

*Foreword by*

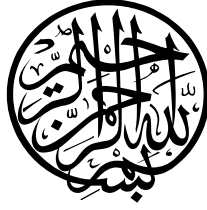
**DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM**

*Edited by*

**IMTIYAZ YUSUF**

**A SOCIALLY ENGAGED GLOBAL MUSLIM**  
**DR JAMAL AL-BARZINJI**

**FELICITATION VOLUME**



**A Socially Engaged Global Muslim  
Dr Jamal Al-Barzinji**

FELICITATION VOLUME



A SOCIALLY ENGAGED GLOBAL MUSLIM  
**DR JAMAL AL-BARZINJI**

FELICITATION VOLUME

*Foreword by*

**DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM**

*Edited by*

**IMTIYAZ YUSUF**



**IBT**

Islamic Book Trust  
Kuala Lumpur

© Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

*Published by*

Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW)  
at Shenandoah University  
44160 Scholar Plaza Suite 100  
Leesburg, Virginia 20176  
USA

*In collaboration with*

Islamic Book Trust  
607 Mutiara Majestic, Jalan Othman  
46000 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia  
*www.ibtbooks.com*

Islamic Book Trust is affiliated with The Other Press.

ISBN 978-1-955653-05-3

*Printed by*

Vinlin Press Sdn. Bhd.  
No. 2, Jalan Meranti Permai 1  
Meranti Permai Industrial Park  
Batu 15, Jalan Puchong  
47100 Puchong, Selangor D.E.

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<i>Dato' Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim</i>	
<b>A Socially Engaged Global Muslim</b> .....	<b>xv</b>
<i>Imtiyaz Yusuf</i>	

## PART ONE

### Personal Reflections

<b>1. Jamal As I Knew Him <i>May Allah Have Mercy Upon Him</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<i>Suzanne al-Barzinji</i>	
<b>2. Remembering Our Father</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>The Barzinji Family</i>	
<b>3. My Father A Light Spreading Light</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<i>Zaid Barzinji</i>	
<b>4. An <i>Ansar</i>—a Helper</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<i>Wafa Shalabi</i>	
<b>5. A Multidimensional Personality</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<i>M. Yaqub Mirza</i>	
<b>6. The Legacy of a Multi-Dimensional Man</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<i>John L. Esposito</i>	

<b>7. In the Darkness of the Night, We Miss the Full Moon .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<i>Hisham Altalib</i>	
<b>8. A Global Institution Builder.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<i>Anis Ahmed</i>	
<b>9. An Optimist Muslim .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<i>Malik Badri</i>	
<b>10. An All-Rounded Person.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<i>Joel Williams</i>	
<b>11. A Diplomatic—Professional Manager .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<i>Mahmoud Mohamed</i>	
<b>12. Partners in Cooperation .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<i>M. Omar Ashraf</i>	
<b>13. A Person Blessed with Unique Talent .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<i>Jerry Pete Martin</i>	
<b>14. A Team Player .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<i>Douglas Carnes</i>	

PART TWO

**Leadership Lessons**

<b>15. In Gratitude to a Pragmatic, Visionary Leadership of Cooperative Spirit .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<i>Heidi Hadsell</i>	
<b>16. Visionary Leader with A Clear Mission .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<i>Louay Safi</i>	
<b>17. Life Lessons Learned from an Exemplary Leader .....</b>	<b>109</b>
<i>Ermin Sinanović and Ahmet Alibašić</i>	

PART THREE

**Historical Context and Academic Contributions**

<b>18. Lasting Contributions to The Academic Study of Islam .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<i>Abdulaziz Sachedina</i>	

CONTENTS

**19. *Maqāṣid* as a Strategic Project for the Muslim *Umma* ..... 130**

*Jasser Auda*

**20. Working in Cooperation American Journal of  
Islamic Social Sciences ..... 148**

*Katherine Bullock*

PART FOUR

**Legacy of Social Activism**

**21. The Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning ..... 157**

*Younus Y. Mirza*

**22. The Builder of the ADAMS Center ..... 166**

*Imam Mohamed Hag Magid*

**23. *Islah* is the Goal of Social Engagement..... 170**

*Iqbal J. Unus*

**Contributors..... 176**

**Index ..... 188**





# Foreword

Dato' Seri Anwar Bin Ibrahim

In 1976, shortly after being released from prison, I went to the United States of America for a winter gathering with international youth leaders in Peoria, Illinois. The meeting was held at a mosque, which was formerly a church, the upshot of the meeting was the establishment of the Malaysian Islamic Study Group, with Dr Md Nur Manuty as the first president. What followed was my tour through several other states where I met youth leaders and Malaysian students abroad, sharing my experience as a detainee under the draconian and now defunct Internal Security Act of 1960 (ISA). Why was I locked up without trial for two years? *Mea culpa*, I don't deny that I had played an active role, instrumental some would say, in anti-government protests championing the plight of impoverished farmers in Baling in northern Malaysia.

Recalling these events, my memory takes me back to Jamal Barzinji and the warm reception that he, together with his parents, gave me when I first landed in the United States, after a long and exhausting Kuala Lumpur-Chicago flight. Words can't express my profound gratitude to Jamal and his family for the kindness, warmth, and generosity showered on me throughout my stay in

the States where I lodged at Sugarland Road, next to the ADAMS (All Dulles Area Muslim Society) Center. Being such a superb cook, Jamal's wife Suzanne and her expertise in Syrian dishes completely reconfigured my palate and expectations for these delicacies. His father, Shaykh Muhammad al-Barzinji was a pious Muslim of Barzinjah descent, an *eponym* not unfamiliar in Malaysia, particularly among the Malays, where the tradition of *Barzinji*, ritual chanting conducted on festive occasions especially for rites of passage, still lives on.

Born in Mosul, Jamal always had a deep desire to remain in Iraq and witness his nation thrive. Unfortunately, the persecution and crack downs by the Baathist party forced his family to flee for safer and greener pastures. Eventually, they settled down in the United States.

There never was a dull moment in Jamal's company, thanks in great part to his wit and penchant for 'intellectual' jokes, oxymoronic as it may sound. Soon, our friendship blossomed into a deep scholarly brotherhood and it was not long before our conversations grew into discourses with other friends and colleagues. I, a Malaysian, and Jamal as well as our brothers Shaykh Taha Jabir al-Alwani, an Iraqi like Jamal, and AbdulHamid AbuSulyaman, born in Saudi Arabia, would come together with the renowned Palestinian thinker Ismail al Faruqi. Bound by a deep-seated yearning for knowledge, a firm conviction to reactivate the Islamic intellectual tradition, and ultimately to articulate a holistic Muslim *weltanschauung*, we would eventually establish the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).

In this vein, throughout the 1980s, countless seminars and conferences were convened. A new network of scholars and friendships was forged, and we witnessed, I dare say, a reflowering of Islamic thought across the globe. While these moments call for humility and hard work, and certainly not triumphalism, it would

## FOREWORD

also be false modesty not to acknowledge that some of our ideas were worked out and crafted and from them arose some major, if not altogether monumental, achievements. Certainly, a crowning success of the time was the core business of the Islamization of Knowledge initiative. As fate would have it, theory became practice when I was the Malaysian Minister of Education. Together, Jamal and I, along with our IIIT colleagues, brought to fruition the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), aiming it to become one of the best places where true knowledge creation and cultivation of Islamic foundation nature in different sciences could develop and prosper. To our great fortune, Jamal came to Kuala Lumpur to assist our dear brother AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, who was by then the Rector of the new university. Initially, Jamal came to deliver insightful lectures and partake in intellectual discourses, but eventually, he took on a more structured, and by all accounts an instrumental, role in elevating the discourses to an even higher plane when he became the Dean of the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRHS) now renamed as AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHAS KIRKHS). It is no exaggeration to say that in this position, he was the Dean *par excellence*, demonstrating an impeccable work ethic and extraordinary diligence, thus setting the bar exceptionally high for all who would come after him.

Throughout this period, he stayed in my house in Damansara for about four years. As the 1990s progressed and I moved on to become the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, political tensions reached a tipping point. When the inevitable political turmoil erupted, the authoritarian government spared no time in silencing dissent and ruthlessly brought to bear its iron grip on the people. Many were forced to leave the country under duress. In Malaysia, where the state and education are intimately tethered, the university had become a battlefield. Scholars were

compelled to declare their loyalty to the government, remain silent, or be dismissed. By the time I was removed from office in September of 1998, Jamal had already been forced out. What was at first a roadblock quickly became our darkest hour where shortly after my sacking, I was sent to prison on trumped up charges.



*Left to right: Dr Jamal al-Barzinji, Dean of the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRHS) during the years 1994-1998, HE Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim former President of IIUM (1988-1998) and Professor AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Rector of IIUM (1989-1999).*

Nevertheless, Jamal and many of our friends continued to work tirelessly to safeguard and ensure the realization of our initiatives and endeavors from abroad. Jamal himself was responsible for keeping IIIT intact while I was incarcerated. His unassuming personality, borne by a profound sense of humility, endeared him to friends and colleagues alike, fostering the spirit of togetherness so crucially needed to withstand “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” that had set upon us. At the time,

## FOREWORD

he was the Vice President for Research and Publications at IIIT. Jamal rose to the occasion serving as the President of IIIT during one of our most difficult periods. Between the tragic murder of Ismail al Faruqi in Philadelphia in 1986 and my imprisonment, if it had not been for Jamal's tenacity, IIIT would have likely been yet another Muslim organization consigned to the history books. His presidency not only saw to the sustaining of the organization, but it was instrumental in IIIT's decisions to commit resources to interfaith programs at various institutions, including Hartford Seminary and Nazareth College in the US, as well as Huron University College at Western University in Canada.

Jamal was also the mastermind in the monumental shift from Islamization to Integration of Knowledge. Admittedly, the issues surrounding the Islamization of knowledge are far from simple, but the debates on the subject were mired in misunderstanding and Islamophobic sentiments. Thus, after a period of time experimenting with the idea and inviting scholars for discussion, we thought it was about time to make a decisive change. Jamal taught me a great lesson in moving on when the situation warrants it. If we want to advance and ensure our cultures and civilizations continue into the future, we must evolve. This necessitates looking for a new approach to the problem. Otherwise, we find ourselves in Einstein's trap of insanity, attempting endlessly the same thing and expecting new outcomes. In fact, such a move required more than an opening of our views, prompting us to go to London to convince IIIT of the change in direction, bringing Dr Anas Al-Shaikh-Ali and Professor Ziauddin Sardar in.

In the pursuit of scholarship, Jamal was as proactive as he was prodigious. He was a voracious reader with a wide breadth of interdisciplinary knowledge. I once mentioned the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne to him. Apparently, he had never heard of Pirenne, but true to his character, he then proceeded to

immediately place an order for his two most widely read works, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*<sup>1</sup> and *A History of Europe*,<sup>2</sup> adding them to the collection in the IIIT library.

Jamal's passing sent ripples through the numerous organizations where he had played an instrumental role in founding and managing. The November-December edition 2015 of *Islamic Horizons* carried a fine tribute to Jamal, befitting his stature and his invaluable contributions to the cause of Islam. I wholeheartedly echo the sentiments expressed in the tribute that indeed, the Muslim *Ummah* has lost one of its visionaries, humanitarian leaders, and reformers.



**Anwar Ibrahim**

Prime Minister of Malaysia  
Ramadan/April 2023

**References**

Pirenne, Henri. *Mohammed and Charlemagne*. First Edition. Martino Fine Books, 2017.

Pirenne, Henri, and Jan-Albert Goris. *A History of Europe: From the Invasions To The XVI Century*. Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2010.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*.

<sup>2</sup> Pirenne and Goris, *A History of Europe*.

## A Socially Engaged Global Muslim

Imtiyaz Yusuf

Dr Jamal al-Barzinji (*Rahimahullah*, may Allah ﷻ have mercy on him) the pioneer of socially-engaged Islam in America passed away on 26 September 2015. He lived a life enlivened by a full commitment to the Islamic faith with a spirit of social engagement. Dr Jamal al-Barzinji’s life reflected the qualities of a socially-engaged Muslim, which resonate with the verses of the Qur’an. He set a living example of a socially-engaged Muslim in America, which can be emulated elsewhere in the world. Dr Jamal (as referred to by all who knew him personally) was a devout Muslim, steadfast in his commitment to Allah ﷻ and practicing the Islamic virtues of compassion, mercy, and forgiveness. He devoted his whole life to the cause of human welfare without discriminating against anyone. Dr Jamal embodied the practical dimensions of the two main teachings of Islam: *Tawhīd* and *‘Ibāda*. *Tawhīd*—monotheism—is the surrender, worship, and obedience to Allah ﷻ alone as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. In other words, Islam is the religion of “moralistic monotheism,” meaning monotheism guided by principles of Islamic morality and ethics as a code of conduct.

The initiative for producing this felicitation volume in honor



of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji was put forward by his wife Sister Suzanne al-Barzinji to Dr M. Yaqub Mirza who welcomed it and has made it become a reality.

Dr Jamal's life illustrates an example of an American Muslim rooted in the principles of *Tawhīd* (the unicity of Allah ﷻ and embodied in the praxis of the Islamic virtues of *Rahma*—compassion and mercy, *Ihsān*—benevolence, *ʿAdl*—justice, and *Hikma*—wisdom. The fruit of his Islam could be seen in both its intra-religious and interreligious aspects, toward all the people he met and encountered during his lifetime. A process aptly described by Professor Ismail al Faruqi as follows:

Dr Jamal was both spiritually and financially generous and supportive towards all and sundry. He was committed to serving in the cause of uplifting the American corner of the worldwide Muslim community and America itself, a country made up of Native Americans, immigrants, and the descendants of enslaved Africans.

Within this diversity, Dr Jamal sought the inclusion promotion and establishment of Islam along with other religions in the American public sphere. He pushed Muslims to support the purported American public values of belief in religious plurality, truth, democracy, freedom, equality, success, hard-work ethic, endurance, efficiency and the development of science and technology.

In this book, Dr Jamal is remembered and memorialized as a living example of a both a socially engaged American and a global Muslim who faced and responded to the above-mentioned values and challenges. He represents an exemplary person worthy of learning from and being emulated pragmatically by the present and future generations of Americans and Muslims around the world.

## INTRODUCTION

A socially-engaged Muslim is committed to serving Islam by upholding its cardinal values of *ibadah* as worship of Allah ﷻ and service to humanity through engaged spirituality and social activism. Dr Jamal combined all of these three qualities in his life by fostering the spiritual development and the promotion of the American Muslim identity in the face of challenges brought by rapid social change, technological advancement and the positive global engagement of the United States of America.

As a pioneering example of an American socially engaged Muslim, Dr Jamal's life exemplifies an endeavor to forge a place for Islam within the contemporary American religious identity that was historically shaped by the traditions of presence of the religions of the Native Americans, Christianity, Judaism and African-American churches among others.

### **Socially Engaged Islam**

The use of the term “socially engaged Islam” as the title of this book is in reference to the constructive social and political engagement by Muslims around the world in living and applying the cardinal values of Islam in their lived experience in a variety of ways. In our case, it is used in reference to the specific role and impact of the lifelong activities of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji in the shaping the face of Islam in USA and Canada.

Inspired by Prophet's Muḥammad ﷺ Madinan model of socially integrated multireligious city and Dr Jamal's American socio-religious experience of “self-perpetuation of society” form the core of his engagement in practicing of socially engaged Islam as his religio-social lifetime project in America.

## **The Formation of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji as a Model of Socially Engaged Muslim**

Dr Jamal Barzinji was born on 15 December, 1939 in Mosul, Iraq in a religious family. He was trained in Islamics as a worldview and way of life and social engagement by his father who was an *alim* in his own right. As a person committed to self-educational advancement after his high school education in Iraq, in 1959 he went abroad to study for BSc. in Chemical Engineering & Fuel Technology at the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom. During his student days in the United Kingdom, he played a pioneering role in the founding of the Muslim Student Society of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. Upon completion of his bachelor degree studies in 1962, he moved to USA to study for his Master's and Doctoral studies in Chemical Engineering, with a minor in Management graduating from the Louisiana State University in 1974.

## **Dr Jamal al-Barzinji—A Socially Engaged Global Muslim**

Crossing the Atlantic and arriving in the United States as a young student, he carried with him the spirit and commitment to continue student activism on American soil. Dr Jamal along with like-minded new friends whom he met for the first time such as Dr M. Yaqub Mirza and others (which became the current umbrella organization called the Islamic Society of North America with MSA-National as an affiliate). In 1972, he became the president of the Muslim Students Association of the U.S. and Canada catering to the needs of the younger generation of Muslim students arriving to study in American universities and helping to build the foundations for establishing a broader community and American Muslim identity.

