyennes. Turtle Dove, or Toch-a-way, who was a chief of Comanches trying to impress the General, struck himself in the breast and said “Me, Toch-a-way; me, good Indian”. The General smiled and answered, “The only good Indians I ever saw were dead.”

The European Muslim Union

The role of mosques in Europe, as places of social dynamism
By Abdalhasib Castiñeira

“The mosques of Allah should only be frequented by those who have iman in Allah and the Last Day and establish salat and pay zakat, and fear no one but Allah. They are the ones most likely to be guided.”
(Sura Tawba, Ayat 18)

“In houses which Allah has permitted to be built and in which His name is remembered, there are men who proclaim His glory morning and evening, not distracted by trade or commerce from the remembrance of Allah and the establishment of salat and the payment of zakat; fearing a day when all hearts and eyes will be in turmoil – so that Allah can reward them for the best of what they did and give them more from His unbounded favour. Allah provides for anyone He wills without reckoning.”
(Surat An Nur, Ayats 36-37)

The importance of the mosque in the Ummah of Islam, in history and in every Muslim community is well reflected in the fact the EMU Foundation has defined mosques as one of its seven points and areas of interest and work. There was a very significant talk containing comprehensive documentation, delivered by our Honorary President, Prof. Nevzat Yağcıntas, in the year 2008 at the EMU Meeting in Potsdam, Germany, entitled; “The Mosque in Europe,” which I recommend to you and which can be read on the EMU Foundation website.

Continuing that research, I intend to focus here particularly on the vital function of the mosque as the heart of the organism of the Muslim community. The title chosen for my talk indicates precisely that the mosque is like a heart in a living organism, the organ that acts as an engine to pump healthy and vital energy to the social body of the Muslim community.

The two ayats of the Qur’an, from Sura Tawba and Surat An Nur, which I have chosen to begin this paper, both point to precisely that; that there is a living community of believing men and women who establish the worship of God and who are not distracted from remembrance of their Creator by their trade, their business or by their daily and worldly activity. As a result, their transactions are guided by the remembrance and taqwa of Allah and that is reflected in the payment of zakat.

I divide this paper into five parts; an introduction with four premises, a brief exploration of the first mosque and what it represented for the first community, the Muslim community in Europe today, a section on the mosque in Europe today, and finally conclusions and recommendations.

Introduction
In the 2008 conference, Professor Nevzat Yağcıntas concluded his study with five recommendations. I would like to take some of them as a point of departure. Professor Yağcıntas encouraged each Muslim Community in Europe to be in possession of its own proper mosque. He recommended that smaller groups of Muslims, if dispersed in any particular area, move closer to places where mosques are focal points.

Secondly, Prof. Yağcıntas recommended that great care should be taken in the maintenance and cleanliness of our mosques – not only the basics but also attention to finer, aesthetic elements: beauty, decoration, gardens and attractive architecture. A third recommendation at the end of his lecture was that mosques should be completely integrated with the non-Muslim
communities that surround them and that each Muslim community should make sure that programmes be put into effect to ensure this integration.

In this paper I will try to complement these themes, on the basis of my own understanding, knowledge and personal experience from the effort of building the mosque of Granada in Andalusia, (1) providing a few more answers to these questions and adding some further recommendations to the aforementioned ones.

The state of affairs in our mosques in Europe

In Europe today, we find mosques and Islamic centres, as well as musallas and prayer rooms. Some Islamic organisations or associations have a space for prayer and other facilities such as offices, a library, classrooms, shops, a butcher’s, a barber’s, a canteen and even space for games and ping-pong.

There are Islamic national centres, like the Albanian Islamic Centres, Bosnian, Turkish Diyanet mosques, mosques of Milli Görüş and a number of Islamic cultural centres. Some of these mosques follow Hanafi fiqh (normally when the community is from Turkey, Pakistan or India), some Malikī fiqh (in the North African and West African communities) and some, mostly established by Muslims from the Arab world, are openly non-madhhab, modernist or salafi mosques.

This diversity of forms and plurality of understanding in the present spread of mosques in Europe is a reflection of the state of our Ummah with all its varieties of schools and national identities, but is also a manifestation of the grass-root congregations of Muslim immigrants, often poor and poorly equipped with knowledge and skills. At an early stage, some Muslim individuals, zealous about preserving the practice of their deen, initiated most of these mosques, which others joined and supported. And this is how the vast majority of mosques in Western Europe and America have been established in the last decades.

The state of affairs of the mosques in Europe is often not exemplary. Poor conditions of the building, bad upkeep, poor hygiene or no activity whatsoever addressed to the neighbouring society (the ghetto mentality). It is not uncommon to find scandalous mismanagement holding sway and in-house fighting dominating in a shameful way among those who would seek permanent positions of power. In some cases these things are taking place in countries and cities of Western Europe where cleanliness, hygiene, high standards of quality in public buildings and good management of institutions of public interest are the norm. How is it that we allow mosques to be in a worst state of upkeep than schools, hotels, libraries or any other public building?

Some mosques in European countries on the other hand, can be portrayed as examples of excellent management, with dignified premises and dynamic programmes of education and social interaction.

That the mosque is essential to our deen and important in our life, is mentioned in the Book of Allah and has played a vital role from the beginning of our history and is a crucial element of our future in Europe. For all those reasons it is imperative to give the mosque its hurma. The mosque has to be honoured in its primordial function. The Muslim communities in Europe must know and apply the correct knowledge in all matters regarding mosques and establish them in a correct and Islamic form, not in some new form which has been improvised or invented and therefore deprived of the blessing, protection and guarantee of success that belong to the deen of Allah and His last Messenger, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him.

I want to focus on differentiating and separating all other dimensions of life which also belong to our deen and also need be developed in Europe and the Western countries, but that must have their own spaces and their own rules. Shops, markets, butchers, barbers, the public square, the street, cafes, canteens where people eat, drink, watch television, meet and smoke (often too much), places of sport and leisure for our young; all are necessary parts of our community life. Each community however must develop these areas and activities, but not necessarily mix them up with the mosque. In a recent visit to a mosque in Germany I was surprised to find a large group of young Muslims playing ping-pong in the main access hall to the prayer room. Their voices could be heard from inside the mosque and anyone; particularly non-Muslim, visiting the otherwise beautiful mosque would feel they had come to the wrong place.

Four premises

To arrive at appropriate conclusions to the questions posed above we must set out with the correct premise. In my attempt to answer these questions about the mosque in Europe, I therefore propose four premises.

1) That Islam belongs to and in Europe. Islam is not alien, foreign or immigrant. Muslims belong to Europe, not only on historical grounds but also even before that, by natural law. This
earth is Allah’s earth. All creatures are Allah’s slaves. Wherever we go and live, there is a place to worship Allah. In the Qur’an, Allah revealed to the last of the Messengers, peace and blessings be upon him; “My slaves, you who have iman, My earth is wide, so worship Me alone!” (Surat al’Ankabut, Ayat 56)

The argument as to historical legacy and the original belonging of Islam to Europe, to which my own country is a testimony (800 years of Muslim rule in Al Andalus) – and this country, the whole Balkan Region from Bosnia to Thrace are also witness to this – and has been the topic of one of our speakers at this conference.

We belong here. We are Muslims and we are Europeans. We affirm our belief, our deen, our way of life, and we strive to the best of our ability to implement the wisdom of Islam in our lives and in this land, to which we have a lawful right as much as anybody else, regardless of our race, nationality and origin.

2) That Islam is our natural right, our legitimate choice and one of the essentials of existence, not something secondary and negotiable. Our fulfilment of Islam is fulfilling the purpose of our existence. It is not a matter of one ideology competing with other ideologies. It is our natural right, our most important right, which comes next to our right to preserve our life and integrity, our families, our possessions and wealth, our honour and dignity. There is nothing to feel apologetic about. There is nothing that should place us in a position of inferiority, to have to make excuses or beg for the right to be allowed to be what we are. We stand in dignity, strength and with generosity as Muslims in the European continent.

3) That the implementation of Islam is a blessing and a mercy. Islam is not only a mercy for believing and practicing Muslims, but also to those around them. Muslims uphold the prophetic wisdom that transforms human beings, illuminates their understanding, develops their noble qualities of character and behaviour and establishes justice, fairness and mercy in the community, not only for and among Muslims but also in their relations with non-Muslims.

4) That we are proud of our identity as Europeans. We acknowledge the great universal heritage of our European tradition and affirm that much of it is in perfect concordance with the belief and practice of Islam. Much of our own scientific, cultural and social heritage in fact comes from the Muslims. On the other hand, we identify numerous manifestations in our European intellectual and spiritual life and in the works of great spirits that coincided with Islam or actually recognised and accepted Islam; from Goethe to Rilke, from the 14th century Mallorcan monk Anselm of Turmeda to the Scottish writer, Thomas Carlyle, in the 19th century, to George Bernard Shaw in the 20th century and scores of other writers, philosophers, musicians and artists in modern times.

We strongly reject the forged hypothesis, now widely disseminated in the media, that Islam represents a threat to the freedom, safety and rights of Europeans and Western peoples. The exact opposite is the truth.

If we can agree upon these four premises then we can look at the matter from two sides.

From one side, and to grasp the correct matters concerning the mosque, let us turn to the sources. How was the mosque of the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace? What did it represent in the life of the first community and what did the mosque mean to the original Muslim community from which we take our inspiration and model? What has the role and way of operating mosques been throughout the fourteen centuries of Islamic practice from Andalusia to the Malay Archipelago.

And then from the other side; how are mosques contributing to inspire, transform for the better and benefit Muslims and the environment in which they live in a non-Muslim society in Europe? What are the challenges, the mistakes from our side, the threats from adversaries and opponents and what conclusions may we draw from these?

The Mosque in the First Community

If we turn our attention to the beginning of Islam, we find that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his Companions gathered in houses to pray, to worship God, to recite the Qur’an as it was being revealed and to learn from the Prophet of God. The house of Al Arqam, not far from the ancient sanctuary of the Ka’abah used to be a place of congregation for the Prophet and his early Companions, while they were being oppressed and persecuted in Makka.

The first Companions who migrated to Madina before the Prophet, like Musaib ibn Umair, used to hold salat in congregation in people’s private houses.

When the Prophet, blessing and peace be upon him, arrived in Yathrib with his companion Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, he established the first mos-
que, dedicated to the worship of Allah, the little mosque of Quba, on the outskirts of Madina, on the land of the Banu Amr ibn ‘Awf.

After a few days he moved on into the city of Madina, where he was accepted by the people of the city as their leader and welcomed by the large majority of them. He then undertook the construction of the mosque, which was going to be at the heart of the Muslim community and the location of much of the revelation, teaching, and examples of the sunna which were going to remain forever.

In the very few days, weeks and months taken for the building of the mosque, other events closely related to the establishment of Islam in the land and to the meaning of the mosque itself, were happening that cannot be divorced from the mosque.

According to Ibn Ishaq, as the mosque was being completed, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, made a covenant with the Jews and the non-Muslim Arabs of Madina and surrounding territories, in order to regulate relations and their mutual coexistence. As soon as worship of God had been established in congregation, the adhan instituted and the life of the community given form and order with the rhythm of the five salats, of immediate import was the establishment of order and concord with the rest of the society.

After that the Prophet, blessing and peace be upon him, established the market of Madina, a space where people could trade freely, regulating its correct and fair rules by establishing limits in the place where the people of Yathrib had traditionally had their market called Souq al Manakha. He forbade fraud, monopoly and usury and laid down principles for economic activity.

In the early weeks of the life of Madina, after the hijrah, as the mosque was being built, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, established the historic bond of brotherhood between the immigrants (al-muhajirun) from Makka, who had left everything behind, with the local Muslims of Madina (al-ansar) who lived and owned agricultural farms, houses and industries on the land where they had been for generations.

The contract of brotherhood between the members of the Muslim community, the solidarity and mutual support among this first generation of the Companions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the sharing of their property and caring for the wellbeing of one another was one of the most important causes for the success of Islam.

During the first year of the hijrah, a large delegation from the Christians of Najran in the South of the Arabian Peninsula came to visit the Prophet.
Consisting of 60 riders, so Ibn Ishaq reports in his sira, they came to pay their respects to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but did not accept Islam. They were received in the mosque and after a kind and courteous reception, given hospitality for three days by the Prophet and his community.

In the first months after being built, the mosque became the departure point of various expeditions to explore the territory in order to defend Madina from its enemies and to watch for dangers, threats and attacks. These expeditions culminated, one and a half years after the arrival of the Prophet and his Companions, with the expedition to confront the powerful army of the Quraysh in Badr. Allah gave the Muslims permission to wage war and the first military confrontation with the enemies took place on 17th of Ramadan at the wells of Badr, resulting in a resounding victory for the Messenger of Allah and the Muslims, a day that came to be known as the day of Furqan, or the day when truth and falseness were clearly separated.

The events that were taking place in the early days of the Muslim community in Madina were not separate from the establishment of the first mosque and are significant for us today. We need to understand that its physical building and its function is integrated within the Muslim community in a broader social pattern that also includes:

1. Clarity and explicit obligations and rights of the Muslims in their relations with other communities.
2. The bond of brotherhood and solidarity among Muslims. Inner cohesion is equal to inner strength and asabiyah, the term used by Ibn Khaldun.
3. Alongside the establishment of the five prayers in congregation and the jumu‘ah prayer which constitute the heart of the Muslim community, the market place also reflects soundness with its correct business transactions and equity, with fairness in the flow of wealth from the rich to the poor exemplified in the collection and distribution of zakat.
4. The mosque was the house of prayer and worship, school, council, house of governance and justice and the point of departure of expeditions to spread the light and guidance of Islam and to promote strength and respect in the eyes of those who wanted to damage or even destroy the Muslim community.

**Salat and zakat**

Important as it is to establish mosques for congregational worship, life is not restricted to formal rituals of worship; in other words, every action in the life of man may be seen as a form of worship with every action in the life of a Muslim being an act of worship to Allah. The sincerity and depth of one’s salat is put to the test in the market place, in transactions. The discipline of the five appointments to prostrate before the Creator produces a different type of human being, a different type of market and business morality. Allah has made licit trade and has forbidden usury. The catastrophe of the current financial system and the now evident injustice and imbalance of the capitalist economic model, the terrible consequences for our natural environment, the profound disequilibrium in material wellbeing and development between some parts of our planet and others, the shameful
accumulation of wealth in a few hands and the protection of those few bankers, speculators and oligarchs by the political class; all of these issues, which would have been considered radical critical statements only twenty years ago, are now mainstream opinion among ordinary people in Europe. However, business goes on as usual as there seems to be no feasible alternative to the present paradigm.

When the Prophet built the first mosque in Madina, grace and peace of Allah be upon him and his Companions, a market was also established, as we have seen. A change is needed in the direction of our Muslim communities in Europe from the psychology of “minority” to a position of leadership in society. This change requires understanding of the world’s present situation and knowledge of the deen. By understanding the dilemmas, ailments and disorders of our time, which originate from a deeply unnatural economic system, and by assuming the obligation of zakat in its full form, implying as it does the prohibition of usury, there will be no alternative but to establish alongside our mosques, our own markets, offering a message of liberation and a way out. Many honest people in the world are waiting for this good news.

We have the cure in our deen, and it is our responsibility to implement it. We cannot separate salat from zakat. In our mosques, where salat is established, zakat also needs to be restored and the concern to establish halal trade.

Much theoretical work has been done in recent years on the parameters of halal trade, with a lesser number of practical efforts being made to establish viable models of trading and exchange using real currency (the dinar and dirham) alongside the implementation of the fair formulas of business contracts of the shariah. These contracts and the precise but very broad parameters of conduct in the market place and which constitute an almost forgotten part of our fiqh, ensured enormous wealth, advancement and culture to Islamic civilisations in various regions of the world over the fourteen hundred years.

Some EMU members in Germany, Spain, Portugal and the UK are conducting Muslim markets in the streets and public squares of their countries to create this alternative. EMU members in Switzerland and Germany have started the minting and distribution of gold dinars and silver dirhams – to name but a few of the initiatives appearing in Europe and in time worldwide, inshallah.

We have the salat, and inseparable from the prayer is the giving out from our wealth, a share of our surplus, collected by the authority of the Muslim community.

Reaching out to the society

The mosques indicate the totality of Islam. It is the totality that has to be our goal; otherwise our mosques will become temples. Our expeditions must reach out to further Islam, to defend our projects, our communities, to advance the case of Muslims and defend them from attacks, atrocities and abuse wherever they are persecuted, to lobby through media, lawyers and political institutions, exercising our rights in European societies, within European law and joining in efforts to change the laws when they are unfair or damaging to our faith and our community. These are our expeditions of today.

In the example of the first community we find that by opening the doors of the mosque the perception of Islam as something alien will change; this means dealing with respect and knowledge those who visit the mosques. Showing respect and interest in the area and location of the community is a necessary act in a land where da’wa remains a priority.

The question of authority

The social dynamism emerging from mosques demands authority. Various formulas have been used in the setting up of boards and committees for the administration of all the hundreds of new mosques that have appeared on the European continent, particularly among the immigrant communities. However, all such structures are only valid when the correct principle of authority is in place. There is no structuralist substitute for the authority for an amir. Mosques have to be under such an authority. The imam is not that authority and the European government’s present concern with controlling the training of imams misses the point. The problem of a Muslim community and the Ummah as a whole lies in the lack of true authority.

Mosques in Europe

There is now nearly half a century of experience of mosque establishment in Europe. Their number continues to grow. There are indeed positive aspects of this proliferation of mosques and Muslim communities all over the continent. We praise and thank Allah for these places where His name is remembered, His book recited and the salat established. There is halal meat at hand now in almost all corners of Europe, places of solace and remembrance of Allah and circles of teaching the deen of Islam to the
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young and the old. That is an immense gift and blessing for which we must certainly be grateful. The presence of Islam is now established in every land of Europe. New generations of Muslims, born here, know their mosques and feel secure and safe as Europeans and as Muslims. What negative aspects there are, by and large are through our own shortcomings. They are our responsibility; we cannot blame anyone but ourselves.

Some such negative aspects of our mosques in Europe are so hideous and so unacceptable that they discourage even Muslims from going to the mosque and almost provide justification for the hostile attitudes of racists, extremists and neo-Nazis in European societies.

Mosques are too visible in Europe, so becoming the target of hostility and fierce opposition. In the city of Cologne, not far from where I live now, opposition against the building of the biggest mosque in Europe continues to be stirred by right-wing parties and neo-Nazi groups. The issue remains a hotly debated one in the media and in politics. In the recent regional elections in North Rhine Westphalia, posters depicting a mosque crossed out in red could be seen everywhere.

In Seville, Spain, a small neighbourhood, supported by rightwing groups and local media oligarchs has managed to put such pressure on the municipality of the city that in 2009, two years after having granted a piece of land to the Muslim community in that neighbourhood having being registered in the Land Department for use as a mosque and Islamic centre, have had the concession overturned and permit cancelled.

The story is repeated in many places in Europe. Lichfield, England, Italy, Gothenburg, Sweden, Dudley, in the English West Midlands, Aalborg in Denmark last week; in many cities of Europe, extremist rightwing groups are provoking hatred of Islam and Muslims and rallying people into the streets to prevent the construction of mosques or to demand the closing down of existing ones.
Under European constitution there is a broad recognition of the freedom of religion and until the fierce propaganda of the Neo-Conservative ‘War on Islam’ (deviously named War on Terror), Muslim populations had enjoyed a high degree of respect and freedom in most of those very same countries.

We cannot afford, under these circumstances, any internal struggles and competition for power inside our mosques, any embezzlement of funds, any lack of programme, lack of hygiene, shortcomings in legality, any opaqueness or irregularity in accounting, any bad relations with the neighbourhood or awkwardness in our relations with the authorities and the mass media. For such as these, we can only blame ourselves.

In every community there must be an evaluation and a diagnosis, and if changes are needed, then it is essential to apply them to our mosques, invoking a system of auditing and benchmarking as effective as that applied to our business interests, to ensure an equally effective performance and management in the fulfilment of objectives. The philosophy of excellence and quality that empowers corporations and gives success to engineering, industrial and trading projects is part of our deen; it belongs to Islam. The Prophet Muhammad, blessings and grace be upon him said; “Allah has prescribed that anything done be done well.”