From the 1980s onwards, as the American Muslim community grew up from the days of its infancy Dr Barzinji along

## INTRODUCTION

with friends like Professor. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Dr M. Yaqub Mirza, Dr Ahmad Totonji, Dr Iqbal Unus and Dr Hisham Altalib played a central role in steering the evolution of the Muslim Students Association of the United States and Canada into becoming the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) in 1981 with its headquarter in the city of Indianapolis Indiana. For his pioneering and lifelong service in the development of the American Muslim community, in 2008, Dr Barzinji was presented with ISNA’s annual Dr Mahboob Khan Community Service Award (now called the ISNA Pioneers Memorial Service Award) it marked the recognition of his “fifty years of service to Islam and Muslims in the West.” Besides this, he also received several lifetime service awards such as the New Dominion Political Action Committee (2011); Council on American-Islamic Relations Award (CAIR, 2012) and The All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS Center, 2013).

Dr Jamal was also the first recipient of the Faith in Action Award in 2007 from the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD)—an organization committed to going beyond the traditional approach to diplomacy by incorporating religion as part of finding solutions to challenge of addressing conflict and Violent Religious Extremism (VRE).<sup>1</sup> In his award acceptance speech titled, “Faith in Action” delivered on 7 June 2007 while recognizing the support and the role of his family and colleagues towards the success of IIIT. Dr Jamal said, “Next, the one person who, through his financial genius, has given me and the Board of IIIT the peace of mind that our endowment is always there to provide the financial need of putting our Faith in Action, and our dreams to reality. Thank you Yaqub Mirza.”

---

<sup>1</sup> “Home—ICRD—International Center for Religion & Diplomacy.” <https://icrd.org/>

The successful role played by Dr M. Yaqub Mirza as a person who possesses successful business acumen from a Sharia compliant perspective was also recently endorsed by Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the current Prime Minister of Malaysia during Dr M. Yaqub Mirza's recent visit to Malaysia at the ceremony for "The AbuSulayman International Student Fund" held at the International Islamic University Malaysia on Saturday, 11 February 2023.<sup>2</sup> On that occasion, the Prime Minister Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim remarked, "so thank you Yaqub, for the students have especially benefitted from the initiatives of the Abdulhamid AbuSulayman family student fund. 'Because of this impeccable young man, Yaqub Mirza.' And, I told brother Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkifli Bin Abdul Razak, the Rector of IIUM, you go closer to him to talk about allocation and budget, you wouldn't like him because he is a typical accountant, 'so stingy my God!' As you know I have so many exchanges and experiences with so many Islamic institutions, his role is phenomenal, not many can challenge him. He can make for example the IIIT, a financially independent endowment because of what he did with the investments.

In the field of financial and business management, Dr Jamal along with his friends set up Sharia compliant financial institutions in America for the first time. Dr Jamal was the founding member and manager of the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT) in 1973. He also served as the president of Mar-Jac Poultry, Inc and was appointed on the board of trustees of several financial institutions such as the Safa Trust, Amana Mutual Funds, the SAAR Foundation, Bank Islam Malaysia, Nada International, etc.

In the academic arena, in his quest for finding a solution to the worldwide educational crisis in postcolonial Muslim world

---

<sup>2</sup> Mirza, *Five Pillars of Prosperity*; Mirza and Moore, *Heavenly Returns*.

## INTRODUCTION

and its psyche.<sup>3</sup> In 1981, Dr Jamal along with Professor Ismail al Faruqi, Professor AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Dr Taha Jabir Alwani and Anwar Ibrahim together founded the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), as an institute dedicated to the promotion and pursuit of Islamic approach to knowledge combined with a high quality of research and in the promotion and engagement interreligious dialogue between Muslim and Western scholars. It was joined by Dr Hisham Altalib, Dr Ahmad Totonji and later by Dr M. Yaqub Mirza. This project under the rubric name of “Islamization of Knowledge” Dr Jamal in his role as the president of IIIT oversaw, managed, directed and supervised the publication of over 600 academic works in English, Arabic and other languages, including some of the best books and research ever produced in the different fields and disciplines from the paradigm of Islamization of Knowledge.

In the academic arena, Dr Jamal was one of the founding members of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) and the Association of Muslim Scientists & Engineers (AMSE) and also founding board member of the Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy (CSID) in Washington DC, and previously he served as an officer with the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) in Saudi Arabia. During the years 1994-98, he was appointed as the Dean of the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Social Sciences (KIRKH—now known as the AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences—AHAS KIRKH) at the International Islamic University Malaysia.

Upon his return from Malaysia to USA, Dr Jamal continued working on educational enhancement and building of interfaith programs with prominent American institutions engaging in the study of Islam and interfaith relations and dialogue such as the

---

<sup>3</sup> AbuSulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*.

Hartford Seminary, (now known as the Hartford International University for Religion and Peace) Hartford, Connecticut; the Nazareth College, Rochester, New York; the Huron University College at Western University, London, Ontario, in Canada. During this period, Dr Barzinji raised millions of dollars for establishing endowed chair positions and centers of Islamic Studies at some of the most prestigious universities in the U.S. and around the world such as the Prince Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (ACMCU) at Georgetown University; Alwaleed Islamic Studies Program (AISP) at Harvard University; University of Edinburgh Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World; University of Cambridge Centre for Islamic Studies.

In his lifelong commitment towards making the American Muslim community as an integral part of the American nation, Dr Jamal's activities revolved around the Muslim question of. "What collective moral responsibility we have, as a community of faith have to build a better America, build a better nation—a caring and gentle nation—which is, really, the Founding Fathers' vision for America ... There is also a big responsibility for people of faith to come together; to develop and articulate their position; and to 'sell' their product of love, of affection, [of] good neighborliness to society at large to build that better society and better community."<sup>4</sup>

Dr Jamal along with Dr Abubaker Ahmed Al-Shingieti initiated the annual Summer and Winter programs designed for students from universities and colleges in the US and Canada, regardless of their major or program of study. They were conducted by faculty members from top academic institutions in the United States and abroad. Dr Jamal al-Barzinji appointed the late Professor Dr Mahmoud M. Ayoub (June 1, 1935-October 31,

---

<sup>4</sup> Obituary, "Dr Jamal Barzinji," ix.

2021) one of the prominent Islamic scholar to shape the contents and direct these programs. Professor Dr Mahmoud M. Ayoub was honored him with the 2012 IIIT Distinguished Scholar Award.

### **Dr Jamal al-Barzinji's Visions about the Future of Socially Engaged Islam**

As a globally and locally social engaged Muslim, Dr Jamal had many other wishes, desires and plans for the future of vibrant and dynamic Islamic presence in the United States.

On the occasion of fund-raising event for ADAMS in the early part of 2015, Dr Jamal delivered a speech titled, "Why Phase III which is available for viewing on YouTube."<sup>5</sup>

Next, on the occasion of the ADAMS Phase III Groundbreaking ceremony just months before his death which was to be his last speech at ADAMS. Dr Jamal has left behind a message expressing his future vision of the ADAMS Center.<sup>6</sup> In that speech he mentioned that the continuous growth and expansion ADAMS Center over the decades is an outcome of the contribution by many pioneers of Islam in America, it included those who have passed away and also the living contemporaries.

In the speech, Dr Jamal remarked that the impressive development and the expansion of the ADAMS Center symbolizes the example of a goodly planted tree as mentioned in the Qur'an with branches reaching out further to the sky.

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا  
ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

---

<sup>5</sup> ADAMS Center | Why Phase III? <https://youtu.be/sI98skYzAuc>

<sup>6</sup> Dr Jamal Barzinji Address | ADAMS Phase III Groundbreaking 2015. <https://youtu.be/v1tcR4Na5No>



*Do you not see how Allah compares a good word to a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches reach the sky.—*  
Qur'an 14:24

Dr Jamal emphasized on the point that the ADAMS Center has given a leadership role American Muslimahs. And it has also transformed the arrangements for the Friday congregational prayers for those residing in different parts of the city by organizing multiple sets of prayers.

Dr Jamal also touched upon the issues facing the contemporary American Muslim communities such as homosexuality, adoptions, divorce and the need for a positive approach to build interfaith relations with people of different faiths. All these issues need to be addressed before it gets too late.

Dr Jamal called upon the American Muslim community to address these and future challenges such as boldly, viz., 1) that contemporary Muslim Ummah has to abandon its cultural baggage and mindset of dwelling in the age of decline of the Muslim Ummah and not its glory exhibited through features such as Islam as a faith of laziness and of self-salvation only instead of being a faith of saving the community and the nation. For Dr Jamal such a view of Islamic faith has no place in today's American Muslim community; 2) Dr Jamal also stressed on the urgent need for training of Imams to be qualified to serve the American Muslim community with skills of communication, endowed with the knowledge of *fiqh al-aqalliyat*—the Muslim jurisprudence of minorities and also about how to reach out to other communities; 3) to envision the future of the American Muslim community in next 50 or more years from now. Dr Jamal stressed that American Muslim community needs a new version or a new breed of Imams different from the cultural versions of Imams imported from home-countries who are unable to address the needs of the American Muslims otherwise there will be further

decline and the Muslim will be further crippled by the growing Islamophobia and 4) there is the urgent need to The Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA)<sup>7</sup> that it becomes functional in addressing complex questions about homosexuality, issues of inheritance, divorce, heritage, and other matters related to the application of Shari‘ah in the individual and collective lives in the American Muslims living in a different environment which cannot be just addressed in the traditional ways. Dr Jamal called upon the leadership of the ADAMS Center to take a lead on this matter.

Dr Jamal passed away a few months after delivering this speech.

On a personal note, Dr Jamal, was a person with a constant smiling face welcomed guests and friends with the Arabian code of honor of *Diyafa*—hospitality, generosity and friendliness—making them feel at home with him. As I came to know him closely, I witnessed that Dr Jamal harbored malice towards none rather advised those who were hurt by others to be patient and sympathetic.

I personally experienced this while working with Dr Jamal during the production of the *festschrift* in honor of Professor Ismail al Faruqi and my other publications which were published with the Dr Jamal’s support in the spirit of generosity and his large heartedness. I, vividly recall on one occasion while seeking his advice during the production of the *festschrift* commemorative volume in honor of Professor Ismail al Faruqi, Dr Jamal smilingly remarked to me that in the life hereafter if Professor Ismail al Faruqi asks him, “Jamal, what did you do for me after my death, he said he would reply, “Imtiyaz, produced a *festschrift* in your honor” and he laughed. It was such a delight to hear of such a generous support and encouragement in completing the *festschrift*

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://fiqhCouncil.org/>

project.<sup>8</sup>



**In 2013, Dr Jamal al-Barzinji and Dr M. Yaqub Mirza  
and their wives performed the Umrah together**

### **About this Felicitation Volume**

The unique context of religion in American society offered space for Dr Jamal al-Barzinji and his colleagues as American citizens to participate in the shaping socially engaged Islam both in America and also globally. The role of role of Muslims was shown to follow the *Sunnatic* model of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ a socially conscious leader who prioritized respect for religio-social diversity, engaged in interreligious relations and meaningful dialogue. Hence, the practice of socially engaged Islam is founded on the principles of respect for human dignity, equality, compassion and mercy,

---

<sup>8</sup> Yusuf, *Islam and Knowledge*.

## INTRODUCTION

benevolence, justice, and peaceful coexistence—all rooted in the wisdom drawn from the main teaching of the Qur’anic revelation i.e., *tawhid*—monotheistic morality. Dr Jamal’s lifelong endeavors can be summarized as being based on the social implementation of these Qur’anic principles and its *Sunnatic* practice. This task is now being carried on by the Jamal Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning to honor and carry on Dr Barzinji’s legacy as an educator, community builder, and humanitarian and also by the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW)—a globally-recognized center for research and education leading to an enriched understanding of Islamic values and perspectives in a multi-faith world both located at the Shenandoah University, Leesburg, Virginia, USA.

The life example of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji—a pioneer, a doyen and a living model-example of a socially engaged global Muslim deserves to be honored, respected and documented for the present and future generations to learn from and carry on the task he initiated. This is the very rationale in producing this book volume to both felicitate and document the lifelong extraordinary contributions of Dr Jamal to the world of knowledge and religion.

Dr Jamal al-Barzinji entered the عالم الحياة الآخرة —eternal world of the life hereafter after battling with cancer on 26 September 2015. Through his lifelong service for the promotion and progression of Islam and in the service of the Ummah model of a religiously inclusive civilization, Dr Jamal has left behind a legacy comprising of 1) righteous child(ren) who supplicate for him; 2) ongoing charities the rewards of which reach him, and 3) knowledge that is acted upon after his passing away.

Dr Jamal has left behind a legacy in the world of academia, business and social work which is acknowledged by the people who knew and worked with him and on whose lives, he has left a lasting and memorable impact. This book comprises of

contributions by the colleagues and academics from the United States and around the world whose lives were impacted by the personality and the role of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji's as a socially engaged Muslim. They are carrying on the torch of Islamic social engagement lit by Dr Jamal al-Barzinji in the different arenas of life, thought and practice both public and private.

Among the contributors to this volume is the Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the current tenth Prime Minister of Malaysia who was a close associate of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji for decades. He has written an insightful and a celebratory foreword to the book.

The book volume is divided into 4 parts—part one begins with an intimate tribute by Sister Suzanne al-Barzinji, the dear wife and lifetime companion of Dr Jamal. It is followed by contributions by people who have worked with Dr Jamal and whose lives were impacted by his personality; the articles in part two, illustrate the leadership aspects of Dr Jamal's personality as a leader and a visionary of the future and the lessons learned; part three, includes articles which feature the academic aspect Dr Jamal's role in the academia both in its historical and futuristic contexts and the last part four, contains articles illustrating the ongoing projects dedicated to continuing the legacy of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji as a model of a socially engaged Muslim in the global world of virtual learning, community service and as a leader of *Islah*—Islamic reform—an ever ongoing project of the Islam as a religion and a worldview in America and the world at large.

I, thank all contributors for their reflections and cooperation throughout the period of producing this felicitation volume in honor of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji—a shaper of the socially engaged face of Islam in America in the age of modernization and globalization.

I, end here by expressing my special thanks to Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Sister Suzanne al-Barzinji, Dr M. Yaqub Mirza,

## INTRODUCTION

Professor John L. Esposito, Dr Ermin Sinanović and Dr Younus Y. Mirza for their trust, support and patience with me in producing this commemorative and felicitation volume for Dr Jamal al-Barzinji.

This book is our collective tribute to Dr Jamal al-Barzinji, one of the great luminary Muslim of the 20th and 21st centuries on the world stage. May Allah ﷻ bless Dr Jamal al-Barzinji with the choicest of His blessings and accept our humble efforts in carrying on his task of making Islam an integral and constructive partner in building an inclusive and a peaceful world civilization for today and the future *inshallah, Amin.*

### References

- AbuSulayman, AbdulHamid A. *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*. Translated by Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo. First Edition. Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993.
- Al Faruqi, Ismail R. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan*. Wyncote, PA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982.
- Mirza, M. Yaqub. *Five Pillars of Prosperity: Essentials of Faith-Based Wealth Building*. Ashland: White Cloud Press, 2014.
- Mirza, M. Yaqub, and Gary Moore. *Heavenly Returns: What the Abrahamic Faiths Teach Us about Financial & Spiritual Well-Being*. Center for Islam in the Contemporary World, 2022.
- Obituary. “Dr Jamal Barzinji: 1939-2015.” *American Journal of Islam and Society* 32, no. 4 (October 1, 2015): vii-x. <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v32i4.1004>.

JAMAL AL-BARZINJI: A SOCIALLY ENGAGED GLOBAL MUSLIM

Yusuf, Imtiyaz, ed. *Islam and Knowledge: Al Faruqi's Concept of Religion in Islamic Thought*. London: New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012.

PART ONE

# **Personal Reflections**





## **Jamal As I Knew Him**

### ***May Allah Have Mercy Upon Him***

Suzanne al-Barzinji

*In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful the Very Merciful.*

It is difficult to speak about those we love in the past tense knowing the past has gone and will never return. Jamal is still present in my thoughts, heart, and life. Fate brought us together in a unique and strange way. We had many commonalities and a solid foundation of values and ethics.

When I reflected upon writing about him, I didn't know where or how to begin because my thoughts were scattered and mixed. Should I speak about his culture, genius, intellectual, religious, and political achievements and contributions, or something else? Or should I speak about the things that contributed to forming his unique personality?

That is why I chose to speak about Jamal, the person, a man of many talents who had all the ingredients for greatness and success—and not every successful person is great. Allah blessed him with several qualities that are rarely found in many men.