5. Conclusions and recommendations
I have tried to show that Muslims need the congregation and the community, that the mosque and the establishing of salat is central and essential, but that life does not stop there. Islam is Deen Al Fitr, it is the natural community that restores those aspects of life that globalisation and the consumer society have lost, and which Muslims and humanity both need. The natural social dynamism is made effective by the Qur’anic joining of salat and zakat. Alongside the establishment of mosques, there has to be seen the establishment of zakat. Zakat requires authority that collects and distributes. But authority, an amir, is also necessary to successfully conduct any project, to give cohesion and order to our communities. Fitra is what people are nostalgic for, longing for it for themselves and their children. The admirable example of the brotherhood between the muhajirin and the ansar shows us a pattern of sanity, safety and integrity. We have to do our work. We have to do our part. It is up to us; it does not depend on others. The position that naturally belongs to the people of Islam is one of leadership and showing the way forward. It is impossible to be satisfied being defined as an alien minority.

What there seems to be consensus about is the perception that our mosques must provide education, teaching of the Qur’an, the basis of the deen to our young and our adults, and guidance in matters of belief and worship. What is not always understood is the necessity of having a reception to meet visitors, to receive schools, universities, civic associations and researchers. What is often neglected is the need to have a good working relationship with the neighbours, the media and government agencies; from the local municipality, to the ministries of religious affairs, justice and home affairs.

What has not yet become mainstream practice in our mosques in Europe is the professional auditing of accounts, criteria of quality management of programmes, personnel and achievement of objectives, which are identical to those being applied in successful organisations.

I have also emphasised the importance of the marketplace as a physical space and the importance of implementing Islam in the arena of our business transactions. Where there is a mosque, there should be a market. Where there are scholars that know the fiqh of ibadat, there must be experts that know the fiqh of the mu’amalat. The curse of riba that has poisoned our world will be removed by the practice of Islam in trade, business and by the collective efforts of the Muslim community; the establishment of the Muslim market openly, for all to see.

In this, the EMU Foundation can play a role – by improving our mosques in Europe, promoting knowledge, know-how and the training of young Muslims with the necessary skills by means of programmes adapted to the specific needs of mosques in Europe. I suggest also the publication of a directory and a map of the Mosques of Europe, a tool of learning for students and a guide to travellers. By the same token I would recommend the publication of a Muslim Yellow Pages directory of Europe, gathering as much data as possible about the dynamics of the social life of the Muslims in Europe: mosques, schools, hospitals and doctors, organisations, trading unions, markets, lawyers, services, professional associations and the Muslim media.

I invite you all, and remind myself, to participate with the best of our talents and with the most sincere of efforts to implement the deen of Islam in Europe with wisdom.
In this paper I will try to touch upon a series of questions about the current obstacles which prevent the achievement of harmony, cooperation and unity between the indigenous Muslim European and the migrant Muslim population of Europe.

For example: How can cooperation between the indigenous and immigrant Muslim communities be achieved in Europe? What are the possible roles that European Muslims and immigrants can play to achieve such cooperation? What are the steps that European Muslims can take to help Muslim immigrants integrate within the European environment? How can Muslim immigrants contribute to support the European Muslims? Can Islam coexist with different European cultures, or should European Muslims replicate every aspect of the culture of Eastern Muslims? And, how can European Muslims maintain the characteristics of their European identity while at the same time be Muslims?

I finish my paper by proposing two recommendations to this conference. But it is necessary at the outset to discuss the importance of migration in Islamic history and how the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was able to change the course of history by uniting the indigenous adherents (Ansar) with the migrants (Muhajirun).

How did he transcend the ethnic, economic, social and racial characteristics that divided them?

**Migration in the history of Islam**

The word Hijrah in the Arabic language literally means to leave one’s homeland and settle in another place. In Islam however, Hijrah refers to the migration of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, from Makka to Madinah. This migration and resettlement in Madinah is considered to be the starting point of the organization and establishment of the first socially, politically and economically independent Muslim community. The Hijrah story begins with the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, ordering the Muhajirun to migrate to Madinah. The Muhajirun were the companions of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, who originally resided with him in Mecca.

This migration from Makka to Madinah was not done just to escape the persecution and torture of the disbelieving Quraysh, but it also gave Muslims the opportunity to organize themselves into a real Islamic Ummah (community) in the city of Madinah, which in the end had a far-reaching effect upon Islamic history. Upon their arrival in Madinah, the Muhajirun were welcomed and received support from the Ansar. The Ansar were those indigenous citizens of Madinah who believed in the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, his mission and had invited him to come to their city.

Today, history is repeating itself in another form, and we Muslims are once again faced with the task of restoring the Muslim nation to its place at the head of civilization through the revival of a pure Islam as was practiced by the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, the Ansar and the Muhajirun in Madinah al Munawwarah.

What I am alluding to, by way of analogy, are those European Muslims who have wholeheartedly converted to Islam and who support it by way of da’wa; they are the Ansar of today, while the immigrants who come to Europe from the Islamic world of Asia and Africa are the Muhajirun of today.

The Muhajirun of today however, move to Europe with different motives and objectives to those who immigrated to Madinah with the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him; a hijrah clearly outlined in the sound hadith, narrated from Umar ibn al Khattab, illustrating the various levels of intent. The prophet, may Allah bless him and
grant him His grace, said; “Actions are only done by intention, and man will only have what he intended. Therefore, whoever emigrated for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, then his migration was for the sake of Allah and His Messenger. And whoever emigrated to attain something of this world or to marry a woman, then his emigration was for whatever reason he emigrated.”

This is the first hadith that al-Bukhari mentions in his Sahih, and it is one of the most pivotal sayings of the prophet in Islamic Law. The repetition of the first part of this significant hadith reinforces the fact that the primary reason for making hijrah in Islam is for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, even though other types of migration; the seeking of worldly benefit for example, are not rejected by Islam.

What must also be understood is that these forms of immigration are encouraged in Islam for those under duress or through weakness in the Earth, whether physical or mental, for Allah ta’ala says in Surat an Nisa; “The angels ask those they take while they are wronging themselves; ‘What were your circumstances?’ They reply, ‘We were oppressed on earth.’ They (the angels) say, ‘Was not the earth not wide enough for you to have made hijra elsewhere in it?’”

If we examine the hadith of hijrah, transmitted from the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, we may conclude that hijrah first and foremost is for religious reasons, the best reasons, while again hijrah may be for economic, social and political reasons which according to the above mentioned Quranic ayat, will be out of necessity.

If we look closely at the case of migration to Europe in the contemporary age, we find that it does not depart from either of the already mentioned motives. There are groups of people who go to Europe for the purpose of giving Islamic da’wa; they are a minority of the Muslim immigrants. Another category is those immigrants who migrate to Europe for social reasons, such as to join their families or for purposes of marriage. A few immigrants have taken refuge in European countries from political oppression in their homeland. However, economic rea-
sons remain the main motivation behind the migration of Muslims to Europe. The majority of Muslim immigrants head to Europe to seek employment in agriculture, construction or trade, while a few of them have jobs in industrial factories as well.

Now I would like to turn my discussion towards two questions: How did the Prophet unite the Muhajirun and the supporters? And how did he transcend the ethnic, economic, social and racial characteristics that divided them? To answer these questions, we must examine the essential steps taken by the Messenger of Allah immediately after he first arrived in Madinah. The first step taken by the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, after his arrival in Madinah was to build a mosque where the Muslims could meet to pray collectively five times a day.

This constant praying in jama’at (collectively) maintained harmony and unity between the Ansar and the Muhajirun, and allowed them to check the ongoing circumstances of each other. The mosque, as an institution for education and learning, plays an essential role in assisting Muslims to share the same moral, social, political and religious values, and helps to blur differences and to achieve cohesion in the Muslim community.

The second step that was taken by the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, in Madinah was to establish bonds of brotherhood by partnering the Ansar and the Muhajirun. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) bonded each muhajir with an ansari regardless of their tribal considerations and class distinctions, in the process linking the strong to the weak, the rich to the poor, the white to the black, and the slave with the freeman. This historical fraternity was able to triumph over discrimination based on tribe, sex or colour, and replaced them with the bond of faith and religious brotherhood.

Today, the entire Muslim Ummah awaits the realization of this kind of religious brotherhood between the European Muslims (indigenous or converts) and the Muslim immigrants in Europe, even though it has proven to be elusive if not impossible to achieve in the East for reasons that are well known to us.

Now let’s turn our discussion to examine another question; namely, the obstacles to the cooperation between indigenous and immigrant Muslims in Europe. The first obstacle that stands in front of Muslim unity, not only in Europe but also in the whole world, is the absence of a spiritual example that can create a brotherhood based on the Prophet’s wisdom and foresight. Allah said in the Holy Quran: “This is my way; I invite unto Allah with sure knowledge, I and whosoever follows me with sure knowledge.”

The Muslim community should have a leader. When The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, sent three of his companions on a specific task, he would appoint a leader among them and advised them to consult each other, but in case of differing views, they must obey their leader or amir. This is well illustrated in the Holy Quran and in the sayings of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, such as the hadith reported by Abu Hurairah, in which the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said: “He who obeys me obeys Allah, and he who disobeys me disobeys Allah, and he who obeys the amir obeys me and he who disobeys the amir disobeys me.”

We may not speak about an amir in the absence of a group gathered around him. Yet in spite of the fact that Europe today is witnessing a significant presence of Muslim immigrants and European Muslims, these two Muslim groups have yet to reach a high level of discussion about developing an Islamic community of Europe.

While community means harmony and coherence among its members, we find that Muslims in Europe are still facing obstacles that slow down their communication and cooperation towards reaching the goal of unity, brotherhood and high standards of moral and social behaviour.

Obstacles Towards Communication

Knowing the obstacles to communication and developing solutions to overcome them is the first phase of solving the problem that should be followed by other constructive phases in the future that will lead to an effective cooperation between immigrants and indigenous Muslims in Europe. These obstacles can be divided into linguistic, cultural, traditional, conventional and intellectual obstacles, (details of which I have spoken about elsewhere).

Consequences

Immigrant Muslims might be somewhat deficient in communication through an ignorance of the language, which can affect their opportunities to aspire to decent work or income. In addition, the lack of ability to communicate in the host language has an impact on the Muslim migrant’s personality, one that creates in them
a social and psychological crisis that can be associated with a permanent feeling of alienation in the host land.

In turn, this feeling of alienation creates in the Muslim migrants a sense of absence from full citizenship, which in turn acts as a barrier to full integration into a European society that remains strange and difficult for them to understand and interact with.

The potential role of European Muslims

The role of European Muslims is particularly important for the development of Islam there. This can be clearly seen by observing what they have achieved and the roles they have come to play in the development of associations, brotherhoods, and in the Islamic culture of Europe as a whole.

European Muslim groups, both indigenous and converts, can play a role in cultural mediation in various ways:

1.) By imparting knowledge to immigrants about the pluralistic society in which they live and what it means to be a minority in that society.

2.) By sharing a network of political, institutional, and religious ties.

3.) By providing information both within the group (through publishing) and outside (by maintaining relations with the media, conferences, publications, and explaining Islamic beliefs in a way understandable to European cultures).

4.) By demonstrating the dignity of the Islamic community. It is particularly gratifying for the members of the immigrant Muslim community, especially if they are low in the social scale and...
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poorly educated, to see westerners, more so if educated and financially well off, embracing their religion. This proves the universality of their religion and demonstrates that it is not just a faith belonging to underdeveloped areas of the world or immigrants from these areas.

On the other side, the presence of immigrants in Europe is certainly positive for the Europeans who convert to Islam. They represent psychological compensation for the loss of their friends and family members due to their conversion and may be of help in giving direction to Islamic institutions, centres and mosques in Europe thanks to their experience in their home countries, as well as teaching Muslim languages, which can help European Muslims to know more about Islamic sources and references.

Steps that European Muslims can take to help Muslim immigrants integrate in the European environment:

1.) To help in establishing mosques in order to worship Allah together; a step that will ensure their religious identity will not be affected.

2.) To found Islamic institutions, centres and schools to teach European languages to facilitate the incomers’ integration to their new environment. This will also open up work and job opportunities, which in turn will contribute to the improvement of their income as well as to the amelioration of their social status and will also make them feel more comfortable in Europe.

3.) To apply political pressure on their European governments, by legal, associative, and academic means as well as through the media, in order to change the negative attitude towards Islam. This will contribute effectively to the newcomers becoming more interested in participating in the building of a European society through its identification with Islam.

How could the Muslim immigrants contribute to support the European Muslims?

1.) By teaching languages that may help the European converts to understand Islam more; Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Urdu are the languages that have been used to study and teach Islam – and in particular, of course, Arabic, the language of Holy Qur’an.

2.) By translating original Islamic texts in an objective way, which will help Europeans to use those texts without being suspicious of their source or originality, especially texts that orientalists have used to undermine the image of Islam.
3.) By getting rid of the idea that they are the sole owners of Islamic religious truth.

4.) By participating in the management of mosques, religious institutions and Islamic centers.

5.) By attempting to establish bridges between European Muslims and their Muslim brothers in the East in order to strengthen cooperation between them, to exchange experiences, as well as promote harmony between the various components of the Muslim Community.

My recommendations to the conference would be:

1.) The formation of a group/organization that will be responsible for dialogue and communication between Muslims converts and immigrants in the West. This group/organization will undertake the task of studying the issue of integration, as well as working towards its accomplishment. It should be under the supervision of the EMU and should consist of representatives from every Muslim minority that exist in Europe.

The work of this group/organization should be distributed among a number of specialist committees, for example; a committee for communication and dialogue, a media committee, a translation committee, etc.

2.) The promotion of Sufism. Sufism has an enormous capacity to unite the converts and Muslim immigrant communities regardless of the multiplicity of their religious affiliations. It should be based on unity rather than division.

Promoting authentic Sufi orders, particularly ones that have a clear Islamic approach and that can mend the rift. The teachings of Sufism encourage plurality and diversity and at the same time discourage terrorism and extremism.

The backing and support of these ideas by credible Islamic bodies, such as the EMU, will also close the doors of suspect movements that work under the name of Sufism yet disseminate the abandonment of Islamic law and religious rituals of Islam, claiming that spirituality is independent of the prophetic practice of the religion.

Finally, I would like to express my optimistic view that in the future, Muslims in Europe will, inshallah, achieve this looked-for cooperation between the Muslim migrant communities and Europeans Muslims (indigenous and converts).

The world community of Muslims will thus be restored by the Muslims of the West, as the well-known and distinguished Islamic scholar Sa’id Ramadan Al Boutti implied when he said; “The whole world will soon witness that western civilization will not let slip the key of human happiness, nor will it throw it away beyond the reach of Man, as some pessimists conceive. The light of Islam is still on and the human sentiments will find in Islam the key they have been looking for everywhere for happiness. This key will be found in the West itself, and this will only happen through guidance from the light of Islam and through the light of science under its new perspective.”

May Allah bless the soul of the genius of his age, Badi’ Az-Zaman Sa’id al-Nursi when he said that “Europe is pregnant and will one day give birth to Islam.”

Now we are starting to see this reality. Allah ta’ala has said in the Holy Qur’an, “Allah is triumphant over everything but most people are unaware.”
المسجد ومراضته، أو حتى في ما يتصل بأسلوب التخلص من النفايات والالتزام بالمواصفات الصحية والبيئية في هذا الشأن.

6/ لا يُوجّر بالبرامج والنشاطات التي تقام ضمن المسجد أو المركز الإسلامي أو بمشاركتها ؛ أن تتوجه إلى الجمهور على أساس مخاطبة أفراده والتعامل معهم بصفتهم المفردة تلك وحسب ؛ بل وأن يسعى القائمون على تلك البرامج والنشاطات إلى جانب ذلك إلى مخاطبة الوحدة الأسرية أيضًا. ويقتضي ذلك تخصيص برامج ونشاطات شتى للعائلات، دعماً لتسكّع النسيج الاجتماعي وتواقيعاً مع إسناد الإسلام للأسرة الأسرية واعتبارها نواة المجتمع.

7/ يتوجب أن تخضع كافة التعاملات المالية داخل المسجد لمعايير دقيقة من الضبط ومحاسبة وشفافية، وسدّ الذرائع، مع أهمية السعي لتنمية الموارد المالية والمالية المتاحة للمسجد ومرافقه على الوجه الأمثل.

8/ أخذًا بعين الاعتبار أن المساجد تمثل بالنسبة للمسلمين حوراً أساسياً لأعمال البر والإحسان وجهود الخير ؛ فإنه ينبغي السعي لتنمية إقامة العطاء والبذل لدى الجمهور، وأن يكون جمع التبرعات داخل المسجد ومرافقه ضوابط يتم التقييد بها، بما يتواءم من جانب مع الدور الذي يتلبيّه المسجد في الإنفاق الخيري والاهتمام به، وتحقق من جانب آخر المواصفات التي تضبط ذلك وتقع الطريقة على أيّ إخلال قد يصاحبه أو يؤدي إليه.
لا يخفى من ذكرنا وجعلناك شُعوباً وقبائلٍ يتعارفون عن أصركمك
عند الله انتمكم (نص نآلام **сыме** (الخجرات 13). ولا يُوقف الأمر
عند حذف نبذ العصبات السلالية أو القبلية أو الجهوية أو الطبقية الهمجية، بل يُعدّه إلى تجاهل معايير الأخوة الإنسانية والأخلاقي الإسلامي، وتجسيد مبدأ
المساواة الذي شدد عليه الإسلام وأكده، وإتاحة المجال للتعبير عن التنوّع
بمراعاة ما يضمن من احتياجات linguistique ومجالات ثقافية وعدم التبرّر من
ذلك طالما كان ذلك منسجًا مع تعاليم الإسلام وتوجيهاته.

4/ ليس المسجد حكراً على فترة عمرية دون أخرى، لذا تعني الالتفات
إلى مخاطبة الفئات العمرية كافة، وال التواصل معها دون إهمال أي منها،
ومراجعة احتياجاتها ومتطلباتها وخصوصيتها، وضمان الانسجام بين الأجيال
التي تحتضر إلى المسجد إلى المركز الإسلامي. وإن السعي للاتصال الحسن بين
الأجيال في الفضاء المسجدي؛ هو مقصد ينبغي الحرص عليه وتجسيده على
أرض الواقع، باحترام كبار السن وتوفيرهم ومراعاة احتياجاتهم، ودعم
الشباب وإطلاق الفرص أمامهم للفعل الإيجابي وتطوير المهارات والمشاركة
في النشاطات والبرامج التي يرعاها الصغر أو المركز الإسلامي، والعناية
الخاصة بسُمعة الطفولة التي يُنتظر من المسجد أو المركز تقديم خدمات
مبتكرة ومتعددة في مجالات تعليمية وثقافية واجتماعية وترويجية شتى، مع
الالتزام بضوابط الحياة للأطفال من أي استغلال كان.

5/ تحتضن المساجد مرافق متعددة كما أنها تشتمل على برامج
ونشاطات اجتماعية وافرة. وقد يشتمل ذلك على تناول للأطعمة والأنشطة،
الأمر الذي يفرض مراة المواصفات الصحية المثلى في هذا الجانب، سواء في
صلاحية الأطعمة وكيفية حفظها وإعدادها وتقديمها، أم في ما يتعلق بنظافة
إنّ منشآت المساجد أو المراكز الإسلامية ومرافقها، هي كغيرها من الأبنية بحاجة إلى صيانة وتحديث مستمرّين، كي يبقى البناء لائقاً في مظهره الخارجي وبيئته الداخلية، وقادرًا على أداء دوره المتجدد على أفضل وجه. وإنّ إعمال الصيانة والتحديث يؤدي إلى تداعي البناء وإهالاك مرافقه، بل قد ينجم عنه تشويه هيبته أو حتى مكاره صحية في بعض مرافقه.

١. في معايير التعامل داخل المساجد

١٠/ يُنتظر من المسجد، وبخصائصه في البيئة الأوروبية، أن يحقق أدوارًا كثيرة في الوقت ذاته. فإلى جانب إعادة إقامة الصلاة والشعائر الدينية؛ من الحيّز أن تضمّ المسجد برامج إرشادية وأخرى تعلمية وترفيهية، علاوة على نشاطات ثقافية وتفاعل إجتماعي، وجهود دعوية وتعريفية، وما إلى ذلك. إذ إن هذه الأدوار البناءة، وها تتشكل عليه من نشاطات وبرامج يستفيد منها الجمهور من شتى الأعمار والشريات؛ لتسدعي تحقيق الانسجام والتناغم قدر الإمكان في ما بينها، وتحاشي حصول التشويش أو الصخب.