As a young man Jamal was raised with teaching to be in

constant obedience to Allah. He used to mention often that he was brought up in the *masjid* where his father served as an *Imam*. His father, *may Allah have mercy on him*, was proud of him and his intelligence. He was among the men who have proven true to what they pledged to Allah. He dedicated himself to working in the way of Allah carrying the concerns of the global Muslim community on his shoulders.

Jamal's faith in the hereafter and deep reflection upon the Qur'an bestowed lofty qualities upon him that are not exemplified except by those who do good and are sincere to Allah. His strong personal piety produced a solid belief system that protected him from transgressing the boundaries of Allah and kept him safe in this world and I believe will keep him safe in the next. He was bold, not fearing anyone but Allah, and truly relying upon Him alone. He attributed any success he achieved to Allah, whom he trusted without limit. The noble verse,

*“And whoever is mindful of Allah, He will make a way out for them, and provide for them from sources they could never imagine. And whoever puts their trust in Allah, then He alone is sufficient for them. Certainly, Allah achieves His Will. Allah has already set a destiny for everything” —*  
Qur'an 65:2-3

was the methodology that he adopted as a mantra and was imprinted in his heart and conscience.

My husband had many talents and capabilities. He had high resolve along with unique intelligence, dedication to work, and optimism that Allah would grant him success. He was highly educated and cultured through his intense love and fondness for reading. Whoever knew him closely felt that they were in front of an encyclopedia of humanity, literature, and science walking on Earth. Whatever topic of discussion was presented before him, you would find him familiar with it and would sometimes

outshine specialists in it.

He was also extremely generous, never refusing to respond to one asking, even if it was at the expense of himself and his family. His deep-rooted faith aided him in balancing the application of religious duties, his interactions with individuals from all walks of life, and the many different situations he encountered. One facet did not encroach upon another.

Metaphorically speaking, Jamal was continuously in a mood of *hajj* consciousness—as if he was directly in the presence of Allah’s house and following the rules of being in *ihram*. There was no indecent speech, misbehavior, or quarrel, and he was rarely upset. He was tolerant, responded to evil with kindness, and carried no hatred or dislike for anyone. He was forbearing, controlled his temper, and pardoned when possible. He was humble and disliked boasting, showing-off, and self-praise. He was a generous and gracious host. Our home was always open to guests, visitors, and travelers regardless of our circumstances.

Jamal’s perspective of things was holistic and complete. He would look at things from all angles and not partially through a single perspective. He was also farsighted in his analyses and would read the future; this was one of the most important factors of his success. His goals were not simply desires and hopes, and failure was not in his dictionary. His firm determination allowed him to overcome difficulties and barriers, however large they may have been, with the help of Allah while truly relying upon Him alone. He would transcend negative situations quietly and simply without pause.

He enjoyed an attractive personality that captured the hearts of everyone he interacted with whether they were a small child or an old man, or a worker in a restaurant, or a doctor in a hospital. He would overlook the mistakes of others and deal with others with wisdom. During his life he never built a wall between himself

and anyone else and he had a unique ability to build bridges between himself and others.



**May Allah have mercy upon him  
wife Suzanne, Ramadan/April 2013.**

JAMAL AS I KNEW HIM

Now, seven years after his departure—may Allah have mercy upon him—I continue to miss him severely in my life, each day more than the previous. I miss the sweetness of listening to his humble recitation in prayers that are recited out loud.

I miss him every Ramadan, during every night prayer, and I miss his heartfelt—supplications. May Allah have mercy upon him and allow him to reside in His spacious paradise. I believe—God willing—that he is among those regarding whom Allah ﷻ said,

*“Surely those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah,’ and then remain steadfast—there will be no fear for them, nor will they grieve. It is they who will be the residents of Paradise, staying there forever, as a reward for what they used to do.”*  
—Qur’an 46:13-14

## Remembering Our Father

The Barzinji Family

Whether in the company of dignitaries or their chauffeurs, scholars or students, waiters, artists, or small children, our father Jamal Barzinji embodied the same unfaltering grace and humble demeanor—he extended the same gentle smile and warm curiosity to each person he met. He had a unique ability to take a genuine interest in anyone’s story. His pointed questions and inquisitive nature never felt intrusive and always came from a place of respect and love for fellow human beings. Above all else, his embracing nature was driven by inspiration and humility before God, and his actions were guided constantly by the example of the Prophet ﷺ.

Given the magnitude of our father’s intellectual, institutional, charitable, humanitarian, and religious contributions, we reflect, as those who loved him dearly, on the distinguishing characteristic that allowed him to constantly strive toward doing more and accomplishing more because in his mind there was always more to do. Even in his last days, our father strove to find meaning and value and discuss with us what priorities were still critical, rather than resting in the contentment of a life well lived. Most importantly, his ambition was never borne out of a love

## REMEMBERING OUR FATHER

for this world and its trappings or to seek name recognition or prestige—rather he had an eternal restlessness, bordering on obsession, to salve the ailments of the Muslim ummah and, ultimately, to glorify our Creator.

The inseparability of our beloved father's character and his life's work is readily apparent in all of the projects he passionately forged. As he built mosques in this country and abroad, he was adamant that they not become islands that walled off the faithful from their broader communities; rather, God's houses should serve as welcoming oases with doors and services open to all. As he founded institutions for religious thought, his goal was never to maintain the status quo of unchallenged thinking, but to push the boundaries of knowledge and understanding in pursuit of Divine truths and to reject intellectual stagnation—reformation of thought in its truest sense.

As he established national and international organizations, the goal was never to create exclusive and irrelevant clubs but to create sustainable and evolving platforms to contribute meaningfully to our world. As he worked to turn around struggling businesses and factories, the welfare of the daily workers came first, bringing much-needed equity and dignity to the neglected. As our father, he encouraged each of us to seek out the vulnerable and work to alleviate their suffering, even if all we could manage was a kind comment to make them smile. He pressed each of us to be hospitable and serve others in any way we could because it is in this manner that we receive blessings and grow as human beings.

Our father's boundless compassion means that his passing is not only a loss for our family but a loss for us all. As much as he was greatly regarded by many, his humility kept him accessible and grounded. Those who had the fortune of attending our father's Friday sermons know that he never dwelled upon



superficial ritualistic or dogmatic aspects of faith; rather, he urged us to find these practices' deeper meanings and connect them to our daily lives. Often, he used the pulpit to impel our collective action on pressing contemporary issues. Education, health care, civil rights, racial justice, gender equality—he did not view these as political or intellectual debates, but as pivotal opportunities to create and ensure societal harmony. He reminded us constantly to speak truth to power and find the courage to stand on principles that are universal and beyond any one person. He challenged each of us to be faithful, active learners, informed activists, and persevering peacemakers.

Our father nurtured us, his seven children and their spouses, along with his grandchildren, to be critical thinkers—whether as teachers, artists, advocates, healers, writers, or stewards of this Earth—to question the status quo and seek out *ihsan* wherever our passions drove us. He knew that any family blessed with such a diversity of talents and perspectives would inevitably face moments of hardship and passionate disagreement. Yet he never let us forget the unbreakable bond that pulled us back together, as branches that sway in the wind but share the same firm roots. No matter how far our individual paths took us, he forever let us know that his home and his heart were ours and that both were filled with nothing but unconditional love.

As was his attitude toward his family, so too was his relentlessly optimistic embrace of humanity. His genuine, soulful smile reminds us of his character and his life's work and that the greatest honor we can do to further his legacy is to live our lives with that same compassion, awe of beauty, and thirst for truth—all with love and seeking a deeper relationship with God. We must all, therefore, be the watchful gardeners of the many seeds he planted in this world. We say repeatedly what he taught us to have ready on our tongues and in our hearts —*Alhamdulillah*. Praise and thanks be to God, the Sustainer and the Most Compassionate,

REMEMBERING OUR FATHER

who gave us our Father as a teacher and a guide for the years he was on this Earth. Surely to God, we belong, to Him is our return.



**Dr Jamal with his children**

*From left: Iman, Fadwa, Ghaida, Jamal, Sohaib, Zaid, Ali and Firas*

## My Father A Light Spreading Light

Zaid Barzinji

Jamaluddeen, “*beauty of the faith*,” was my father’s given name; it was the lens through which he saw the world and what he strove to exemplify and advocate for throughout his life. May Allah ﷻ (Allah’s glory and perfection be praised) have mercy on his soul.

Dr Jamal, as most people called him, was also described by those who crossed paths with him as a fatherly figure, teacher, leader, *khalifa*, strategist, visionary, people’s servant, bridge builder, innovator, genius, patient, encyclopedic, scholarly, humanitarian, dedicated, loyal, generous, compassionate and passionate person, among others. The people I heard referring to him using these descriptions run the gambit from those with humble means and education to presidents of countries, business tycoons, esteemed scholars, community leaders, and activists. He gave so much of himself to all those who interacted with him, and this came at a high cost to his availability to be with his family. The occasional hours and days I spent with my father were indeed the most precious, and each time was memorable and left me

thirsting for more. He was a loving, kind, generous, wise, faithful, and inspirational role model to his family and relatives in the time he could spare with them. It was difficult to be related to such an incredible, larger-than-life person yet have so little of his time or have to share the precious moments we had with him with never-ending high-profile urgent calls, urgent global events, and meetings demanding his immediate attention. Nevertheless, this was my father's best effort to give of himself as much as possible to all those around him and, above all, to live a grateful life to Allah ﷻ for all the gifts he was endowed with. The following are my views, personal experiences, and understanding of my father, Dr Jamal Barzinji, which I would like to share with you.

### **Love for Knowledge**

From an early age, Shaikh Muhammad noticed his son, Jamaluddin's, aptitude for learning and reading, brightness, and love for knowledge. Shaikh Muhammad was an avid reader himself and a respected Islamic scholar in the city of Mosul, which was a center for religious scholarship, and throughout the Iraqi Kurdistan region. Upon noticing his son's hunger for learning and keen academic aptitude, he immersed his son in studying the major Shafi'i *fiqh* (jurisprudence) texts, mastering the Arabic language, and understanding the Qur'an. Shaikh Muhammad was also often seen engaging in discussions with his young son. He made sure that Jamaluddeen occasionally accompanied him to scholarly forums and discussions with fellow prominent jurists and scholars in the city. This exposure deepened Jamaluddeen's love for seeking knowledge and wisdom, appreciating differences in views and various interpretations of Islamic texts. He also cherished the art and science of serious debate ethics that maintain respect for the parties involved.

Jamaluddeen demonstrated academic aptitude from an

early age and throughout his academic career. Following are glimpses from various stages of his schooling. In 1956, he took the unified secondary school exam, a country-wide requirement for advancing to college education in Iraq. This crucial test determined the academic and future career options of those concluding their secondary education, depending on their overall score and national ranking. Jamaluddin attended the prestigious Al I'dadiyyah al Markaziyyah High School in Mosul and was expected to rank among the top 10 students in Iraq for that year. The test at that time encompassed the entire curriculum from the last two years of secondary education! However, due to Jamaluddeen's political activism, he had to run to the countryside, away from the pro-communist security forces of the time, which made him miss months of learning. He was also under disciplinary review by Al I'dadiyyah's administration for his student activism against the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt. All of these events led to losing almost half a year of schooling in the crucial last year, along with the prospect of jail in the brutal Iraqi military regime of Abdul Karim Qassim (1958-1963) at that time.

With Allah's facilitation, the government crackdown on activists abated, especially on under aged activists. After a heated debate, the al-Sharqiyah administration and academic staff decided not to dismiss Jamaluddeen for his activism while also not allowing him on school grounds. Jamaluddin tackled two years of secondary school curriculum over a two-month period without help from his teachers and prepared himself as best as he could to take the grueling general exams. While not ranking among the top 10 students nationally, Jamaluddeen still finished with high enough marks to be awarded one of the few highly sought-after scholarships to study in the United Kingdom. I remember asking my father how he ended up studying chemical engineering at Sheffield University and if chemistry was a favorite subject for him; he said, actually, by the time he was able to clear his records

from the security red flags put on it due to his activist history, chemical engineering was the last available slot left. He gladly accepted it despite chemistry being his least favorite subject!

Another example of Jamaluddeen's scholastic genius is from 1974, the year he finished his Ph.D. in Chemical engineering at Louisiana State University-Baton Rouge. His final thesis was cutting-edge research, combining computer programming with behavioral management to optimize human-machine performance. Because of his breakthrough research and the strong prospect of military and industrial applications, Jamal received several incredible employment offers to continue his research. There was also the expected invitation to join the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE), which is customary after finishing a graduate degree in chemical engineering. My father felt honored to receive AIChE's highest honorary membership level. Yet, he felt awkward presenting his membership invitation to his thesis supervisor for a required signature as his supervisor had a lower membership status!

### **Kindness and Generosity**

Jamaluddeen's often first mentioned trait is how kind and generous he was to all those around him. I often heard from my cousins how they anticipated his visits with excitement, as it definitely meant enjoying some tasty treats, lighthearted conversations, and words of encouragement to do their best in their studies. His visits also meant relief for his older married sisters as it usually included taking care of their kids and what they might need for that evening. This included trips to the barber or the shared bath for a good scrub (until the 1960s, most homes in Mosul either did not have baths or, especially during winter, when warming enough water for the family to bathe was hard.) On such outings with their uncle, I always heard from several of my older

cousins how uncle Jamaluddeen would treat them to sweets after the haircut or bath. They also recalled how he would pay street vendors generously for their simple wares, and on many occasions, he would buy their whole tray of sweets or their cart's contents, then treat the neighborhood kids.

Many decades later, hundreds, if not more, fondly remember Ramadan *iftar* meals at father's home, especially college students away from their families. These dinners and the warm fatherly feelings they experienced from Dr Jamal are usually some of the first things mentioned when I meet these old guests. This personal connection came ahead of how he impacted their view of Islam, their scholastic and professional careers, worldview, public policy, and strategic plans, all of which he also was known to address.

### **Faith in Allah and Love of Islam**

My father's deep faith in Allah produced a profound love of Islam in all of its aspects and manifestations. To him, Islam was Allah's precious gift to humanity. Father embraced the Qur'an, the revealed word of Allah, as the ultimate connection with Allah's divine love, compassion, truth, and beauty. He constantly read the Qur'an and reflected on its *ayahs* (signs or verses), which connected him with Allah and all of His creations. One of his proud moments was contributing to Abdullah Yusuf Ali's revised commentary and translation of the Qur'an. He cherished the opportunity to directly serve and better facilitate understanding of the book of Allah by millions of Muslims and fellow human beings. Father often referred to Qur'anic *ayahs* as the principle upon which he conducted himself. He also especially enjoyed and valued spending time preparing and sharing his insights into the book of Allah with the community on Sunday mornings and Friday sermons.

During what, perhaps, was one of the most challenging tests in

his life, the persecution and harassment he was subject to by the US Department of Customs on baseless charges of terrorism, he would constantly recite the Qur'anic ayah, "... *In Allah we trust. Our Lord! Judge between us and our people with the truth. You are the best of those who judge*" (7:89). His attentiveness to the most beautiful recitation of the Qur'an, constantly astonished me! A couple of months before his departure from this world, during the Ramadan nightly prayer, Father would correct the Qur'anic recitation of the Imam faster than anyone else, despite the extreme fatigue of his late-stage cancer.

### **Teacher, Guide, and Counselor**

Rather than giving ready answers, Father often prodded those around him to think for themselves by questioning the premise behind a question or by providing a fresh perspective. Once, I asked him if praying behind an Imam from the *Shia* branch of Islam was permissible. His reply was to ask back, "I would like you to rethink if your question itself is permissible!" Rather than express dismay at a question rising from an environment full of disinformation to sow division among Muslims, he directed my attention to a greater truth. This truth was that Muslims readily accept others as Imams (prayer leaders) as long as they are within the fold of Islam.

On another occasion, a young man asked if he should focus on traditional Islamic Studies at the secondary education stage (high school) or complete his basic education in conventional schools. Father responded by sharing his personal experience with a highly learned friend in traditional Islamic sciences. After a long period of trust and friendship building between the two, this friend finally gathered the courage to ask a burning question on his mind. He asked, "Dr Jamal, I trust your faith and knowledge of Islam and knowledge of modern sciences. I hear Westerners claim



the earth is round and not flat, as I learned from my teachers! Which is it?” Without getting to the obvious answer, Father looked at the young man and asked, “Is it acceptable to know so much about Islam without knowing basic facts about Allah’s creation? Can you delay your full immersion into Islamic traditional sciences until you reach college and give yourself a few more years of conventional learning?”

A final example of my father’s thoughtful approach was to help guide those seeking his advice to believe in aiming higher. One of his favorite *mantra* was: “Do what needs to be done, not what can be done.” This succinct statement was often enough for many to reconsider how their actions and aspirations are aligned with their long-term priorities and the priorities of the communities or causes they want to serve. Father probably counseled thousands of people from all walks of life and stations throughout his career. A previous head of state recalled fondly how he looked forward to meeting with him: “Dr Jamal always set us straight and showed us how Islam should be applied. We miss him dearly.”

### ***Tajdid and Islah Legacy***

My understanding and appreciation for my father’s vision, accomplishments, and legacy became more vivid after I was blessed to contribute to the cause of *Tajdid* (Renewal) and *Islah* (Reform) by founding the Maqasid Institute. Father knew that the root cause of Muslims’ contemporary challenges and crises is intellectual in nature. Therefore, the solution required new, serious Islamic-based scholarship to respond with new ideas firmly anchored in the revelation (the Qur’an and *Sunnah*). He sought to bring together a vast network of Muslim intellectuals, researchers, and opinion leaders he nurtured globally and surrounded himself with. This intellectual base of talents required

outlets for their ideas to be shared, debated, refined, and accumulated. This process needed to continue until it reached a critical mass of knowledge for a breakthrough moment of paradigm-shifting ideas. Effective publishing and distribution of scholarly output were needed to accomplish this, as well as an active program of conferences and other in-person academic events.

As the search for significant intellectual minds and ideas expanded, Father faced the urgent need to maintain the momentum of new ideas generation. This challenge called for massive efforts to improve research standards, especially at the postgraduate level in the Muslim world. In the Western world, the problem is the deep bias of research philosophy toward other knowledge traditions and epistemologies, which often produces researchers with a strongly secular mindset, especially in social sciences. The answer to this challenge was to pay special attention to higher education reform and establish world-class institutions of higher learning and research excellence, like the International Islamic University Malaysia. All the effort to nurture serious intellectual contributions also required real-life applications and proof of concept in business, science, technology, and public policy, among others. This crucial aspect of *Tajdīd* and *Islah* demanded the development, support, and promotion of a wide range of entities in various endeavors. Sustaining this ambitious vision with expansive, interdependent, dynamic parts required massive resources developed over time with the help of a close-knit team, trusted friendships, and strategic partnerships spanning the globe. The above is still urgently needed today if the *Tajdīd* and reform agenda of the Maqasid Institute and other like-minded organizations are to thrive and make a positive difference in the world.

## **A Life Mission to Spreading Light**

As I sat listening to the speakers at the Seminar on the Legacy of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji, organized by IIIT in 2016, I found myself thinking hard about how to sum up my father's legacy in one theme. I arrived at the conclusion that he saw his life mission as empowering other individuals and organizations to realize their fullest potential as servants of Allah ﷻ and the guardians of Allah's gift of Islam, the most beautiful, fulfilling, and compassionate way of life. As such, Dr Jamal was a burning candle dedicated to lighting other candles to banish darkness from this world. This was his top concern till the end. Instead of writing extensively and lecturing on his ideas, his light can be found in the profound ways he influenced every book, thesis, or article he reviewed. His strategic thinking and vision are embedded in every institution, agency, company, or organization he founded, managed, or helped set its vision. His beautiful, generous, and compassionate spirit shines bright in all the people he interacted with throughout his years and all the lives he touched and inspired. I witnessed this light from people I met who still remember him from a one-time meeting at a conference in Tripoli in the early 1970s, working together on a business project in Riyadh in the 1980s, a collaboration project with an Islamic university in Mindanao in the 1990s; a scholarly initiative in Washington DC in the 2000s, or striving to help a friend in unjust captivity in Kuala Lumpur—all up until a week before returning to the Almighty Allah, the Most Compassionate. Father made people feel he was with them and one of them regardless of where they were. A dear Nigerian friend and leader in Islamic work related to me how his father, a renowned Islamic scholar, and activist, talked so much about all the efforts he is undertaking with Dr Jamal that he thought his father was talking about a fellow Nigerian!

Despite the challenges my father faced, he always highlighted the bright spots with endearing humor. Once, Father shared this

story about a moment he had while going through what he expected to be yet hours of grueling questioning every time he passed through airport security. This security interrogation continued for years, even after all the trumped-up charges against him were dropped, and it often contained the same exact questions asked tens of times before and many absurd questions with absolutely no relevance to my father. So, as he was passing passport security at Dulles International Airport in Washington DC, a large, white passport inspection officer, with a serious look on his face, said: “Oh, Dr Jamal Barzinji, I know all about you.” So much was not new to my father; he just assumed he would endure the usual absurd questioning process. The officer continued: “I actually love your *Khutbahs* (Friday sermons). Welcome home, brother.” My father smiled, thanked the officer, and with deep gratitude to Allah ﷻ, said, “*Alhamdulillah* for everything.”

Finally, let me conclude by sharing with all who loved my father and want to honor his legacy, his final words of advice to his family:

*“Above all, seek what pleases Allah ﷻ and leave everything else behind.”*

May Allah ﷻ shower Jamaluddin with His eternal mercy, honor him with the highest paradise, and guide us all to continue his legacy.

## ***An Ansar—a Helper***

Wafa Shalabi

It was during my high school days that by chance, I met Suzanne al-Barzinji in Damascus. I realized she was the friend I had been searching for. I got married and drifted away. But when I returned to study at the University of Damascus, I met my sister Suzanne again in the Arabic Language department in which we had both enrolled. Sister Suzanne became the model of goodness and success in my life by helping me immensely and encouraging me until we both graduated together. But by the way of fate, we parted when she to America.

But as destiny would have it, we met again in in 1981 in Riyadh with her husband, Dr Jamal, *May Allah rest him in peace*. Dr Jamal represented the other side of a rare coin, the first side being Suzanne. He opened his home and heart to my husband and myself, generously sharing his knowledge and noble behavior as if we had known each other for ages.

My husband, *May Allah rest him in peace*, had been promised a job by some relatives in Jeddah to work with them. But after some time, they retracted on the promise disappointing us immensely.

In light of this development, Sister Suzanne and Dr Jamal invited us to Riyadh and through them my husband was offered a job in one of the companies, where he continued to work for thirty years.

Due to my training and interest in literary writings I often sought Dr Jamal's opinion and advise in this arena because he was also an articulate writer. In this way, he became my wise mentor who always guided me in my humble writings.

Similarly, my husband would often seek Dr Jamal's advice in the field of scientific, practical, jurisprudential, and religious matters.

One can speak for long about the great qualities of Dr Jamal. He was indeed a living example of encyclopedia of science, literature, and religion, but above all, he was a great human being.

May Allah bless and place him in *Jannat al-Firdaws*—the highest level of Paradise along with the martyrs and the righteous.

## A Multidimensional Personality

M. Yaquub Mirza

Today, many of us who were closely associated with Dr Jamal al-Barzinji and his work as a wise Muslim leader with an Islamic foresight for many decades, miss him immensely. May Allah ﷻ be pleased with him with his lifetime service in the cause of the development of the Muslim community in America and humanity at large.

I, first met Dr Jamal Barzinji in early 1972 in Dallas, Texas in a common area of a friend's apartment building while he was on his way to Lafayette. Dr Jamal was then studying for his PhD degree at the Louisiana State University. At that time, I too was studying for a PhD degree in Physics at the University of Texas at Dallas. From that very first meeting, Dr Jamal and I built a strong bond of friendship and love that made us true brothers to one another. After our first meeting, Dr Jamal and I met again many times at the meetings of Muslim Students Association of the U.S. and Canada (MSA) and also at the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT) events. I believe that Dr Jamal was elected as the president of MSA in 1973. He was an inspiring member of the Planning Committee of MSA, along with others, who came up with 5 future priorities for the MSA which were:

1. Producing and disseminating Islamic knowledge;
2. Establishing Islamic institutions;
3. Providing temporal daily requirements;
4. Initiating *da'wa*, recruiting and training of personnel;
5. Promoting and nourishing the unity of Muslims.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Jamal worked hard in cooperation with others to establish the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT) in order to hold the titles of properties used by local Islamic Centers, schools, hostels etc.<sup>2</sup> as a *waqf*, the historical Islamic equivalent of an American trust or endowment, serving Muslims in the United States. Together we organized many activities for both the MSA and NAIT. Later Dr Jamal became the general manager of the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT) at its Indianapolis office where he met his wife-to-be, Sister Suzanne.

In 1978 we attended a conference organized by the *Rābiṭat al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*— رابطة العالم الاسلامي —The Muslim World League of Saudi Arabia, which was established in 1962 and whose mission is to propagate Islamic teachings around the world.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of our attendance was to clarify to *Rābiṭat al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī* —The Muslim World League of our desire to form a national organization of the Muslim community organizations in US and Canada viz., the MSA of US and Canada, which at that time was being opposed by many as the interference of foreign government(s) into the affairs of American Muslim communities and Islamic Centers.

---

<sup>1</sup> MSA 13th Annual Report, May 28-May 31, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Alharbī, “Development of Islamic Finance in Europe and North America: Opportunities and Challenges,” *International Journal of Islamic Economics and Finance Studies* 2, no. 3 (November 1, 2016): 123.

<sup>3</sup> “Rabitat Al-Alam al-Islami,” *Islamicus* (blog), July 10, 2017, <http://islamicus.org/rabitat-al-alam-al-islami/>.



During our meeting with Mr. Safwat Saka Amine, the then Deputy Secretary General of *Rābiṭat al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*—The Muslim World League, I myself witnessed first-hand the unwavering courage and audacity of Dr Jamal who told Mr. Amine that *Rābiṭat al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*—The Muslim World League should not interfere in the management of the Muslim affairs of the United States. Dr Jamal held up his arm and told Mr. Amine, “We do not want the affairs of Islam and the Muslims in the USA to be tainted by the practices of outsider Muslim cultures and practices.” On witnessing this heated altercation, the attendant security personnel tried to intervene, but Mr. Amine told them no, as there was no danger.

During that conference, Dr Jamal, along with the Muslim leaders from the different Muslim communities residing in the US and Canada, opposed the interference by *Rābiṭat al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*—The Muslim World League in their activities. In the end, all the parties came to an amicable agreement: appreciating the efforts of *Rābiṭat al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī* in holding a successful conference which brought all the parties to an agreement and agreed not to form a national organization of Muslim Communities in the US.

During the late 1970’s, when Dr Jamal was residing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia we used to meet together during my visits to Riyadh and discuss different topics of interests concerning the different issues being faced by American Muslims. I was always inspired by his unique insights concerning political issues, including the 1979 Iranian revolution.

Since I was trained as a physicist, he once asked me “Does the *umma* need more physicists or managers?” His question made me pause and reflect deeply. It resulted in my career turn from being a physicist to a manager, and then to a financial executive. Dr Jamal foresaw my professional abilities as a financial executive and

wanted me to pursue it as a career.

In 1982, our common friends in Riyadh told Dr Hisham Altalib to talk to me about joining them in Virginia to manage large endowment funds when he met me at a conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I agreed to the proposal and moved to Virginia, USA, in April 1984. We built our homes together in 1987 at Mena Estates along with other American Muslim activists and have lived as neighbors ever since. As further testament to our close friendship, we both married in August 1976 and we even bought our grave sites together.

Since that time, Dr Jamal and I often traveled together. While discussing things on a flight, he would fall asleep. Though he never said it, I figured that I was boring him! And while driving on the road, he trusted me so much that he would sleep peacefully while I drove the car. I wondered whether my driving was so bad that he thought that whatever happens so be it! Or was my driving so good that he was so comfortable that he could relax? We often joked together and he would tell me to remember the jokes for him! We brainstormed together and often hung out together, be it in the USA, the Middle East, Africa, or even Japan, and we accomplished a lot together as a team. *Alhamdulillah.*



**Dr Jamal al-Barzinji and Dr M. Yaqub Mirza,  
strolling at a market in Tokyo, Japan**

As an astute person, Dr Jamal had his own uniquely different but very compelling viewpoints. In this sense, he was an intellectual with the acumen of an independent thinker. So much so, that a scholar of Muslim jurisprudence such as Shaikh Dr Taha Jabir al-Alwani used to consult him for his opinion concerning different *fiqhī* (jurisprudential) issues. And Dr Jamal would often remark that, “I am not a *faqīh* (a scholar of Muslim jurisprudence),” to which Shaikh Dr Taha Jabir al-Alwani would say, “I know that but, Jamal, I want your opinion and viewpoint on this particular subject matter.” Dr Jamal possessed a very clear understanding of Islam and its interpretations drawn from Islamic religious texts. This was the result of him being an avid reader of

Islamic scripture—the Qur'an and relevant Islamic texts. He once related to me that while growing up he read all the books in his father's personal library who was a leading imam in Iraq. Therefore, he had learned and knew almost everything there was to know or learn about Islam.

Besides being an avid reader, Dr Jamal was also an excellent editor, he would just pencil a word or two here and there and whole sentences would flow out with better and clearer meanings. He was also an extremely hard-working person with the perseverance to achieve real results. At times, he was even overly optimistic and overconfident, as he was a visionary who wanted to achieve his vision more quickly than the supporting resources, he had to accomplish them. At times this resulted in disappointments for him, and in those times, I would generally chime in. He would listen to my arguments and most of the time agree with me. Dr Jamal and Sister Suzanne have put a great deal of trust in me for which I am most grateful. He gave me tremendous respect (which at times I wondered if I really deserved it). And whenever I needed some advice, I would go to see him—he was my first choice for consultation before others. He was very trusting of people which sometimes caused minor problems, since he was so pure in heart and patient in spirit. He possessed such admirable qualities of being kind, caring, and God-fearing.

Dr Jamal also being a man with a strong personality led some people to characterize him as being “stubborn” because would not give up or compromise on an issue if he thought he was right and it was worth fighting for. He was also unique in many ways in that he would open a discussion to agreements or disagreements without getting upset. He would listen to peoples' opinions without cutting them off. Therefore, at times, I was able to give him ideas and advice which I thought were appropriate. Many times, he would call to consult me on different issues. I find this to be a unique quality which many of us do not possess. Most of us

have an attitude that “we know it all” and cannot accept criticism. He was open-minded and willing to listen to and also accept my criticisms, especially after we got to know each other very well. And many times, he would give me *nasiḥa* (advice) which I readily accepted.

On the social front, Dr Jamal was someone with whom most people would like to associate. Office staff members and others would go to him because they knew he would listen to them and make a quick decision. He had many friends and could speak well with children, and he knew how to entertain everyone. At times, he had the habit of answering phone calls amidst our conversation which would annoy me but I learned to live with it.

Among our group, Dr Jamal was the only person who met and offered advice to two sitting US Presidents viz., President George H. W. Bush who served as the 41st President of the United States from 1989 to 1993 and his son George W. Bush, who served as the 43rd President of the United States from 2001 to 2009. Dr Jamal also participated in US State Department Round Table Discussions under President Bill Clinton who served as the 42nd president of the United States from 1993 to 2001. Then in May 2012, he also met with Nancy Pelosi, the 52nd speaker of the United States House of Representatives from 2007 to 2011 and again from 2019 to 2023.



**Dr Jamal al-Barzinji in conversation with Ms. Nancy Pelosi,  
the 52nd speaker of the United States and Dr M. Yaqub Mirza**

In my opinion, Dr Jamal was a unique and an exceptional person formed by the 20th and 21st centuries.

In one person/soul, Dr Jamal embodied many qualities possessed by many prominent intellectuals such as Newt Gingrich, who served as the 50th Speaker of the United States House of Representatives from 1995 to 1999; John Henry Sununu, who was the 75th Governor of New Hampshire from 1983 to 1989 and later White House Chief of Staff under President George H. W. Bush; and Michael Spindler, a German businessman who was president and CEO of Apple from 1993 to 1996, all whom I knew personally well (except Gingrich) and served with them on several corporate boards.



**Dr Jamal al-Barzinji with Abdullah Gül the 11th President of Turkey (in office from 2007 to 2014) along with Dr Hisham Altalib and Dr M. Yaqub Mirza**

Dr Jamal’s kindness to help people parallels that of Mother Teresa. He was an honest and just man; extremely careful in spending waqf money and clearly differentiated between the funds of the *waqf* (a charitable endowment under Islamic law) and his personal money and needs. In 1988, while discussing the allocations of project-related expenses to various parties, we had two different opinions. He remarked, “Yaqub let us take the approach which we can defend on the day of judgment before Allah ﷻ.” This was the benchmark which became the guide for our lives as colleagues.

Sometimes, Dr Jamal would make comments which would clarify the subject matter so clearly, or give such a valuable insight that it would make us pause and think. For example, at one occasion he mentioned “Fools have no limits,” meaning they continue to surprise you with even more foolish acts than before. Another time he would say in spite of the shortcoming the

concerned person is a “good Muslim brother” meaning reasonably (not so) smart.