٢٠/ إذا كان الإسلام يوجب أتباعه في تعاملهم اليومي إلى الرفق مع الآخرين والساحة وتجنب رفع الصوت وتحفيز ما يثير الشحناء والبغضاء؛ فإنّ الحرص على الامتثال لهذه التوجيهات السامية هو في داخل المسجد ومرافقها أكثر أهمية وتوكيداً.

٣٠/ لا ينبغي أن يتجاهل التعامل ضمن فضاءات المسجد وواقع التنوّع الذي عليه واقع المسلمين في معظم البلدان الأوروبية، بل واقع المجتمع التعددري العريض. ولذا فإنّ التعبير عن احترام هذا التنوّع ومراوحة الخصوصيات التي يملحها؛ لها من المتطلبات المتضرة في الإدارة السليمة لشؤون المساجد والمراكز الإسلامية، مع استذكار قوله تعالى (يُتَّبَع أَيْنَّا أَلَّا تُشْوَى).
وتيسير وصولهم إليها دخولاً وخروجًا، وإباحة المجال لتعاملهم الميسر مع مرافقها، وتمكينهم من الاستفادة بما يُقدّم فيها دون تمييز. وعلى سبيل المثال؛ فإن القانونين على أمور المساجد مدعوون لتوفير الوسائل والأدوات التي تتيح لأولئك الذين يستخدمون الكراسي المتحركة الإقبال على المسجد والتردّد على مرافقها دون صعوبات تحرمهم من ذلك، وكذلك ينبغي البحث في خيارات اعتياذ وسائل مساعدة خاصة من يعانون مشكلات في السمع أو غير ذلك. وفي كل الأحوال؛ يُوصى بالاستفادة من الخطوط التوجيهية المتاحة من الجهات المختصة بشأن ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة والحصول على الإرشادات اللازمة لرعاية احتياجاتهم على النحو الأمثل، مع السعي لتحقيق مشاركة ملائمة من هذه الفئات في تدبير هذه الأمور.

6/ إن المسجد في الإسلام ليست حكراً على جنس دون آخر، ولذا فإنه تيسير وصول الرجال والنساء إليها وإقامة الصلاة فيها والالتحاق بدورات العلم والمعرفة داخلها والاستفادة من مرافقها، هو ما ينبغي الحرص عليه وتغذيره. وإن التعامل بين الجنسين في المجتمع العامة؛ حدوده وأدابه التي وجّه إليها الإسلام، وإن تصميم المسجد وتوزيع فضاءاته ينبغي أن يحقق هذا المقصود أيضاً.

7/ لا ينبغي الاقتصار على العناية بفضاءات المسجد الداخلية، بل يجدر الاهتمام بالشكل الخارجي للمسجد بواجهته وأبوابه أو بواباته وحدائمه ومرافقه التي يبسطها المارة. فالظهور الخارجي لأي بناء يحمل انطباعاته عنه ويبعث برسائل ضمنية بشأنه، وقد يبعث على الإقبال عليه أو النفور منه، وهو ما يفرض مراعاة هذا الأمر في البناء والتشييد، وفي التجهيز والتهيئة، وفي العناية والرعاية.
المخصصة. وحريّاً بالمساجد والمراكز الإسلامية أن تكون قدوة للمسلمين وعامة المجتمع في هذا الجانب أيضاً، بما في ذلك تقبل التفاعلات بشكل صحيح.

3/ إن إقبال أعداد كبيرة من المصلين على المساجد والمراكز الإسلامية في أوقات معلومة، واكتشاف الفضاءات المكانية بها؛ مما يفرض عدم التهانئ في تدابير الأمن والسلامة في المسجد ومرافقه. فمراعاة تلك التدابير هي الالتزام واقع على عاتق القائمين على شؤون المسجد ونساؤه، ولا يُقبل في ذلك التقصير أو التراخي منها كثيرة الأذان. ويشمل ذلك تدابير مكافحة الحرائق، أو الحوادث الفاضلة، وكذلك التحسيس لأي استهداف محتمل ضد المسجد أو جهوده. وتوجّب مراعاة هذه التدابير على النحو الأمثل في مواصفات البناء وفي كيفية استخدامه وتشغيل مراكحه، كتوفير خارج الطوارئ وسلامة التمديدات الكهربائية ومراعاة جوانب الأمن والسلامة الأخرى.

4/ إن تدفق أعداد وفيرة من الناس في أوقات محددة؛ يُعمي العنابي بها قد يترتب على ذلك من الزحام في الطرقات القربى من المسجد، وعند مداخله أو سلامته، ويباح للأمر من الضجيج الذي يُصلّ بطمأنين الموقف ويعود بالإزعاج على الذين أوصى بهم الإسلام خيراً وتفضيل على المارة الذين قد يعرقلهم ذلك عن متابعة مصالحهم اليومية. ومن ذلك أيضاً؛ تقدر حاجة مرتادي المسجد من موقف السيارات، ومدى قربه أيضاً من خطوط المواصلات العامة، فضلًا عن تصميم المدخل والمخرج بما يؤدي إلى تلاؤم الاكتظاظ وتحقيق تدفق الداخلي إلى المسجد والخارجين منه بسلامة وانسيابية بعيداً عن التدافع.

5/ ما كانت المساجد مخصصة لعامة جهورها بشتى فئاتهم، وقد يكون فيهم أفراد من ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة؛ فقد لزم مراعاة خصوصياتهم،
على عامة الجمهور، ويزيد من قابلية الأفراد على الولوج إليه والاستفادة من خدماته المتنوعة، علاوة على ما توفره الأستف في تنفيذ أشعة الشمس من تغذي قليص في استهلاك الطاقة اللازمة للإنارة.

وفي ما يلي تفصل جوانب متعلقة بالعناية بالمسجد ومرافقه، وأخرى تتعلق بمعايير التعامل داخله.

أ- في العناية بالمسجد ومرافقه

1/ ينبغي في تصميم أبنية المساجد بمرافقها، وكذلك في التوزيعات الداخلية للمساجد، أن تراعى على الوجه الأمثل طبيعة الوظائف والأدوار التي يُنظر من هذه الأبنية وتوزيعاتها الداخلية أن تحققها. إن التوزيع الملائم للمرافق تحقق استخداماً أبهر وأكثر كفاءة ويعين على تلبية الصعوبات المكانية والاستعمارية. ومن ذلك تقسيم المساحات الداخلية، وفصل المرافق الصحية عنّا سواها، وعناية بالتهوية والتدفئة والإنارة والتنظيم الصوتي فضلاً عن المواصفات البصرية (كطبيعة الألوان) والجاهزة. ويتطلب بذلك أيضاً السعي لتيسر الوصول إلى المسجد بوسائل النقل العامة وبالسيارات التي تحتاج إلى عدد كافٍ من المرافق.

2/ إنّ المساجد هي أماكن ظاهرة وموثة للذين يبترعون أن يتظّهروا من أدران الحياة، ولا شكّ أنّ العناية بنظافة المساجد ولجانب الصحبة فيها وفي كافة مراقبتها هو من المواصفات التي لا غنى عنها في هذا الشأن. ويتضمن ذلك اخضاع الوسائل والتدابير المثل لضمان هذه المواصفات على نحو مستمر، بما في ذلك تحضير ميزانية كافية لشؤون النظافة وتوفير الاشتراعات الصحية والوسائل والأدوات التي يقتضيها ذلك. ويتطلب بذلك التعامل مع النفايات على أساس رفيعة بالبيئة وحسب المعايير والمواصفات التي تقررها الجهات.
رابعًا، في العناية بالمسجد ومعايير التعامل داخله

إن نهوض المسجد بالأدوار المشوودة منه، يملي على القائمين على إدارة شؤونه أن يأخذوا بالاستعدادات والمتطلبات التي تحقق تلك الأدوار، وأن يتدعوا لمعالجة ما قد يصاحب ذلك من جوانب الخلل أو القصور، ودرء المشكلات التي يمكن أن تنشأ في مسارات الحياة اليومية. كما أن عليهم إدراك التحديات التي قد يواجهها النشاط المسجدي والاستجابة الإيجابية الواعية لها على أسس سليمة.

ولنا شك أن مراعاة هذه الجوانب مطلوبة مع بدء التخطيط لإقامة المساجد والمراكز الإسلامية وأثناء تصميمها التعاري وتوسيع مراقبها وأركانها، وخلال أعمال الترميم والتجديد والتطوير، مع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار أيضا متطلبات الأمن والسلامة. بل إن في التصميمات المعارية الحديثة، كالتوسع مثلا في استخدام الواجهات الزجاجية، ما يشعر بالفتح المسجد
• إقامة البرامج المشروعة الخيرية والإنسانية، ومن ذلك جملات
             إغاثة المتضررين من الكوارث، أو برامج التضامن مع الفقراء والمشردين،
             وغير ذلك.

• قيام المسجد بجهود إعلامية للمواصلة الإيجابي مع فئات الجمهور،
             سواء بطرق تقليدية أو متحدة، وبمضايقم خطاب تسجل مع رسالة
             المسجد وحضوره. ومن ذلك إصدار مجلة أو نشرة، وتحرير مجلة جدارية
             وتشويق موقع على الإنترنت، أو تخصص متحدث إعلامي، أو إصدار
             مواقع صحفية تسجل مرسالة المسجد ودوره، ويمكن أن يكون ذلك
             بالشراكة والتعاون مع جهات أخرى مسلمة أو غير مسلمة، أو بالساهمة
             بالمحتوى في وسائل إعلامية محلية (مجلة الحي، أو إذاعة محلية، أو موقع
             إلكتروني عام، مثلاً).

• تنظيم فعاليات تعاونية مشتركة على مستوى الحي والمدينة والمؤسسات ذات الاهتمام المشترك في مجالات عدة.