Several decades ago, American Muslims being in a majority non-Muslim country started facing questions concerning the annual payment of *Zakat*. Questions such as should it be paid in cash or in the equivalent values of gold, certificates of deposit, guaranteed bank credits, money market accounts, and bonds? The nascent but gradually growing American Muslim community also faced questions concerning financial risk investments; shares and mutual funds; buildings, factories, and businesses (non-trading types); stock options and stock purchase plans, and retirement accounts, life insurance policies and annuities. There was a little religious literature to guide the community concerning such financial matters. So, I decided to collect and research the available material to write an article on how to calculate *Zakat* on these financial instruments. Since I am not a scholar or a writer by profession, I was not sure about the quality of my finished article, so I gave it to Dr Jamal to review, edit, and correct it. After reviewing and editing it, Dr Jamal came to my office, handed over the article to me and said “Very good; keep writing.” This article was then reviewed by the *Fiqh* Council of North America and published in the *Islamic Horizons* magazine.<sup>4</sup> Those encouraging words drew out the “writer” in me. It led me to write my first book titled, *Five Pillars of Prosperity: Essentials of Faith-Based Wealth Building* published in 2014 and is available for free of charge download at the website of the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) at Shenandoah University.<sup>5</sup> I

---

<sup>4</sup> M. Yaqub Mirza, “Understanding Zakat—Righteous Ways of Managing and Owning Money” in *Islamic Horizons*, May/June (2001) : 24-27.

<sup>5</sup> M. Yaqub Mirza, *Five Pillars of Prosperity: Essentials of Faith-Based Wealth Building* (Ashland: White Cloud Press, 2014); M. Yaqub Mirza “Five Pillars of Prosperity,” CICW @ SU, accessed October 11, 2022, <https://www.contemporaryislam.org/fivepillarsofprosperity.html>.



presented a copy of the book to Dr Jamal and said, “Here is my first and last book.” He looked at me, puzzled, and questioned, “Yaqub, why is this your last book?” His comment gave me pause to ask myself, “why *should* this be my last book?” Dr Jamal’s question inspired me to write to my second book titled, *Heavenly Returns: What the Abrahamic Faiths Teach Us About Financial & Spiritual Well-Being* in co-authorship with Mr. Gary Moore, a former senior vice president of investments with Paine Webber, founder of the Financial Seminary, and founder of Gary Moore and Company, which provides investment counsel to banks, churches, and individuals.<sup>6</sup> Such brotherly encouragement from Dr Jamal made me both a “writer” and a storyteller. So, Mr. Moore and I dedicated the book to my dear brother Dr Jamal as a *ṣadaqa jāriya* (a continuous charity for the benefit of all people for which the benefactor continues to receive rewards from Allah ﷻ even after death). May Allah be pleased with and reward Dr Jamal with heavenly blessings.

As we worked together to address the social and financial needs facing the American Muslim community, I would often invite him to visit my family’s retreat home to engage in deeper reflections on these matters. He would always accept these invitations to visit our house in the city of Woodstock, VA, which is about 85 miles away from Herndon, where we both lived. These outings gave us the time and opportunity to have deep discussions away from the hustle and bustle of daily demands. During one such visit while sitting on the bench at the riverside in the Shenandoah Valley, I asked him, “What do you think we should have focused on all these years?” He responded, “educational reform” and spoke about this topic with eloquence and passion.

---

<sup>6</sup> M. Yaqub Mirza and Gary Moore, *Heavenly Returns: What the Abrahamic Faiths Teach Us About Financial & Spiritual Well-Being* (Center for Islam in the Contemporary World, 2022).

He remarked that we need to train better leaders for the future who are ethical, speak the truth without fear, and have backbone to stand for what is right! I was inspired. And I told him then that I pledge to work on this project. That pledge has led us to undertake the “Barzinji Project for Reform of Education” which now operates under the name of “The Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning” under the umbrella and part of Shenandoah University.<sup>7</sup>



**Dr Barzinji and Dr Mirza conversing about reform of education in Woodstock, Virginia located in the Shenandoah Valley in 2013**

I think it was during the 2010 summer picnic when Br Arif Khan brought an apple tree as a house warming gift for us. This was to be planted in our front yard. It was raining but Dr Jamal led a group, perhaps 20 of us to go out and plant the tree.

---

<sup>7</sup> Brad Fauber, “The Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning: A Legacy of Dr Jamal Barzinji,” Shenandoah University, September 27, 2022, <https://www.su.edu/blog/2022/09/27/the-barzinji-institute-for-global-virtual-learning-a-legacy-of-dr-jamal-barzinji/>.

Thinking of the *hadith* even if the last hour comes and you are planting a tree you should go ahead and plant it. He led us including Imam Magid and others to plant this tree. After planting the tree, he then led us to pray while standing all around the tree. My wife, Tanveer calls it “Ummo Jamal’s tree”. Today I look at this tree (and every time we visit) it has grown tall and with lots of apples. As it looks it will continue to give apples for many years to come.



**Ummo Jamal’s tree**

I may say it symbolizes and reminds us that Dr Jamal has planted many such “trees” of good deeds around the world which will continue to give “fruits” for many years to come. He will be getting ever the rewards for them.

Umm Ali (as Mrs. Suzanne Barzinji is popularly known) and Dr Jamal are the most hospitable people I have ever met in my life. Their home was always open to visitors. Over the years, I have come to know the deep support Sister Suzanne offered to Dr Jamal, leaving aside routine and minor disagreements which exist

in every family. She raised four children, managed the house, welcomed visitors and supported him during all his travels which were often, many, and sometimes long. Among our group, he was often chosen to travel and handle issues for the rest of us. After discovering that he has been affected by cancer, Sister Suzanne devoted even more of her time to serve him. For months she drove him to Indianapolis (which is about 600 miles away from their home) for treatment. May Allah reward her for her dedication to Dr Jamal during the difficult times and period of life which ended with his death in September 2015.

Sister Suzanne is the “true woman behind” the successes of Dr Jamal’s myriad activities. He told me that she would pack his bags for each and every trip—this was news to me. He told me she also does the research for him for his *khutbas* (sermons and speeches) he delivered. Whenever I complimented him about his nice and decent matching dress, he would say, “You should thank Umm Ali for it.” She did most of the shopping for him. Umm Ali at times has her own viewpoints and sometimes she has strong opinions which she expresses frankly. I find her to be a very fair and honest person, God fearing, and with great clarity about what is right and wrong in respecting the rights of all of Jamal’s children and other people. Sister Suzanne is the cook (and I must say a very good one) of the family, often preparing meals on short notice and hosting large groups of people for meals. My family and I had probably the most meals in their home than in any of my other friends’ homes.

During the annual event of the IIIT Summer School Student Program, Dr Jamal insisted that the students come to his home for dinner at the end of the program. The year in which he passed away and because of his deteriorating health, we requested him to take a break and not to invite the students to his home, but he insisted that the students come to his home for dinner rather than meet at a restaurant. It was only a few months later he passed

away. Dr Jamal welcomed and hosted not only the students, but also professors, staff and friends during every annual Summer School program and on other occasions. May Allah ﷻ be pleased with him, as he and his family have sacrificed a lot for the development of not only the American, but also the global Muslim community. Among many other instances, one of them stands out in particular when he moved with his family to Kuala Lumpur to work for raising funds for the Graduate School of Social Sciences in Virginia.

The best manner by which we can honor Dr Jamal for his ceaseless work and the contributions he made in all of his lifetime is by continuing his legacy into the future. For example, he liked the FAITH Social Services project undertaken by Dr Tanveer A. Mirza, which is a grassroots organization committed to empowering all members of the community through its mission is to provide humanitarian aid to needy individuals and families living in the Northern Virginia area.<sup>8</sup> FAITH is a living example of how *Zakat* can empower people to become self-sufficient. Dr Jamal, once told Dr Tanveer A. Mirza, “You are lucky you can see results of your efforts during your lifetime, while most people see them after death.” Dr Jamal was always available to offer advice and guidance to her work. Dr Tanveer would often call him when she needed to get his advice, including from the funeral homes where she would be washing female bodies preparing them for their burial. Dr Jamal was her walking 24/7 *shari‘a* advisor. Whenever we used to travel together in the same car, as soon as he sat down, he would turn to Dr Tanveer and ask, “So what is your question for today?” This became a running joke that we often used to share among ourselves.

Let me take a moment to share what Dr Jamal al-Barzinji had envisioned for the physical expansion of the All Dulles Area

---

<sup>8</sup> “FAITH,” accessed October 11, 2022, <https://www.faithus.org/>.

Muslim Society or the ADAMS Center, which is one of the largest mosques in the United States, also known as the Phase III expansion project. When I first heard about it, I was not very excited because it would not increase the capacity for the number of people who could pray in that space. I told Dr Jamal, “Why spend 6 plus million US dollars? It will be better that we build satellite centers costing about \$1.5 million each, each accommodating 200 persons in 4 different localities, rather than investing \$6 million more at the existing facility.” I opined that these satellite locations would “take the mosque to the people.” While I could argue using business arguments, I saw in his eyes that he really wanted a nice Mosque in our area of which we would be proud of.

Dr Jamal had many other wishes, desires and plans which he shared with us and some of those are outlined in his “last” speech at the “Groundbreaking Ceremony” of the ADAMS Center, which *insha’Allah*, we plan to continue. Some of which will be done through the “Center of Islam in Contemporary World” (CICW) at the Shenandoah University and through other organizations. May Allah ﷻ give us the resources to accomplish them. For me this is a great way to honor him by doing the projects which he believed in and wanted to be accomplished. May Allah ﷻ be pleased with him and reward him many folds for his contributions to society and for the betterment of humanity, especially the *umma*. *Amin*.

I want to conclude here by reiterating what I said during the opening ceremony of the Phase III expansion project of the ADAMS center on Friday May 5, 2017.

“I believe we were able to complete the expansion solely because of the strong desire of Dr Jamal Barzinji. We dedicate our efforts for the completion of Phase III to Dr Jamal Barzinji, who truly was a visionary of our time. Please pray for him. I am extremely happy that this phase

is completed and to be a part of this ceremony. Thank you.”

## References

- Alharbi, Ahmad. “Development of Islamic Finance in Europe and North America: Opportunities and Challenges.” *International Journal of Islamic Economics and Finance Studies* 2, no. 3 (November 1, 2016): 109-36.
- “FAITH.” Accessed October 11, 2022. <https://www.faithus.org/>.
- Fauber, Brad. “The Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning: A Legacy of Dr Jamal Barzinji.” Shenandoah University, September 27, 2022. <https://www.su.edu/blog/2022/09/27/the-barzinji-institute-for-global-virtual-learning-a-legacy-of-dr-jamal-barzinji/>.
- M. Yaqub Mirza. “Understanding Zakat—Righteous Ways of Managing and Owning Money” in *Islamic Horizons*, May/June (2001): 24-27,
- Mirza, M. Yaqub. *Five Pillars of Prosperity: Essentials of Faith-Based Wealth Building*. Ashland: White Cloud Press, 2014.
- Mirza, M. Yaqub, and Gary Moore. *Heavenly Returns: What the Abrahamic Faiths Teach Us about Financial & Spiritual Well-Being*. Center for Islam in the Contemporary World, 2022.
- Mirza, M. Yaqub “Five Pillars of Prosperity.” CICW @ SU. Accessed October 11, 2022. <https://www.contemporaryislam.org/fivepillarsofprosperity.html>.
- Islamicus. “Rabitat Al-Alam al-Islami,” July 10, 2017. <http://islamicus.org/rabitat-al-alam-al-islami/>.

## The Legacy of a Multi-Dimensional Man

John L. Esposito

It is a distinct honor to remember and pay tribute to Dr Jamal Barzinji, a long-time friend and, like my mentor Professor Ismail al Faruqi and his wife Professor Lois Lamya al Faruqi, a true *mujahid* whom I have known for more than 40 years. I have known Jamal for so long and on so many occasions that it is difficult to remember just when we met for the first time! But I soon came to see Jamal as a Muslim intellectual and visionary, an activist and reformer, an organizer and builder of Muslim organizations and networks in the US and abroad.

Jamal was a powerful and unrelenting whirlwind of action, driven by his deep and abiding faith. Few have combined a 24/7 dedication and energy with a razor-sharp intellect, and a creative and action-oriented disposition that he demonstrated so consistently and productively throughout his life.

In my days as a graduate student and then young professor, I met Jamal briefly at early Muslim organization-building meetings and conferences when I was invited by Professor Ismail al Faruqi and others. But it was not until 1981 and afterwards that I began to really see Jamal in action. Jamal was one of the original



founders of The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) along with my mentor Professor Ismail Ragi al Faruqi and Anwar Ibrahim, Dr M. Yaqub Mirza, Dr Hisham Altalib, Professor AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, and Professor Tahir Jabir al-Alwani.

I can still remember the first time I visited the newly created IIIT in Herndon, Virginia. In those days Herndon, from a Washington, D.C. perspective, was a somewhat remote town, far not only in distance but also in thought. IIIT's two modern buildings seemed out of place, standing alone in an area that was just beginning to develop. I wondered why IIIT was there in such a sleepy suburb, what it would be doing and would it survive?

On the other hand, I was attracted by the fact that its mission and purpose was "to focus on conducting research in advancing education in Muslim societies and the publication, translation, and teaching of the work through various means", with "the objectives of revival and reform of Islamic thought." At the time, both IIIT's then remote location and seeming distance from Washington D.C. as well as the resources that would be needed to achieve its challenging mission reinforced my concern about its feasibility and future. Little did I know how misplaced my concerns would prove to be!

Jamal and his colleagues were dedicated Muslim pioneers on a faith-inspired mission. Jamal was extraordinarily bright and a multi-tasker par excellence. He was a brilliant strategist and, most importantly, a problem solver who often seemed to welcome, and almost be invigorated by the challenge and opportunity to conquer powerful obstacles. At times his super active, business-like personality, could initially eclipse his identity as a man of deep faith, generosity and compassion. Like Professor Ismail al Faruqi, and so many other major Muslim pioneers in America, Jamal sought to establish deep roots for Islam and Muslim Americans through the creation of strong institutions in America as well as

globally.

Jamal and IIIT's significant accomplishments could be seen not only in the chain of IIIT centers established overseas and in Europe but also in his service as Dean of the *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences at the International Islamic University Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I happened to be in Kuala Lumpur during that period and especially recall a special event during which Anwar Ibrahim, the then Deputy Prime Minister spoke. I sat with Jamal at a large outdoor luncheon there and was struck by how enthusiastic he was and, how, in typical fashion, he talked about a range of reforms, projects, and programs that he planned to implement. Little did I know at that time about the significant role Jamal would play in my own life and career post 9/11.

In 1993 I was invited to move to Georgetown University and become the Founding Director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding: History and International Affairs in the Walsh School of Foreign Service. The Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (CMCU) was founded in by an agreement between the *Fondation pour l'Entente entre Chrétiens et Musulmans* Geneva and Georgetown University to build stronger bridges of understanding between the Muslim world and the West as well as between Islam and Christianity. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the First Gulf War in 1991, Hasib Sabbagh and a small group of Arab Christians and Muslim corporate leaders were concerned that Islam and the Muslim world would be seen as the next global threat. CMCU's activities were designed to address stereotypes of Islam and dire warnings of an Islamic threat and a clash of civilizations. We focused on engaging challenging questions regarding Muslim-Christian relations, the compatibility of Islam and modern life, and important issues, from democratization and pluralism, to the status of women, minorities, and human rights.

I and my colleagues, John O. Voll, Yvonne Haddad, and later Amira Sonbol, were able to quickly build a strong and vibrant Center that focused on traveling and speaking nationally and internationally, producing major publications and teaching the next generation of citizens and leaders. But, suddenly, in many ways, all our efforts and successes seemed to come to a crashing halt with 9/11 and Al-Qaeda's attack on the US, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and subsequent attacks in London, Madrid, and Bali. We then were faced with an international threat epitomized by Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda and a response described by President George W. Bush as a War on Global Terrorism as well as the steady growth of Islamophobia.

Post 9/11, the importance and relevance of the Center was epitomized by the exponential demand and growth of the Center and its faculty's involvement in media interviews, government leader briefings, speaking engagements, and consulting in the US, Europe, and globally. In the midst of these challenges there appeared a totally unexpected opportunity for the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Prince Al Waleed bin Talal Al Saud, a major Arab entrepreneur, educated in the USA, recognized the implications of 9/11 and the Global War on Terrorism. He understood the need to foster and strengthen much greater mutual understanding among the next generations in the Arab world and in the West. To pursue this goal, he funded the creation of centers for American Studies at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the American University in Cairo (AUC) so that Arab students could learn more about America and the West. And, Prince Al Waleed also went on to fund Alwaleed Bin Talal Centers for Muslim-Christian Understanding at the Georgetown and Harvard universities in the USA and also similar centers at the Edinburgh and Cambridge universities in the United Kingdom.