• المشاركة والتنسيق مع الجمعيات والمؤسسات ذات الصلة
             بالمجالات التي تقع ضمن نطاق الاهتمام بالنسبة لدور المسجد وحضوره،
             ومن ذلك المشاركة في الأطر التنسيقية ومجموعات التعاون وفرقة العمل في
             الحقوق المستهدفة، وبالصفة التي تعرّض دور المسجد في تشجيع مشاركة
             المسلمين المجتمعية.
في هذا المجال، النهوض بأطر مخصصة، كروابط المساجد أو مجالس الأئمة أو الهيئات الدينية المسلمة وما في حكمها.

ولكي ينهض المسجد بهذه الأدوار، فإن إدارته معنية بأن تخصص الموارد البشرية والمادية اللازمة لهذا الغرض، وتحديد مهام ومسؤوليات في هذا الشأن كمسؤول العلاقات العامة أو جدولة الإعلام وما إلى ذلك.

وفي ما يلي بعض من الوسائل والأنشطة التي ينتمي من المساجد القيام بها على الصعيد الخارجي، على سبيل المثال لا الحصر:

- إقامة لقاءات الاستقبال والاجتماعات العامة والمنتديات الحوارية والثقافية والمؤتمرات والمعارض، بما ينسجم مع طبيعة المسجد ودوره المشرود منه وإمكانياته.

- تنظيم أيام مفتوحة على الحي والجيران، حتى يتعرّف سكان الحي على أنشطة المسجد ويتحقق الانسجام المتبادل. ويمكن التنسيق بين المساجد على مستوى المدينة أو الإقليم أو البلد لتنظيم هذه الفعالية.

- إقامة بعض الأنشطة المخصصة لتركيز التواصل مع عامة الجمهور، مثل احتفالات العيد وحملات تنظيف الحي والتبرع بالدم والإفطارات الجماعية التي تستضيف عامة الجمهور في رمضان، علاوة على فعاليات التعريف بالإسلام والثقافة الإسلامية والمساجد لفئات الجمهور كلاميًا والمدارس وكبار السن وطوام الإسعاف والطاقم والشرطة والخدمات، وغير ذلك.
يفسر الموقع المركزي الذي اتخذته المسجد في تخطيط المدينة الإسلامية، بحيث ارتبطت بالمسجد الجامع أحياء المدينة وأحوالها ارتبطتب القلب بشرائين الحياة.

إن الدور المشروود من المسجد يجعله موثقاً لفئات الجمهور على تنوع خصائصها وتمدد احتياجاتها، يقيم فيه الناس الشعائر الإسلامية، ويستفيدون فيه من الخطابة الإيجابية التي تشجع العقل وتصقل إرادة الخير وتتنمّي العاطفة البناءة، فتقوم السلوكيات وترشد إلى المدى والفضيلة والإحسان في مسائل الحياة. وحري أن يستفيد الجمهور في ارتباطه للمساجد من جملة القرآن والسنة والذكر، ومن دورات العلوم الشرعية والكونية، ومن برامج النموذجية والإرشاد والعمل التطوعي وورش العمل، ومن أطر العمل النسوي والشريعة والشفع، ومن وسائل الإيضاح التعليمية والأجهزة التلقائيّة التفاعلية التي تواكب المستجدات وتتوظفها لما فيه الصالح العام.

ولن ريب في أن للمسجد مكانة متميزة في حياة المسلمين أينما كانوا، كما لا يمكن إغفال دوره في واقع مسلمي أوروبا وفي مشاركتهم المجتمعية، وفي تجسيد المعاني الإنسانية النبيلة كالمساواة ونبذ السلالية (العنصرية)، والتراحم والتكافل والتعاون على الخير. ويرقي حضور المساجد في البلدان الأوروبية لأن يجعلها دوحة النشاط المجتمعيّ وموئل الجهاد الخيري والإنساني للمسلمين على المستوى المحلي. كما أن للمسجد موقعه الذي لا يغلي عنه في تخفير التواصل المجتمعي وتحقيق التفاهم ونزع قليل التوترات.

ويتطلع من الأئمة وإدارات المساجد، مع المؤسسات الإسلامية ككل؛ أن تعبّر عن الاحتياجات الدينية وعن الاهتمامات المجتمعية للمسلمين، بما في ذلك ما يتعلق بشؤون الأحوال الشخصية مثلًا. وإنما يعنى على جودة الأداء
إن كان المسجد دارًا للعبادة وإقامة الشعائر؛ فإنّ دوره يسع للإشعاع الإيجابي على جوانب شتى من الحياة، ودون تعطيل الأدوار الإيجابية الأخرى لمكونات المجتمع وركاؤه.

فمن المعلوم أن المسجد في عهد النبي الأمين صلى الله عليه وسلم لم يكن مجرد مساحة للصلاة، ولم يكن حكراً على الرجال وحدهم، أو على ناشئة عمرية محددة؛ بل كان مركز إشعاع للمجتمع كله، ومركزاً لقيادة وتدبير الشؤون العامة، وصدراً للعلم، وداراً للقضاء، وقاعة للإجتماع، وحضناً للإطلاع، ومحطة للجهد الإعلامي الذي يبني ولا يهدم، ومراكزاً للتكتلات الاجتماعية. وفوق هذا فقد اضطلع المسجد بمسؤولية تعاون مشكلات الناس، والمبادرة إلى حلّ همومهم. وله في هذا كله ما

ثالثا، رسالة المسجد داخلياً وخارجياً
وطرح معالجات رشيدة وناجعة لها بما يتجاوب وهدي الإسلام الحنيف، وله أن يتخذ مستشارين أكفاء لهذا الغرض بعيدون في تقديم الأمور.

8/ ينبغي على الإمام أن يولي عناية خاصة للشريعة الشابة، فيدرك تطلُّعاتها ويبصر مشكلاتها ويثبت أحزاها كافعة، بما يعزُّز قابليته على التواصل معها وتقديم ما يفيدها في أمور دينها ودنياها، فيكون له دوره المرتَّحٌ منه في صلاح هذه الشريعة واستقامتها، وإعانتها على النجاح الحسن في شتى المجالات الإيجابية.

9/ للدعاء في الخطبة شأن عظيم، وقد تَّنَّهَ الإمام تبارك وتعالى إلى أنه قريب من عباده الذين يسألونه (وَإِذا سَأَلُوك عِبَادِي عَنْ فَاتِي قَرْبِي أَجِيبُ دَعَوَةَ الْأَذَاعِ إِذَا دَعَوَانِ فَلْيُسْجِبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يُرَشِّدُ وُلْدَى مِنْهُمْ) (البقرة 186). ولذا فإنَّ على الإمام أن يحرص على التضرُّع إلى الله في دعائه من فوق المنبر؛ بصلاح الأحوال، وبالرحمة والمغفرة للمسلمين والمسلمات الأحياء منهم والأموات، وبطلب خير الدنيا والآخرة، وأن يستحضر في دعائه أوضاع أمَّة الإسلام في العالم أجمع وما يداهمها من نوازل، وأن يدعو كذلك بالإمَّة والطمأنينة للبلد الذي يكتنفه والمجتمع الذي يعيش فيه أيضاً، وأن يتحاشى أن يشمل دعاؤه على أي ما يسيء إلى الخطبة وسمو رسالتها، أو أي مما قد يسإله فهمه أو تأويله.
3/ تعايشي التعاضد للمؤسسات أو الأشخاص، وتجنُّب التقريع الشخصي أو حتى اتخاذ المئة منسجمة لردة المباشر، وإنها يكون تناول المسائل المنسجمة مع رسالة الخطبة وطابعها في نطاقها العام الذي لا يخرج عن هذه الضوابط.

4/ يُبدِّر بالإمام أن يتهيأ للخطبة بالاطلاع الواقي على ما يتناوله في خطبته من شتي الجوانب، بل وطلب المشورة من أهلها في المجالات ذات الصلة، بما في ذلك مساندته في تقدير الموضوعات التي يمكنه معالجتها في خطبته أو في توفير المادة العلمية والمصادر المساعدة والوقوف على المعطيات اللازمة.

5/ يُوضِّح المعين من ذوي الاهتمام والاختصاص والكافءة، بالنهوض بمشروع خطب منترتب موجهة للأئمة والخطباء في أوروبا، بما يحقق المقاصد الشرعية من دورهم الفاعل، وكما يعينهم ذلك على أداء رسالتهم الإيجابية على أنواع وجه، مع أهمية خروج هذا المشروع بنتاجه في أنجع مجتمع ومستقبل صورة ويشكل مطبوع ومتعدد الوسائط (مسموع، مرئي، إلكتروني).

6/ ينبغي على الخطيب إعطاء الأولوية في الخطبة لدعم تمشك المسلمين الصحيح بدنيهم بدون تفريط ولا غفلة، والنهوض بأحوالهم وتنمية واقعهم من شتي جوانبه، ومساعدتهم على تحقيق حضور إيجابي لائق في مجتمعاتهم الأوروبية يقوم على المواطنة الصالحة.

7/ يُوصِّي الخطيب بأن يرصد مشكلات المسلمين الذين يحدث إليهم، وهموم جهالة المسلمين والمسلمات في نطاق حضورهم، وعليه أن يسعى لرصد هذه المشكلات وفهمهم بما يمكنه من الوقوف على أبعادها وفهم ملابساتها.
٩/ ينبغي مراعاة خصائص كل من الخطبة والدرس، وطالما أنّ المتظر
من الإمام والوعاظ والمرشدين عدم الاكتفاء بالخطب الجمعية؛ وأنّ دورهم
المسلجدي يشمل أيضاً إقامة دروس العلم والإرشاد والتوعية، مع السعي
لإضفاء شئٍ فاتح الجمهور وشرائحه بهذا الدروس، فإن ذلك يقتضي
التفريد بين مواصفات كل من الخطبة والدرس في الشكل والأسلوب
والحتوى لإنجاح كل منها وتحقيق الأهداف المرجعة منها.

ب- في مضمون الخطاب

١/ الخرس على أن تتضمن الخطبة المسجدية رسائل إيجابية واضحة
لجمهور المصلين بختلف فئاتهم، ولن يواكب الخطبة بوسائل الاتصال
الأوسع نطاقاً (الخطب المسجدة أو التي يتم نشر مضامينها إعلامياً)، مع
الإشارة إلى أن حقيقة إلقاء اثنين وخمس خطبة جمعة في العام الواحد
تضيف إليها خطب العيد، فإنها تضيف أهمية فائقة على مثل هذه المناسبة
الأسبوعية التي يأتيها مصلون في حاجة إلى من يرشدهم فيها بهمهم من أمور
دينهم ودنياهم، وفيهم من لا يرتاد المسجد إلا يوم الجمعة وربما بشكل
متفق.