The Alwaleed Foundation had tapped Jamal Barzinji to chair a small group of distinguished consultants who would advise and vet candidates for a generous endowment. Jamal organized and chaired a committee that reviewed applications and then visited selected universities, interviewing their administrators and prospective directors of Centers.

While most of the funding went to universities that were establishing new centers, Georgetown's CMCU, established in 1993 through an initial gift and sustained by year-to-year financial support, needed new funding to continue its growth and expanding mission. Our continued existence required a substantial endowment. The approval of Jamal's committee was of course critical! In 2005, an agreement was signed for a \$20 million endowment and the Center was renamed the Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (ACMCU). Little did I know at that point that Jamal and IIIT would play a continued important role in ACMCU's future.

In a post 9/11 world, there was an explosion of Islamophobic media coverage and commentary, hate speech, discrimination, and hate crimes. In fact, studies based on IRS returns found that more than \$250 million had been given to support Islamophobic social media authors, organizations, and websites. Obviously, this has had a serious negative impact on Muslim civil liberties and human rights in American and European politics and society. It was natural that my colleagues and I had a challenging task before us. We needed to identify and counter this metastasizing social cancer. We needed a new focused initiative in our Center and thus The Bridge: Protecting Pluralism—Ending Islamophobia multi-year program was born.

I made an appointment to see Jamal at IIIT. We talked about IIIT and its work in the US and abroad and especially Jamal's role in the selection and creation of the Alwaleed Center of Muslim-

Christian Understanding and about its new Islamophobia initiative: The Bridge Initiative: Protecting Pluralism—Ending Islamophobia. I was delighted by Jamal’s deep appreciation for the critical importance of ACMCU and The Bridge Initiative. I cannot think of a single time or conversation in which Jamal was not “turned on,” brimming with ideas, questions, and solutions and that included my last meeting with him at his home. Although he was obviously weak and near the end of his struggle, after indicating that he had to be brief, he once again asked me how I was doing and then shared his List of Ideas and Concerns, enriching me with suggestions about ACMCU and the future of the Bridge Initiative in which he played a key role. Despite his critical condition, he remained a *mujahid* to the end. Jamal’s example will continue to shine for all of us to see, in what he has helped to build and what he has generously supported.

SEVEN

## **In the Darkness of the Night, We Miss the Full Moon**

Hisham Altalib



**Dr Jamal al-Barzinji—A Co-traveler in life journey**

Dr Jamal al-Barzinji was my lifelong companion and beloved colleague. A man of extraordinary energy, sharp intellect, and strategic output, he passionately devoted much of his life to the service of Allah *subhānahu wa ta'ala*, striving in His cause with untiring optimism and an unwavering commitment, underscored by values and principles.

In the six long decades that spanned our remarkable friendship, which in itself is a testament to its strength, Jamal and I spent a lot of time together running the gamut from youth to old age, and it would be no exaggeration to say he had a dramatic impact on my life. I watched him grow and develop, from wide-eyed student to devoted husband and father, to a man influential in the betterment of others' lives, someone who marked time both wisely and precisely, living by an ethic of hard work to pursue what he set out to achieve. Not only did I learn much from Jamal as the years rolled by, but I also came to know him on a deeply personal level: how he thought, how he approached problems, what inspired him, and how he affected others.

### **The Early Years**

Jamal was very much a product of his native city of Mosul in Iraq. More specifically, besides Islam, the backdrop of his life was an ancient and powerful past married to a modern, multifaith, and multicultural present. These surroundings would shape his views remarkably early in life. He appreciated the existence of the diverse faith communities around him, mingled in different cultural milieus, and entered a world of many jostling ideas and conflicting political opinions. We initially met at high school, but became firm friends later when gaining scholarships to attend the Preparatory College for Scholarship Students in Baghdad, a place we boarded at for one year before leaving for the UK to pursue our engineering degrees.

Baghdad was a great, bustling city and we suddenly found ourselves away from home for the first time at the tender age of 16. We were also thrown into the company of 110 other scholarship students, boys and girls from all over Iraq. The environment was politically and ideologically tense, involving serious conflict and physical confrontations between communists, Ba'athists, nationalists, and Islamic-oriented youth all vying with one another. We may have been young and inexperienced, but fortunately our faith, being a powerful component of our mental makeup, acted as a protective shield. Thus, one of Jamal's and my first acts on settling into the College was to petition for a prayer room to perform the five daily prayers. The request, to our delight, was duly granted. Our teamwork and its resultant success drew Jamal and I closer. This was a recurring theme in our lives with ever more complex and challenging projects demanding our attention and, in turn, cementing our friendship.

This is not to give the impression that we were carbon copies of one another, as many seem to think, like-minded in all things and always in harmony when it came to ideas and opinion. Rather, ours were quite different personalities with the particular element that we enriched and complemented each other within that difference. Thus, the relationship astonishingly did not suffer a single rupture throughout its six decades, in large part because our temperaments suited each other, the sincerity of our intentions, and dedication to the cause regardless of circumstances, and of course our faith rooted strongly within.

Whilst living in Baghdad, we also had the good fortune to be mentored by someone I had been acquainted with from his earlier visits to our hometown of Mosul, a civil engineer named Abdul Ghani Shindala, who took us under his wing and to whom we are forever indebted. Addressing our age and inexperience, Abdul Ghani proved to be a formative and fearless figure in our fledgling development. We greatly benefited from his vast knowledge of



Islam as well as his command over a wide range of contemporary issues, including his daringly open discussions emphasizing the fallacy of various ideologies and -isms. His parting advice when we finally left Baghdad for London in August 1958 was significant: “You go now to the British Isles. Think of yourselves as the first pioneers to showcase true Islam. You will have no help from any source except from Allah, so rely on Him and yourselves entirely. Have confidence in yourselves because we cannot communicate with you anymore. You have all that it takes to realize your potential and accomplish the mission Allah ﷻ has planned for you. May Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala bless you.”

These few words resonated deeply and would act as a steady compass and rudder to direct and steer the ship of our goals and lives safely through the sea of experiences we would encounter, not only during our studies in England between 1958 and 1962, but also upon our return to Iraq. We imbibed within our souls the ideals of piety and generosity, to display qualities of creative original thinking and hard work, and to act on our values, morals, and spirituality. In other words, to be moral agents in the world, not just passive observers. It was a coming of age, a transitioning from childhood and youth to adulthood in terms of perception of our potential and civilizational roles. Recalling vividly Abdul Ghani’s words, once we had settled in the UK, together with Dr Ahmad Totonji (another lifelong companion to be), we formed an organization for Muslim students in 1959 called the Muslim Students Society (MSS) in the UK and Northern Ireland. We diligently worked for its success and it continues to exist to this day.

Having been awarded our undergraduate engineering degrees, Jamal and I duly returned to Iraq in 1962, far different men to the naive students who had landed on England’s damp shores. We now had a wealth of experience behind us, from community work to civic responsibility projects, that would form the trajectory of

our future endeavors. Once in Iraq, we were required to attend the Reserve Officers College at Al Rasheed Military Base in Baghdad, spending six months in officer's training until we were dismissed in March 1963 from serving in the Iraqi Army. By this time and even as early as 1958, Jamal and I had become well-known to the Ba'athist authorities and other political factions as Islamically-oriented activists. Therefore, when the Ba'athists took over and began "cleansing" the military and other government institutions from all opposition elements, we were both on top of the list of many officers.

Life moved inevitably on as our career paths now took root and we found ourselves in lucrative jobs, eventually settling down to become married and start families. By 1967, we came to the unavoidable conclusion that nothing more could be gained by staying at the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) in Kirkuk where we both worked. The company's higher pay and comfortable lifestyle in the residential complex were not enough. Our vision was much wider and clearly could not be realized in Iraq given the way things were going. In fact, no Islamic work could achieve its objectives under the prevailing political circumstances. We concluded that there was little hope of any reform or progress no matter how long we remained in Iraq and, therefore, we decided to pursue our Master's and Ph.D. degrees either in the UK or USA. We thought that in doing so we would improve our knowledge and expand our horizons, with a view to returning to Iraq suitably qualified so people would listen more to us regarding the dire needs for reform (*'iṣlāḥ*) and renewal (*tajdid*) of the Muslim community. With this larger objective in mind, we applied to around 70 universities in the UK and USA, resulting in my joining the University of Cincinnati in 1968 and Jamal enrolling in Louisiana State University in 1969, both in the USA.

In retrospect, I cannot help but think how true the saying is: "Man proposes but God disposes." At the time each of us wrote in

the application forms, “My plan is to come to the USA, obtain both Master’s and Ph.D. degrees as fast as possible, then return immediately to serve my country, Iraq.” *Subhān Allah*, both of us were never to set foot in Iraq again, not even as transit passengers at Baghdad Airport. We had a plan but Allah always has the MASTER PLAN!

### **Setting Roots, Building Institutions**

Our old friend and colleague, Ahmad Totonji, whom we had met as undergraduates in the UK, and who was one year younger to me, had already gone to the United States to pursue his graduate studies once he had been awarded his Petroleum Engineering degree from the University of Birmingham, UK. He, along with Dr Ahmad Sakr and a dozen others, founded the Muslim Student Association of the US and Canada (MSA) in 1963 based on the same principles as the MSS of the UK and Northern Ireland: a non-sectarian, non-partisan, non-ethnic, cosmopolitan, color-blind, and gender-blind organization that also established annual democratic elections, transparency in all matters, financial accountability, and equality among members with full participation. Both Jamal and I were elected to the executive committee of the MSA and through this organization we founded many other institutions.

Indeed, the daughter of the MSS, that is the MSA, was to become the mother of many other effective and well-functioning organizations, one of them being the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), *walḥamdulillah*. Another was the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT), which was established in order to safeguard the future of mosques. Instead of ownership by individuals, mosques would be registered under NAIT thereby allowing us to ensure that they would always be utilized as mosques or Islamic centers.

In 1972, Jamal and I were among the founders of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) along with Professor Ismail al Faruqi, Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Dr Anis Ahmad, Dr Ahmad Totonji, and others. We also actively participated in yet another organization, the Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers (AMSE). In addition, Jamal understood the importance of Muslim representation in the political process and this resulted in the formation of the American Muslim Council (AMC). Jamal's contributions were not limited to Islamic activism in the UK and the USA, but also in many Muslim countries. Thus, for instance, he was successfully involved in the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), managed at the time by Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman and Dr Ahmad Totonji in Riyadh, and the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), where he became the Dean of the *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS).

Jamal's philosophy in establishing institutions was threefold:

1. One should not only do what one can do but what must be done; one should not be like water that runs down to fill valleys, swamps, and holes, but actively seek the higher grounds.
2. One should do what others cannot do, and this is the objective that he set for himself and for all those working with him.
3. One should establish institutions and when they are standing on their own feet, hand them over to the next generation who have been trained and are devoted and committed; they will employ their own creativities and initiatives to carry the work further and higher.

So, it was on these three fundamental principles that Jamal (may Allah bless his soul and reward him abundantly) started early in his life to establish and develop institutions as an active member of our team.

I strongly believe that we were not  $1+1=2$  but  $1+1=11$  in terms of thought, effectiveness, planning, and execution. We would always do our homework together in advance and approach every task ready and well-prepared as well as with confidence, openness, and transparency. We never maneuvered or conspired but came forward with sincerity and dedication.

Our friendship was truly for the sake of God and our intentions were purely for His cause. Our double act definitely paid dividends, helping us and the organizations we were involved with tremendously, elevating the level of work and minimizing if not avoiding altogether mistakes and pitfalls. In fact, so united was our front that some people began referring to us as Hisham Barzinji and Jamal Altalib, locally and overseas. Jamal and I were also referred to as *al fahīm* (the smart, clever person) and *al ḥakīm* (the wise man), respectively. Actually, I even invented the word “twinity” to describe us: two in one and one in two. As the Prophet ﷺ stated, “The believer is the mirror of his brother.” That is how we worked continuously for 60 years; Jamal was my mirror and I was his.

As a person, Jamal was unique in many ways. Firstly, he slept much less than eight hours a day and used the extra time to read, even in bed. In my estimation, there are two types of scholars, encyclopedic or analytical. Jamal was both. He was an avid reader from his early childhood which gave him a good grasp of a wide array of topics and sharpened his reflection and analysis. I have watched him challenge many an expert in their own fields who, unable to respond, would end up saying, “Let me re-read about this or let me think it over.” His scholarly foundation was also

remarkably strong since he had grown up in a very learned environment. For instance, in his youth he had regularly read aloud classical Islamic texts to his father, Muhammad Ali Barzinji, who was an *Imam* and a *Khaṭīb* at one of the mosques in Mosul. Due to Jamal's attachment to books, and his literary prowess, he always played an instrumental role as a leading member of the Publications Committee, whether in the 1970s within the MSA or later at IIIT. In the 1970s, he founded the American Trust Publications (ATP), an educational arm of NAIT. Under his management, the three organizations published many groundbreaking books and journals.

Jamal truly understood that faith is inseparable from moral action, that we need to effect good in the world, to transform humanity from a perspective of compassion borne out of faith. Jamal never lost focus of this and tried to expand the framework of our potential in the wider world. His life and work are testaments to his belief and convictions. He habitually worked hard, with diligence, and he never lost hope, inspiring many others in the process.

### **Jamal's Foresight: The Global and the Local**

Jamal was a perfectionist who throughout his life harbored great concern for *humūm al umma*, or the angst or problems of the *umma*, always thinking of how to address and solve them to eventually allow the Muslim world to emerge from its malaise. So deeply ingrained were these two elements that he would look at any work of a specific institution, Islamic movement or otherwise, and begin critiquing it, so much so that people who did not know him well would occasionally interpret his views or assessment as an attack. However, eventually they would discover that he meant well, and that his observations emanated from a concerned insider perspective seeking genuine improvement and not that of a hostile

critic. In many cases, this led to the leadership taking his earnest concerns seriously and introducing changes and improvements. Jamal was without doubt a dedicated, honest, nuanced person who always put public interests before his own personal benefit.

Jamal had a deeply generous and pious soul. Compassionate action towards the community defined him to the end. The concerns of practical implementation never stood in his way. He was a man driven to help those in need, viewing his role in life as one of service for the sake of Allah ﷻ. This compassion made him feel acutely for the poor and even those on the streets whom he tried to assist. Many a time, he would recruit me to participate actively, finding all manner of ways of helping. Feeling that plight and the suffering keenly, he would constantly be in a hurry to save the world—yesterday! To reiterate: empathy alone was not enough, action was needed. He held the view that for any Islamic awakening to truly succeed, all sections of society, from Islamist to secularist, nationalist, and socialist, etc., needed to come together on a united front to reach a consensus. He also strongly believed that the best vehicle for lasting transformation was the reform of education in Muslim societies, from family education to school education to higher education. Towards this end, in 2012, he was instrumental in forming and chairing a IIIT committee comprising Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Dr Ziauddin Sardar, Dr Anas al-Shaikh-Ali, Dr Jeremy Hanzell-Thomas, and Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi. At his request, I was actively involved in the work of this committee which later developed into the ongoing Advancing Education in Muslim Societies (AEMS) project.

Jamal fully realized that this is the first time in the history of the Muslim *umma* that it is not a superpower and that Muslims were instead living as a minority in a superpower *non-Muslim* majority country such as the USA. Therefore, Jamal recognized that in order for Islam to thrive in the United States, American

Muslims had to learn to adapt and adjust to their new environment while staying true to the dictates and spirit of Islam. He reflected upon this in a speech he gave at the Phase 3 Groundbreaking Ceremony of the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center in Northern Virginia, of which he was a founding member. I categorically consider this speech as his farewell speech to all of us; he delivered it sitting on a chair with a low voice, and as I watched and listened, it dawned on me with a great and heavy heart, that I may never hear my old friend speak publicly again. Unfortunately, I was proved right.

Instead of being reductionist in his thinking or being discouraged, he reflected more on putting into place relevant projects and community spaces to serve the current Muslim minority context in so many countries across the world. As such, a mosque or a *masjid* needed to be much more than just a place of prayer, but also offer other facilities like a gymnasium, a multipurpose room for various social functions, etc. In addition, Jamal pioneered the practice of having multiple *jumu'a* prayers and satellite *jumu'a* locations so that professionals could fulfill this weekly obligation with ease. This has now become common practice across North America and Europe. Unlike the stark reality in Muslim majority countries, Jamal advocated for an active role and solid physical place for women in the mosque, as well as in the community. Likewise, he was aware of both the necessity of interfaith exchange and civic engagement for the survival and recognition of Muslim contributions in America.

Nonetheless, he was also cognizant of many challenges that the Muslim community continues to face. For example, he acutely felt that *imams* need to be properly trained for the American context. He also bemoaned the lack of a functional Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA), a body which was established by the late Dr Shaykh Taha Jabir al Alwani (may Allah bless his soul). Such an active council is badly needed, he felt, to address through



proper *ijtihad* by qualified scholars the myriad issues confronting the community at local and national levels.

## **Farewell**

Never in my wildest imagination would I ever have predicted that Jamal and my fateful meeting all those decades ago would spark a 60-year long friendship, merging our destinies for the rest of our lives and seeing us grow old together. Even when not living in physical proximity, we kept in constant communication, illustrating the extent of our shared vision and synthesis of work. We coordinated and worked closely together when dealing with many local and international societies, institutions, organizations, and associations, as well as when attending conferences, workshops, and brainstorming sessions which we either organized or were invited to attend.

Jamal understood the Muslim community's spiritual, emotional, economic, and functional needs, and spent a lifetime developing frameworks to address them. He rolled up his sleeves, worked hard, and acted as a catalyst to empower others. In the process, he left behind an incredible legacy whose imprint can be seen in many aspects of the American Muslim community today. In fact, he was such a pivotal figure in people's lives that we at IIIT now, when faced with a new challenge, often ask ourselves: What would Jamal do?

Jamal's friendship was a great joy which lit up my life, and words cannot express how grieved I am to have lost such a true friend and dear brother. As Rumi said, "Life is a balance between holding on and letting go," and though hardly a day goes by when I do not think of Jamal, I have had to let him go, with the knowledge that we will be reunited one day. He was an instrument of God and I am honored and privileged to have shared the journey with him.

IN THE DARKNESS OF THE NIGHT, WE MISS THE FULL MOON

May Jamal's efforts be a *ṣadaqa jāriya* for him and may Allah accept all his hard work and endeavors for His cause alone and reward him abundantly. *Amīn, ya Rabb.*

## **A Global Institution Builder**

Anis Ahmad

It is always difficult to recollect memories involving a person one knows not in a formal way, but as a family member Dr Jamal al-Barzinji was a dear brother and colleague with great organizational capabilities. We have known each other since 1969 when Islamic work in the US and Canada started gaining national and international recognition. We came to know each other through the activities of the Muslim Students Association of the US and Canada (MSA).

We also worked together as members of a group including Dr Ahmad Totonji, Dr Hisham Altalib, Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Dr Tijani Abu Jidairi, Professor Ismail al Faruqi, Dr Jamal Badawi, Dr Mahmoud Rashdan, Dr Ilyas Bayunus, Dr Iqbal Unus, Dr Ahmad Sakr, Brother Osman Ahmad, Brother Ahmad Al Qadi, Dr M. Yaqub Mirza, and others. I think it was a unique experience of fraternity, unity, and mutuality of thought, working together for a noble cause of the development of a new paradigm of knowledge.

The Muslim Students Association provided a common forum for not only Muslim students involved in the PhD programs, but also for those teaching across the US and Canada and Muslim

families. The founding of Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers (AMSE), Islamic Medical Association (IMA), and Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) were landmarks in the development of professional bodies in the Muslim community in North America. Even though Dr Jamal, Dr Totonji and Dr Hisham were not trained as social scientists, they were the force behind establishment of AMSS. We often used to have long discussions at the home of Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman in West Philadelphia in which I, Dr Jamal, Dr Ahmad Totonji, Dr Tijani, and Dr Hisham participated. It resulted in the founding of AMSS in 1971 at a meeting held at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, Illinois. Professor Ismail al Faruqi and Dr Anis Ahmad were elected its president and secretary general respectively.

As visionaries, Dr Jamal and Dr Totonji pioneered the concept of North America Islamic Trust (NAIT) in order to develop a network of the Muslim communities across North America, and also to establish the Islamic Book Service in order to establish a financial base of Muslim organization. Dr Jamal's active contribution in the efforts of building Muslim community in North America was outstanding.

At the 1981 international conference organized at the International Islamic University, Islamabad, Professor Ismail al Faruqi presented his research paper on "Islamization of Knowledge" with a work plan to materialize the concept. It provided the guidelines for the future development of two important academic institutions namely the International Islamic University Islamabad, established in 1981, and the International Islamic University Malaysia, established in 1983, in close collaboration with IIIT under the leadership of Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Dr Totonji, and Dr Jamal.

The IIU Malaysia was fortunate to have Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman appointed as its Rector and Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim as its President, who was then the finance minister of Malaysia and later became the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. I was invited by Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman to assist him in the establishment of a new faculty namely, the *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS). It was a challenging task. Since its inception, AMSS has persuaded Muslim social scientists to develop a new paradigm of knowledge. Thus, IIUM provided a laboratory setting to test and implement the idea of the integration of values and production of '*ilm al nafi*'. As the founding Dean of this unique *Kulliyah*, I was privileged to hold interactive sessions with faculty members in different subjects in order to integrate Islamic values into the schemes of studies and curriculum. Integrating Islamic values into the subject matters of various disciplines in social and human sciences was an uphill task, but with the continuous support and interactions with Professor Emeritus Dato' Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Dr Mohd Kamal Hassan, Professor Malik Badri, and other faculty members, we were able to develop a working model, to be further improved with feedback from students and faculty members. As the founding Dean of this faculty, I worked for four years and when I left IIUM, Dr Jamal took charge by becoming the new Dean of the faculty.

I have known very few Islamic workers who have sacrificed their professional career for a higher objective in life: working for the welfare of the *ummah* in a selfless, sincere, and wholesome manner. Dr Jamal was one of such gifted persons, with a capacity to work tirelessly. Dr Jamal's sense of humor even during crises always helped dissolve and resolve any tension.

These days, the new generation of Muslim communities, intellectuals, and academicians in North America think they are

facing unique problems of Islamophobia and racism in the name of secularity and women rights. If they look into the formative phase of development of the Muslim community in the US and Canada, however, they will discover the truth of the matter. As a participant in this process, let me share how ISNA and its leadership including Dr Iqbal Unus, Dr Jamal, and Dr Hisham, Dr Mahmoud Rashdan, myself and others were mentioned in the media. A known newspaper published a story with our names and called us mentors of “extremists” and “fundamentalists.” This is the case not only for Islam, I believe, but for any movement rooted in a moral revival and ethical transformation of society. They have always been considered alien by those who love the status quo and seek to maintain it. I am not at all surprised to see the rise of contemporary white supremacists in the USA. When the headquarters of the Islamic Society of North American (ISNA) was moved to Plainfield, Indiana, a local newspaper reported: “Muslims are coming.” Quite often we found iron spikes spread in the parking lot of the ISNA headquarters meant to puncture the tires of our cars. Such incidents are unsurprising when a gap of communication exists between people of diverse cultures and faith. Dr Jamal and the pioneering leaders at the ISNA headquarters faced all these incidents with patience, understanding, and a welcoming attitude. A series of open houses we organized gradually helped develop mutual understanding and trust between the Muslims and the local community.

Dr Jamal was a symbol of resolution, strategic planning, patience, and team building. May Allah accept all his sincere contributions towards building the now approximately 3.45 million large Muslim community in USA<sup>1</sup> and about 1 plus

---

<sup>1</sup> “United States Population 2022 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs),” accessed November 5, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/united-states-population>.

million Muslim community in Canada,<sup>2</sup> respectively.

## Reference

“Canada Population 2022 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs).”

Accessed November 5, 2022.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/canada-population>.

“United States Population 2022 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs).”

Accessed November 5, 2022.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/united-states-population>.

---

<sup>2</sup> “Canada Population 2022 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs),” accessed November 5, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/canada-population>.

## An Optimist Muslim

Malik Badri

(1932-2021)

(Posthumous article)

I first met our beloved brother Dr Jamal al-Barzinji in England in 1960. He was reading for an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering at the University of Sheffield and I was working on my Ph.D. research at the University of Leicester. We must have also met in one of the Islamic gatherings in Leicester. As was the case in these good old days, we quickly found ourselves intimately attached to each other. I invited him to take lunch with me in my Leicester house. I was living alone, since after the birth of my daughter, my wife had to travel to Sudan in response to the request of our parents who were eager to see our first born baby. So, I prepared a good meal of mutton and cooked vegetables. This was a recipe that I had perfected since it was the only one that I used to cook.

Dr Jamal at that time was a typical staunch Muslim. As soon as I put the food in front of him, he seriously asked me whether the meat was from an Islamically slaughtered animal i.e., *halal* or not. I said that I buy my mutton from any butcher's shop. He angrily and solemnly said that eating this kind of food is *haram*. I



argued that the Holy Qur'an has permitted Muslims to eat the food of the People of the Book (the Jews and the Christians) and I laughingly told him not to be so dogmatic. With a firm looking face, he replied, "If you call me dogmatic, then I will call you too lenient with respect to *sharia* متساهل". I smiled and served him a lunch of boiled eggs, jam, and bread.

The next time I met him was in Indianapolis, USA in 1976. I could not believe that this was the same young man I saw seventeen years earlier. He was a totally changed man; flexible, accommodating, optimistic, and cheerful. His face clearly expressed this great spiritual change in thought and behavior. I reminded him about our Leicester meeting and we laughed together remembering our idealistic youthful enthusiasm. I had come to Indianapolis to read a paper at the annual conference of the American Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS). It was organized by the Muslim Students Association (MSA) of which Dr Jamal was also one of its leading founders. Six years after we met in Indianapolis, he was unanimously elected as the president of AMSS and then he continued to be an active member in its planning and organization committee.

It is really difficult for any obituarist to write about the contributions of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji. They are too many and too diverse to be properly appreciated in a few pages. One can write pages on his scholarly contributions. Furthermore, as an administrator and planner, Dr Jamal excelled in establishing the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT) and served as its general manager. He was also a founding member of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). He worked as its vice president for Research & Publications. Furthermore, his administrative and scholarly contributions as the Dean of the *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS) at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) stand out as evidence for his rare ability to adapt his inborn intellectual

capabilities to new tasks. One of these new tasks is business. While serving as the Dean, he told me in the late nineties that one time he was also selling ice-cream in Morocco! In fact, many economic circles know him more as an Arab-American businessman than a scholar. This diversity shows itself in his published works and his public lectures. They include various topics such as banking, education, Islamic thought, Islamic movements, current affairs, and the problems of the Islamic *Umma*, and also on some of the good aspects of Western civilization.

How did Dr Jamal manage to successfully contribute to such diverse spheres of activities? The main core of these contributions comes from his unwavering faith in Allah, his native brainpower, his self-confidence, and his optimistic attitude to life. This directed him to develop a far-sightedness approach in finding creative solutions in dealing with people and organizations. He also looked cleverly for the most pragmatic and realistic answers to their questions. This holistic and wise style of his led him to abandon trivialities and small things in order to devote his time and energy to major issues: from the limited passionate preoccupations of parties and movements to the strategic issues that benefit the *umma*; from the important hair-splitting arguments of Islamic jurisprudence to the ethical and practical issues of life in our demanding generation.

Dr Jamal's optimism led him to look for the positive aspects in the most dejecting circumstances and in the most divergent and secular cultures such as that of Western modernity. However, though a lenient and forgiving Muslim in his dealings, he did not hesitate to strongly remove obstacles that seriously hampered his long-range Islamic objectives.

May Allah Bless his soul and help the new Muslim generation to learn from his devotion, broadmindedness, and spiritual devoutness.

## **An All-Rounded Person**

Joel L Williams

I cannot say enough good things regarding this man's great character, leadership skills, intelligence and integrity.

I met Dr Barzinji in 1985, as I was an employee of a recently acquired poultry company where he served as Chairman of the Board. My first impression of him was that he was a very tough individual who demanded his employees meet their performance expectations. Over time, as I progressed through the ranks of the company, I developed a better understanding of Dr Barzinji and truly respected him as our leader.

Having high expectations is a good thing. It makes you a better manager and allows you and your team to achieve higher standards of performance than you thought were possible. I am very fortunate to have worked under such leadership that allowed our company to achieve our greatest potential.

Over time, I came to understand Dr Barzinji's personality better. As a leader, one must have high expectations. But on a personal note, Dr Jamal was a fun-loving individual. I went on several trips with him and he truly enjoyed life. No matter what the adventure, be it go carts or mountain climbing, he wanted to

AN ALL-ROUNDED PERSON

participate in it to the fullest.

This man taught me that a family atmosphere in the workplace is how you become successful. The employee-family relationship is highly important, since you become joyous together, share grief with one another, and lift each other up to help each other attain the level of expected performance—as opposed to just demanding it.

I genuinely loved this man in life. I have wonderful memories with him, and still have the highest respect for his legacy.

## A Diplomatic—Professional Manager

Mahmoud Mohamed

I had a fortune to know the late Dr Jamal al-Barzinji for over thirty years. I found him to be a tough negotiator, kind, truthful, principled, and curious. For example, in managing the poultry business of our firm Mar-Jac Poultry in Gainesville, Georgia, USA, he went to great lengths to learn as much about the industry as possible. He would visit our many facilities—hatcheries, farms, feed mills, and processing plants—and ask critical questions based on his observations. For instance, many times he would climb to the tops of the feed mill to gain a better understanding of the operation. His hunger for this knowledge meant that future business planning was based on facts and data for the benefit of the business and its employees.

Dr Jamal was also willing to take courageous risks, which might cause others to hesitate. And more importantly, he did so based on his convictions and values. At other times, his colleagues would engage him to help in solving sensitive matters, because he could handle them with diplomacy and professionalism.

Dr Jamal's impact on me was immense. Even after working together for thirty years, at the time of my retirement from Mar-Jac Poultry, he personally appointed me to continue to serve on its

Board of Directors. I was touched by his recognition of my contributions to the company and his continued confidence in me.

No doubt the Muslim *Umma* has lost a great leader. May Allah reward him in the highest place in *Janna*.

## Partners in Cooperation

M. Omar Ashraf

It was May 1986 and I had made my way to a small town called Herndon, located in Northern Virginia. I was there to interview for a project manager position with Saar Foundation. Little did I know that this interview and the people that I met that day, Dr M. Yaqub Mirza and Dr Jamal Barzinji, would have such a profound effect on me personally and professionally. For the next 30 years I directly reported to Dr Mirza, and worked very closely with Dr Jamal Barzinji.

During my early years, I oversaw the agro-industrial companies in the investment portfolio of the group. Later while serving as the Executive Vice President of Mar-Jac Poultry, which was the largest company in the investment portfolio, I worked very closely with Dr Jamal when he was the Chairman of the Board. Dr Jamal was an avid reader and always overprepared for the board meetings and he would ask questions that were least expected by the management. During visits to the production facilities (processing plant, hatchery, and feed mill) he would quiz the department-level supervisors about operations and challenged the management to be creative. He believed that if management paid attention to minor items, they would definitely attend to the

important ones to increase operational efficiency and maximize profit.

It was in traveling with Dr Jamal many times over the years that I got the opportunity to connect with him on a more personal and religious level. He was a deep believer in education. Achieving both secular and religious Islamic knowledge. He believed in religious moderation, meaning one should neither be too conservative nor too liberal in his or her religious views. He was deeply committed to improving education in Muslim countries. Dr Jamal knew that with proper education these populaces could overcome their challenges and develop into successful Muslim nations. Under his leadership, IIIT (International Institute of Islamic Thought) developed curricula for various levels of education, and especially higher education reform, and reached out to many Muslim countries for their adoption.

Even though Dr Jamal did not have formal schooling in religious education, he had passion and thirst for knowledge. This passion led him to consuming vast amounts of books on Islamic literature, history, and culture. His father was a renowned Islamic Scholar in Iraq and he once mentioned that he read almost all the books in his father's library. He was so knowledgeable about the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (traditions) of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, that he was often seen as the go to person when seeking answers around religious questions. At ADAMS Center he had a weekly class for a number of years teaching how to properly read the Qur'an and its (*fiqh*) understanding. I attended his class many times. He advised ADAMS to engage in interfaith work with other faith communities, especially Christians and Jews, for common good in the society. No doubt in part as a result of his encouragement, ADAMS established the Interfaith Committee and joined the Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Washington. ADAMS today remains strongly committed to building interfaith dialogue and working with others in building a better community for everyone.



The Muslim population in the United States started to rapidly grow during the 1990s. With this increase in population came new attention to the community that was not always positive especially as our nation has a checkered history in its treatment of minority groups. Extremist groups and organizations were controlling the narrative of how Muslims were seen, with the media displaying disproportionately negative views about Muslims in America. Dr Jamal along with other Muslim-American leaders and their intuitive thinking believed that we as Muslims should be relevant in the American society and protect our rights. To achieve this objective, we should register to vote and have civic engagement with political parties and candidates running for office. Dr Jamal helped organize the American Muslim Council based in Washington, D.C. to educate Muslims about the civic process, promote voter registration, and reach out to elected officials in the U.S. Congress and states where the Muslim population was growing. After the horrific incident of 9/11 in 2001, media and conservative interest groups became even more vocal and aggressive against Muslims, their businesses, and institutions. So, it became not just more important, but also immediately necessary to engage with elected and government officials and reach out to interfaith groups and the media.