٢/ يُستحسن أن يستفيد الخطيب من الأحداث والمناسبات الدينية
والعالمية، ليكون منطلقاً للدروس والخطب، والإرشاد والتوجيه من خلالها،
وهنا ينتمي حاسة التفاعل الإيجابي لمرتادي المساجد مع هذه المناسبات.
5/ إن مراعاة العامل اللغوي في الخطابة هام، وهو ما يوجه إلى البحث عن الخطيب المحسن لغة البلد أو الإقليم الذي يقع فيه المسجد، إلى جانب اللغة العربية، ويقتضي ذلك أيضاً مراعاة اللغة التي يتحدث بها معظم رواد المسجد إن لم تكون تلك هي إحدى هاتين اللغتين (العربية ولغة المنطقة)، وقد نبى القرآن الكريم إلى أهمية اللغة في هذا الشأن كما في قوله تعالى: "وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قُوُومِهِ فَبِي ضُلُولِ اللَّهِ مِن يَشَاءَ وَبِي هَدِيَّةٍ مِنْ يَشَاءَ وَهُوَ الْعَرِّيْبُ الْحَكِيمُ".

6/ يُوصى الخطيب بعدم الإطالة والاسترسل في الخطة، مع الحرص على اجتذاب انتباه السامعين وإعطائهم التركيز في ما يقال، وهو ما يقتضي توظيف نبرة الصوت ودورة الإلقاء وتفاعل الملامح ولغة الجسد، علباً على العناية بالمضمون والصياغات والمفردات.

7/ على الإمام مراعاة أحوال المخاطبين من جهور المصلين ومن عامة المسلمين، بل ومن عامة المجتمع الذي يعيش فيه، فراعي تنوع مداركهم وتنوع مشاراتهم، واختلاف أحوالهم وشواغلهم، وهو ما يستدعي كذلك حرصه على تحاشي القيام بفعل أو الإدلاء بتقول قد يساء فهمه أو يؤدّى على غير المقصد الحسن.

8/ يندرج في باب مراعاة أحوال المخاطبين إدراج خصوصية جهور المسجد الذي يرتقي فيه الإمام، لجهة شرائحهم العمرية وتوزيعهم على الجنسين، وكذلك خصوصياتهم الوظيفية أو المهنية ومستوياتهم التعليمية والأكاديمية، كما يلحق بذلك معرفة أوضاعهم الاجتماعية وشواغلهم وهمومهم.
مثل هذه المناسبة الأسبوعية التي يأنثى مصلون في حاجة إلى من يرشدهم فيها. يهمهم من أمور دينهم ودنياهم.

وفي ما يلي عرض موجز لتوصيات تتعلق بشكل الخطبة ومضامينها.

أ- في شكل الخطبة

1/ يوصى الإمام الخطيب بحسين إعداد الخطبة والاستعداد اللائق لها، لما تتمثل من أهمية بالغة، مع التحوى من الافترال غير المضبوط وصعود المبكر بدون تأخير مسبق.

2/ ضرورة الانتباه بالهندام واللباس اللائق بهذه المناسبة الدينية الهامة. ويُنصح بأن يكون الإمام بارزاً بلباسه مع رعايتي التكلفة، وأن لا يصعد المنبر بملابس اعتيادية كي لا يفقد هويته بين المصلين، بل يكون لباسه مقبولًا وباعثًا على الاحترام.

3/ الصراح والصباح يضعيفان الخطبة ولا يقوبانها، أما الغلطة في الأسلوب والأداء الحاد في الإلقاب واللملح العباسة والتحركات التي توحى بالشدّة فهي إجمالًا من بواعث النفور لدى الجمهور.

4/ على الخطيب أن يتمثل في سلوكه وتصريحه ووجوده ما يقول؛ حتى يكون أسبق الناس للانتفاع بالتوجيه، ولكني يكون أقدر على التأثير، فإنه يخرج من القلب هو أقدر على الوصول إلى قلوب المستمعين.
للخطابة في المساجد أهمية بالغة، فهي عباد التواصل مع جهور المصلين،
بل مع نطاقات أوسع من المتلقيين تواكب الخطاب وتتابعها بوسائل الاتصال
المتاحة. ولا شك أن ذلك يفرض العلاقة بشكل الخطبة وبمواصفاتها.
وبمضامين ما تشمل عليه أيضًا.

ويجدر بكل خطيب أن يستوقفه مليًا عظم الدور ومسؤولية الكلمة،
وأن يتأمل في ما يعني ذلك بالنسبة لمن يتناول إلقاء انتين وخمس خطبة جمعية
في العام الواحد تضاف إليها خطب العيد؛ فذلك مما يضفي أهمية فائقة على
3/ يُفضّل عدم إقحام الإمام في القضايا الإدارية للجمعية المشرفة على المسجد، إلاّ في الحالات الخاصة التي يُستحسن فيها استشارة الإمام، ويُتظرّ من الإدارة والإمام أن يتعاوننا في المجالات التي تتطلب جهوداً مشتركة.

4/ من الأوفق أن يختص مسؤولو الجمعية بالتصدي لما تتطلبه الظروف من مواقف أو تصريحات ذات صلة بالشؤون السياسية أو بالمواصفات الرسمية للجمعية، مع صيانة موقع الإمام ومكاناته عن هذا الشأن.
المؤسسة المشرفة على المسجد أن ترعى الجانب المالي لهذه المتطلبات، آخذة بعين الاعتبار الصلحة المباشرة التي تعود على الجمعية عبر مساعدة الإمام على القيام برسته وإشعاعه الإيجابي على محيطه.

8/ تُوصي الجمعيات والمؤسسات الإسلامية، بما فيها التي تشرف على المساجد، بأن تتبنى طلبة يدرسون في الكليات والمؤسسات الإسلامية الموثوق بها، ليس لكي يقدموا على العلم الشرعي والألبانية بالتكوين الشخصي فحسب، وإنما لكي يتقلدوا مواقع إمامية مساجد وينضموا بأعباءها أيضاً. وما يتطلب هذا الأمر اتباع المرشحين الصالحين لذلك، واعتماد صيغ تعاقدية بين الجمعيات والمؤسسات وإدارات المساجد من جانب، والمرشحين لتقلد مواقع الإمامة وفق هذا الترتيب، مع الالتزام المتبادل بمسؤوليات كل جانب وحقوقه وواجباته.

ج- فيما يتعلق بالعلاقة بين الإمام وإدارة المسجد أو الجمعية

1/ يجب الاهتمام بالوضع الاجتماعي والقانوني للإمام والمتسعة عليه، وإكرام ذمته، وأن يُعطى الإمام ما يكفي حتى لا يضطر إلى عمل ينزل من قيمته أو يضع عليه الشبهات.

2/ يحرص على أن تجتمع الإمام وإدارة المسجد علاقةً تواصلية وتعاون إيجابية، وهو ما يحقق الصلحة العامة في المسجد ويعين على التهوض الأمثال بشتى الأ-selector فيه.
في ظل بعض المؤشرات عن تفكك الأسرة بدل تماستها أو الانقطاع بين الآجال بدل التواصل بينها.

4 / على الإمام أن يسعى لتنمية مهاراته اللغوية والبلاغية، وقدراته في الإلقاء والحوار، وهو ما سيستشفه - بعون الله تعالى - في القيام بدور التواصل مع قطاعات أوجس من الجمهور عبر المبادرات الحوارية والندوات والمؤتمرات ووسائل الإعلام.

5 / يوصى الإمام بالاستفادة من الجامعات والكليات والمعاهد المختصة التي تقدم تكويناً شريعاً وثقافة اجتماعية من شأنها مساعدة على حسن فهم المجتمع وترشيد المسلمين إلى ما فيه صلاحهم وصلاح المجتمعات الأوروبية التي يعيشون فيها. [على سبيل المثال المعهد الأوروبي للعلوم الإنسانية يفرعه الثلاثة (فرعان في شاتو شينون وباريس بفرنسا وفرع ثالث في ويلز ببريطانيا) التي تقوم بتخرج أئمة يجمعون بين الفهم الشامل والوسطي للإسلام وفهم عقلية المجتمع ومعرفة الواقع، وذلك عن طريق نظامين: الدراسة: الانتظام (الحضور) أو الانتساب (المراسلة)].

6 / يوصى الإمام بالاستفادة من الفتاوى والمواد الفقهية الصادرة عن "المجلس الأوروبي للإفتاء والبحث"، الذي يقوم بإصدار فتاوى ودراسات شرعية وبحث متعددة تراعي وضع المسلمين في أوروبا باعتبارهم أقليات في مجتمعات غير مسلمة.

7 / الإمام في حاجة إلى الاستزادة من العلوم والمعارف والمهارات، وإلى تأهيل مستمر يمكن تحقيقه بطرق الحلقات الدراسية والدورات المتخصصة التي تنظمها المؤسسات الكفؤة في هذه المجالات، وعلى إدارة الجمعية أو
بـ: بشأن تكوين الإمام

1/ يمثل الإمام موقعاً هاماً في الإرشاد الديني لجمهور المسجد وللامة المجتمع. وكثيراً ما يُنظر إليه باعتباره المرجعية الدينية - بغض النظر عن مدى دقة هذا المفهوم حسب المتطوع الإسلامي الصحيح - وهو ما يجعله يُشبه موقعًا مميزًا شكلاً ومضمونًا.

2/ يقتضي موقع الإمامة بالمساجد إبلاء عناية فائقة لتنمية الجانب الشرعي والفتوى في تكوين الإمام، وإلهامه بحصيلة علمية ومعرفية متنوعة وثرية، بما في ذلك القرآن الكريم وعلمه، والحديث الشريف وعلومه، والسيرة النبوية المطهرة، والفقه وبخاصة ما يتعلق بأحكام العبادات، وكذلك أحكام المعاملات أو بعضها أو آداب الإسلام وتوجيهاته.

3/ يقتضى الدور الاجتماعي الذي يشهده الإمامة، فإنه يكون مُنظرًا منه السعي لإصلاح ذات البين والتوفيق بين الفياليق، ودعم التوافق الأسري، وهو ما يتطلب دراية بسُؤال الأحوال الشخصية وإدراكًا للظروف الاجتماعية السائدة، واستشعارًا للمسؤولية البالغة الملقاة على عاتقه.
أ: بشأن شخصية الإمام

١/ إن تألق الجناح الإيزيدي لدى الإمام وتميزه في سلوكي الحسن هو مطلب لا غنى عنه حتى يكون الإمام قدوة لغيره. وإن حال الإمام ينبغي أن يكون مصداقاً لقوله، وقد شدد القرآن الكريم النكر على من لا يوافق فعلهم قوله: "يُنبِئُونَ الَّذينَ عَامِنَوا إِنِّي لَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا لَا تَتَفَعَّلُونَ رَبُّكُمْ مَقْتًا" (الصف ٢-٣).

٢/ يُنظر من الإمام أن يكون محباً لمهامته السامية التي ينهض بها، مقدراً أهليتها ومدركًا دورها، وساعياً لأدائها على أتم وجه، مستشعراً المسؤولية ووطأة الأمانة الملقاة على عاتقه.

٣/ يُوصى الإمام أن يكون قريباً من الناس ومنفتحاً عليهم ومنتوطاً لهم، ومهما في التواصل معهم، كي يجد الجمهور فيه المقصد ليس في السؤال الشرعي فحسب؛ بل وفي التواصل الاجتماعي أيضاً. ومن الأهمية بمكان أن تحل الغضوات بينه وعامة المصلين، وحذفاً لشيئاً دوره خارج المسجد إلى الحي والمجتمع، يقوم - ضمن الضوابط الشرعية ومقتضيات العرف المقبول - بزيارة الناس في بيوتهم وتفقد أحوالهم، والمشاركة في مناسباتهم الاجتماعية. ويعدو المرضى ويدعم الناس بزيارتهم، وأن يسعى لكي يتعلّى هذا المسلك الحسن إلى غير المسلمين أيضاً وأن يكون لغيره في ذلك أسوة طيبة.

٤/ يُراعى في موقع إمامة المسجد الاهتمام باللباس وبحسن الهيئة والهندام، دون تكلف أو إسراف، لما في ذلك من أثر إيجابي للإمام لدى عامة الجمهور وخصائصه.
أولاً، فيما يتعلق بأمام المسجد ودوره

إنّ إمامة المساجد من المهام الجليلة في حياة المسلمين، وهي ذات شأن بالغ وتنطوي على مسؤولية كبيرة، وتفرض كذلك متطلبات مّن يتبوأها والتزاماته متقبولة منه.

إنّ مواقع الإمامة تلك لها من الخصوصية الإضافية في واقع الأقليات المسلمة، كما عليه الحال في الديار الأوروبية، التي تتمثل المساجد والمراكز الإسلامية فيها أبرز نقاط الارتكاز لرعاية الاحتياجات والخصوصيات المتعلقة بالمسلمين والبهوض بواقعهم والانفتاح على المجتمع الكبير وتقديم الخدمات لفئاته.

وإنّ ما يلي عرض ل متطلبات ومواصفات، تتعلق بشخصية إمام المسجد، وبدوره، أخذًا بعض الاعتبار الواقع الأوروبي على نحو خاص.
إن هذا الكرّاس هو وثيقة توجيهية خصصة لشؤون المساجد والمراكز الإسلامية والأئمة في أوروبا، وهو يشتمل على توصيات عامة نحو دور إيجابي أكثر فعالية. وقد روعي في وضع مادة هذا الكرّاس، الإيجاز والاقتصاص لتحقيق غرض السهولة في التداول والتناول، إلاّ لكان المقام قد اتسع للتفصيل والشرح والاستدلال بالنصوص الشرعية. كما روعيت أيضاً التبادلات التي ينطوي عليها الواقع الأوروبي، والتفاوض الذي يطبع واقع المسلمين في هذه القارة وظروفهم والتي تنعكس أيضاً على تجاربهم في مجال إقامة المساجد والمراكز الإسلامية وتسير شؤونها.

وقد جاء وضع هذا الكرّاس التوجهي، استقاءً من مقرّرات الندوة التشورية التي عقدها قسم المواطنة والشؤون السياسية باتحاد المنظمات الإسلامية في أوروبا، في بروكسل بتاريخ 16 و17 يوليو 2007 وحضورها ثلث من المشايخ والأئمة الفضلاء من بلدان أوروبية شتى، وكان من مقرّرات تلك الندوة الخروج بخلاصة موجزة ونشرها تعميّاً للفائدة. والله من وراء القصد.
لا يمكن أن تكون المسجد موضعًا لأداء الصلوات فحسب؛ بل كان مدرسة وجامعة، يتلقى فيه المسلمون تعاليم الإسلام وتوجيهاته، ومنتمى تألف في العناصر الثقافية المختلفة التي طالما نافرت بينها النزعات الجاهلية وحروبها، وقاعدة لإدارة جميع الشؤون، ومجلسًا للتشاور والتنفيذ. بل كان المسجد النبي في هذا كله دارًا يسكن فيها عدد كبير من الفقراء الذين لم يكن لهم دارًا ولا مال ولا أهل ولا بنون.

وقد أوضح الارتباط بين الهجرة وإقامة المسجد؛ كم يرتبط دور المسجد بتحقيق الطمأنينة وثبيت الاستقرار وتفريق الوجود المنتج، لأن المعهد المكي باً شهد من ابتساط للمؤمنين وطغيان عليهم واستمال للتوحد وملائمة للموحدين؛ لم يتح المجال لعبارة المسجد وتهويها بدورها المنتظر منها. وبهذا، فقد كانت الصلاة في مسجد قباء نقطة تحول في التاريخ الإسلامي بين عهد المنى والخوف والمعاناة، وعهد الاستقرار والأمن والطمأنينة والمشاركة الجامعة.

إن المسلمين في أوروبا، في أتجاههم لإقامة المسجد والمراكز الإسلامية، بمواصفاتها العقارية اللائقة بها وبا تشغيل على من مرافق وخدمات؛ إنها يعكسون بذلك صورة من صور الاندماج الإيجابي في مجتمعاتهم الأوروبية، ويعبرون أيضاً عن حضور لائق ضمن فضاء المواطنة التي تسع للجميع في رحاب القانون والحقوقي العامة والخاصة والخريجات الدينية والشخصية. ولا يريب أن نبوءة المسجد والمراكز الإسلامية بدورها على النحو الأمثل، يمثل خدمة للفئات المسلمين، ودعاً للنهوض المجتمعي، ونطوي أيضاً على إشعاع على الجمهور على اختلاف مشاربه، يشتمل كذلك على فرص التواصل المتبادل معه.
توطئة

في طريق هجرته من مكة المكرمة إلى المدينة المنورة، نزل رسول الله ﷺ بقاء وأقام أول مسجد في الإسلام، فكان أول مسجد أسس على النقوى كما ذكر القرآن الكريم.

ثم كان أول ما شرع به النبي ﷺ عند وصوله المدينة المنورة، إقامة المسجد الالبوي الشريف، فكان ركيزة أساسية من ركائز إقامة المجتمع الجديد الذي يشجع التعددية وتحفيز المسلمين وغير المسلمين على قاعدة الاحترام المتبادل والحقوق والواجبات التي تمليها المواطنة.
في بيوت أذن الله أن ترفع ويبذكَر فيها اسمه
يُسبح له فيها بالغدو والأصلى ٣٥ رجال لا تغلهم
تجرة ولا بيع عن ذكر الله وإقامة الصلاة وإيتاء الزكاة
محفون يومًا يتنقلُ في القلوب والأبصار
لمجزيهم الله أحسن ما عملوا ويزيدهم من فضله
وأطُلق من يشاء بغير حساب

(النور ٣٦-٣٨)
المسجد والأئمة في أوروبا

توصيات عامة نحو دور إيجابي أكثر فعالية
دور الأئمة في أوروبا

أهمية دور المسجد كمدرسة وجامعة لتعليم الإسلام وتوحيهاته.

1. المسجد يحقق الطالتينية ويثبت الاستقرار ويستقر العرف والعناية، فقد كان مسجد قيادة بداية لعهد الأئمة والاستقرار.
2. من الوثائق المتعلقة بشخصية الإمام السجاد، ويدور ويعتبر مثل الواقعي الأوروبي ما يلي:

أ. فيما يتعلق بشخصية الإمام:

1. الجانب الإيماني والسلوك الحسن لدى الإمام ليكون قدوة لغيره.
2. محبة الإمام لهذه المهمة واستشعاره المسؤولية والأمانة الملقاة عليه.
3. القرن من الناس والافتتاح عليهم والتواصل لهم والهادأ في التواصل معهم شرعياً واجتماعياً، مع زيادة الناس في بيوتهم وحضور مناسباتهم الاجتماعية.
4. الاحترام بالباس وبحسن الهيئة والهردام دون تكلف أو إسراف.
5. عند ارتدائه كن الأئمة اجتاع عليهم تكون المسؤولية عليه أكثر من غيره.

ب. بشأن تكوين الإمام:

1. أهمية موقع ودور الإمام في الرشاد الديني عند جمهور المسجد والمجتمع.
2. بسبب هذه الأهمية يجب تنمية الجانب الشرعي والفقيه في تكون الإمام وخصا معرفة أحكام العبادات والمعاملات.
3. الدراية ببعض الأحوال الشخصية والظروف الاجتماعية السائدة في بلد.
4. تنمية المهارات الفنية والبلاغية ومهارات الإقامة والعوار.
5. الاستفادة من الجامعات والكليات والمعاهد التي تتميز بالجانب الشرعي والاجتماعي وإعداد الدعاة والقادة. (إجبارية مشروع كويتي في الكويت).
6. الاستفادة من العلوم والمواد الفقهية المتاحة من المجلس الأوروبي للإفتاء والبحوث.
7. الاستفادة من العلوم والمعرفات والمهارات بجامعة الخطوات العلمية والبحث.
8. تبني طلبة يدرسون في الكليات والمؤسسات الإسلامية، وتدريبهم على مهم الإمام وتوظيف مواقع الإمام واسباب مهارات القيادة.

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