I was fortunate to serve as an elected trustee for ADAMS from 2001-2011 and from 2005-2011 served as the Chair of the Board. These were tumultuous times for American Muslims as the events of 9/11 had cast the majority of American Muslims in a negative light due to the actions of a few repulsive extremists and their wicked ideologies. The guidance and suggestion of Dr Jamal and other Muslim leaders in the community encouraged ADAMS to become active in media and government relations as well as civic engagement with our local, state, and nationally elected officials. ADAMS established the Media and Government Relations Committee that serves to educate local media and elected officials

about Islamic values and culture. This committee has made progress in civic engagement and in voter registration efforts. Today, many elected officials and those seeking elected office make ADAMS a regular stop as part of their campaigns. ADAMS regularly holds candidate nights to educate Muslim voters about the position taken by competing candidates and matters that are important to the local Muslim American community.

Muslims are mandated to give out annual *Zakah* (charity to purify wealth) from their income and savings to help those less fortunate, poor, and in need. Business owners are required to do the same from their annual profits, such as Mar-Jac Poultry. I would have regular conversations with Dr Jamal about how Mar-Jac Poultry was performing. We would make *Zakah* payments based on the yearly profits. One year, Dr Jamal asked if we had made a charitable contribution. I informed him since we did not turn a profit this year, we have not made a donation at that time. Dr Jamal advised that we should still proceed with making a charitable contribution, to show our gratitude to Allah (God) and so our business may receive blessings during the upcoming year. Dr Jamal emphasized to me the importance of charitable giving. It really touched me how kind and compassionate Dr Jamal was. I witnessed him to be a generous and giving person. I mentioned to Dr Mirza about this conversation and we made a contribution to FAITH, a local charity organization helping poor, needy and under-privileged in the community.

I still remember the day when Dr Jamal summoned people to a meeting at IIIT, where he informed those in attendance that he had been diagnosed with a rare kind of cancer. While those in the room were shocked and saddened, Dr Jamal was in good spirits and told everyone he was aggressively pursuing treatment with his doctors. During his battle with cancer, Dr Jamal never complained and always showed a strong presence and will.

As the cancer slowly took over, his health began to decline. Even though he was weak, Dr Jamal took the time to record a video encouraging the local Muslim community to donate to the Phase III expansion of the ADAMS Center that was in progress. He emphasized that our mosques and community centers must reflect the greatness of Islamic culture and civilization in its design and functionality. They should be models for the American Muslim community and be relevant to the American Society at large. They should serve the community's needs for Islamic education for our children and youth and must integrate the role of women.

At the ground breaking ceremony for the Phase III expansion, even though Dr Jamal was very weak and frail, he accepted the invitation to be a keynote speaker. He came in a wheelchair to attend the event. Again, in his message he emphasized the need for Islamic education for children, youth, and adults and to have a place and role for women in the community center. Living as a minority in America we must reach out to other faith traditions and make them comfortable. We should participate in civic and political processes. He emphasized to our Imam Magid, that he, as religious leader of the community living as a minority here in multicultural society, needs to work with Fiqh Council of North America to develop opinions on difficult and controversial issues facing Muslims in America. Putting his money where his mouth is, Dr Jamal also personally made a significant financial contribution to complete Phase III expansion of ADAMS Center.

In spite of getting all the best treatments available, his cancer overwhelmed him and he was called back to meet his creator on September 26, 2015. Though Dr Jamal left us, his legacy will be everlasting. He was one of the pioneers to establish many organizations for the Muslim community in the United States. He was not only a strategic thinker and a man with great vision and leadership, but he also had great business acumen. He was

PARTNERS IN COOPERATION

generous and compassionate. It was my honor to know him and work with him.

We pray for Dr Jamal's forgiveness. May Allah ﷻ shower His mercy on his soul and grant him the highest place in *Janat al Firdaus*. May he rest in peace!

## **A Person Blessed with Unique Talent**

Jerry Pete Martin

I first met Dr Jamal Barzinji in June 1985 at my first Board meeting with Mar-Jac Poultry, Inc. As the President and Chairman of the Board, he presided over the meeting and extended me a very warm but professional welcome to the Mar-Jac team. I quickly realized that Dr Barzinji was a strong and dedicated operational-type person who would be very much hands-on with our challenges ahead. He completely won my respect and love that day and it only grew stronger over the remaining years. God blessed me to work under Dr Barzinji's leadership. He was a man of the highest integrity, and one who was blessed with the ability and wisdom to motivate his Board of Directors and the entire Mar-Jac management team. He was a leader who was an expert in delegating authority and helping each individual to achieve goals without misusing his authority in the least. He also had the expertise to keep his team motivated to the highest possible level to produce results that would meet his expectations.

I can remember in the first few years when our operational performance was stretching to reach average. I dreaded the Board meetings, but when we would get started and explain our

challenges, you could feel in your heart his concern and his attentive ear. Regardless of how tough the circumstances were, he always had an attentive ear and an understanding heart. Every individual was especially important to him and he always put others first.

From the very beginning, our performance perpetually improved. We improved at a snail's pace in the beginning, and then we reached the average level we had been striving for. Thanks to almighty God, he yoked our team together and under the leadership of our Chairman of the Board and the Mar-Jac Board of Directors, we were blessed to become a very competitive poultry complex. Dr Barzinji was very generous in sharing God's blessings with all the employees. If you asked him for one, he would give you two, and if you asked for two, he would give you three.

There were always improvements to be made, as well as the need for capital projects to meet these improvements. There was never a time when Dr Barzinji and the Board denied our capital expenditure requests. This was a result of the operations team knowing they had better do the proper due diligence, and if so, Dr Barzinji would lead the Board to an approval decision. He made sure the operations and sales teams were properly equipped to meet our expectations, which was always maximum performance.

Dr Barzinji was blessed with a very unique talent that I always admired. He could look at you and without saying a word, could encourage, motivate and set your ambitions on fire! He and the Board set a bottom-line goal that when accomplished, would allow the Board members and their spouses a trip. The first trip was to Africa, and a few years later, we were in Hawaii.

Now Dr Barzinji enjoyed good, clean fun and he was always active and ready to go. I will always remember an experience he and I had in Honolulu swimming in the Pacific with huge sea

turtles. He was swimming in the middle of two huge turtles and all three of them were coming straight at me. I was determined to be brave and maybe fall in line with them, but when they were about five feet away, I turned and began swimming as fast as I could. In just a second, the turtles came by me. I turned and looked back and Dr Barzinji was laughing himself to death. We had a great time that day. On the same trip, we were swimming off the coast of Maui looking at the beautiful fish and coral reefs. We were approximately 20-30 yards away from the ship when all of a sudden, a 10-12-foot shark came between us and the reefs. We both came up at the same time and raced back to the ship. We made it to the ship unharmed and enjoyed a great time and much laughter that day. That entire trip was so special and will always hold a special place in my heart.

Dr Barzinji was always focused on performance and growth. I remember when Rabobank contacted us about the Marshall Durbin operations, Dr Barzinji was just as excited as we all were about the possibility. He told me in the very beginning to do the proper due diligence and if it was God's will for the acquisition to take place, it would. He was exactly right and Mar-Jac was blessed with the opportunity of growth.

As I look back and reminisce over the past 37 years that I have been blessed to be part of the Mar-Jac team, Dr Jamal Barzinji was not only our boss and Chairman of the Board, but he also became one of my very closest and dearest friends. He was a role model leader and friend. May God continue to bless his precious family, friends, and the Mar-Jac team!

## A Team Player

Douglas Carnes

From the first time I met Dr Barzinji in Virginia as I interviewed for a position with Mar-Jac Poultry, I knew I was in the presence of a wise and brilliant man. He seemed to have a gift for accumulating knowledge on any subject that came before him. This ability also brought Dr Barzinji closer to people in his presence, whether expressing agreement on a discussion or expressing another viewpoint. He was always able to gain favor and respect from those around him.

The team at Mar-Jac quickly learned that Dr Barzinji, as our Chairman of the Board, would challenge us to be better than we ever thought we could be. He always set new goals and new horizons to claim as we worked together as a team to accomplish them. Yet we were never left high-and-dry to meet unreasonable expectations, Dr Barzinji and the Board of Directors always ensured we had all the support and assets needed to accomplish any task he asked of us.

Perhaps the most valuable quality of his character was his ability to communicate and make everyone feel important and essential to accomplish the mission ahead. He made each person not only a vital part of our company, but a vital part of our



community. Most everyone calls this a family, and that's how all of his associates, employees, and Board members conducted themselves. We worked with a passion to succeed together with the inspiration that Dr Barzinji showed us all. We are a great family organization and his leadership and character qualities still guide us in business and our lives together.

My most personal moment with Dr Barzinji was after our last Board of Directors meeting in Mississippi. I told Dr Barzinji how I had always taught every one of my grandchildren about God by taking them to the creek near our home and asking them, "Who made the water? Who made the trees? Who made you? Who made me?" Their response soon after our trips together was, "God did!" As Dr Barzinji and I were parting that day (I did not know it was to be our last day together), Dr Barzinji looked at me and said, "Doug, who made the water?" My response was, "God did!" These were our last words together. We loved Dr Barzinji like family!

PART TWO

## **Leadership Lessons**



## In Gratitude to a Pragmatic, Visionary Leadership of Cooperative Spirit

Heidi Hadsell



A posthumous Honorary Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, was awarded to Dr Jamal Barzinji by the Hartford Seminary (now known as the Hartford International University for Religion and Peace) graduation on May 13, 2016. The degree was received by Dr M. Yaqub Mirza, Sister Suzanne al-Barzinji, Firas al-Barzinji, Dr Mohamed R. Mansoor MD, (holding the Degree plaque) the First Vice Chair of the Hartford Seminary Board and Dr Abubaker Al-Shingieti

Dr Jamal al-Barzinji has a place in my personal pantheon of people I most learned from and enjoyed working with when I was President of Hartford Seminary, now known as Hartford International University for Religion and Peace, (HIU) Hartford, Connecticut, USA. Dr Jamal and his colleagues at the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) also enjoy a place in the institutional pantheon of people and institutions who, in a variety of ways, have made a significant contribution to the ongoing work in, and commitment to graduate education in Islam, to Islamic Chaplaincy, and to peace building at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace.

It was through Dr Ibrahim Abu Rabi that I first met Dr Jamal al-Barzinji. Dr Ibrahim was a professor at the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian Muslim Relations, at what was then known as the Hartford Seminary established in 1833 as a private theological university. Dr Ibrahim was a highly accomplished, widely respected and productive scholar who studied and wrote about Muslim movements around the world. He was also the co-editor of *The Muslim World*, which was founded in 1911, and sponsored by Hartford Seminary since 1938, under the aegis of the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, the country's oldest center for such study, having opened in 1973. Currently, *The Muslim World* journal is edited and published quarterly by the Macdonald Center and Wiley-Blackwell. It is dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of scholarly research on Islam and Muslim societies and on historical and current aspects of Christian-Muslim relations. Dr Ibrahim was deeply committed to serving Muslim communities in North America, and to helping them thrive on North American soil. He was also an important informal interlocutor and guide for me, a Protestant committed to interreligious relations, in many things pertaining to Muslim communities and institutions in the United States and beyond.

Early on in my tenure as President, Dr Ibrahim, who very helpfully guided me in many things connected to our programs in Islam, proposed that he and I take a trip to Herndon, Virginia so that he could introduce me to Dr al-Barzinji and his colleagues at International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). He thought it important that I begin to get to know the folks at IIIT and the work they were doing, especially as it pertained to graduate education in Islam in North America. I readily agreed. I had already heard about IIIT from Dr Ibrahim and others and I was eager to meet and to begin to get to know the people there and to hear firsthand about their work. I was also eager to share with them personally my enthusiasm and that of my colleagues about the quality and importance of the ongoing scholarship and teaching of Islam at the Macdonald Center as well as the promising already very popular new program in Islamic Chaplaincy led by Dr Ingrid Mattson.

Dr Ibrahim made the arrangement with the folks at IIIT, and when we got there, I was immediately impressed by the friendly welcome of the leadership team led by Dr Jamal al-Barzinji. I was also amazed by the wide experiences of each of the people that were part of the leadership team, both in the USA and around the world. Their clear individual and collective commitment to Islam and the work of IIIT was exemplary, as was their clarity of purpose.

Our initial conversations were the beginning of what would become fruitful, generative, and enjoyable cooperation between our two institutions, building on earlier institutional and personal cooperation. The two institutions already knew each other, and thus already knew that they had much to share regarding what each was doing in areas relevant to the other, centered on the teaching and learning of Islam, and the development of Muslim Chaplaincy. And even in that initial conversation, as in many subsequent conversations that followed, we not only shared

interests and information but we also began a discussion about potential ways to cooperate productively and creatively.

Our initial conversations took place not long after 9/11, and therefore at a time in which Muslim—Christian relations were under great pressure in many communities across the USA. It was a time in which Muslim-Christian cooperation was viewed with hostility, or fear, or suspicion, by many of our respective co-religionists.

At such times of high tension between religious communities, it may seem, and in this case, it often did seem to many, counterintuitive (if not downright crazy), to work with, turn to, learn from, people and institutions connected to the very people that significant parts of one's own religious community viewed with high levels of mistrust and hostility. This suspicion would apply especially, it would seem, to institutions charged with identifying and helping train the emerging religious leadership and religious scholarship (both institutional and academic) of that religious tradition of which one was fearful.

Neither of our institutions was captive to this fear and it was in some ways in spite of, but in some ways also very much because of the post 9/11 context in the USA, that Hartford Seminary and IIIT found, building on the foundation of on-going relationships between the institutions, productive, substantive and meaningful ways to learn from and cooperate with each other. We knew it was the right thing to do, both because of our understanding of our own traditions and their teachings (not only because of our institutional histories), but also because we knew that our cooperation was to the benefit of our shared common interest in providing excellent academic education in Islam.

As the head of my institution, in order to best educate and best attract Muslim students to our on-going graduate program in Islam and Muslim-Christian Relations, and to our new program

in Islamic Chaplaincy, which was the first in the nation, I knew I needed not only to know at least some of the primary Islamic institutions and actors that were supporting, shaping and forming the Muslim students who then sought graduate education in Islam in the United States in places like Hartford Seminary; I also needed very much to learn from them personally. And I needed to work with them, along with the institution I served, which was proud to have one of the oldest programs in the study of Islam in North America. Dr Jamal, as head of IIIT, with its commitment to support and to help guide and shape the study of Islam in North America, wanted on his part, as I understood it, and the part of his colleagues, not only to know and support programs and institutions squarely inside the Muslim community, but also in places like Hartford Seminary that were offering academic programs in Islam at the graduate level. And at that time, while so many doors were closed to Muslims, some new possibilities were emerging as well, one of which was the graduate training for those students who sought to become Muslim chaplains from the Hartford Seminary.

The interest and commitment of Dr Jamal in working with us at the Hartford Seminary seemed to me to be the result of what looked like a perfect blend of realism, pragmatism and vision. He saw clearly the various real possibilities, and also the very real roadblocks for Muslim individuals and communities in North America. But neither Dr Jamal's realism nor his pragmatism succeeded to blunt his vision. He was willing to be bold and he could see the substance and promise of new or expanded possibilities for Muslim communities and for Muslim graduate education by working with institutions such as the Hartford Seminary. Dr Jamal did not limit his vision of what could be, to what was there already.

This description of our cooperation is quite abstract. Our cooperation was not abstract. It consisted in concrete actions



some of which included Hartford Seminary students taking courses at IIIT in the summer; professors from Hartford Seminary taking part in seminars, giving lectures, and other activities at IIIT; professors associated with IIIT teaching at Hartford Seminary; participation on the Board of Trustees of Hartford Seminary by a IIIT representative; people in the leadership at IIIT giving public lectures at Hartford Seminary; participation of representatives of both institutions about our work together on panels nationally and internationally. And I also happily remember an exciting soccer match in Turkey which people from both of our institutions attended together after a long day at a conference in Istanbul. Like everyone else in the packed stadium, we never sat down once during the whole match, and Dr Jamal enjoyed it as much as the others of us did.

The conversation and cooperation between our institutions would have been more than enough for each institution to fulfill its respective institutional interests in the graduate education and training of new generations of Muslims in North America. But I would say that in important ways the relationship, the friendship over the years, between Hartford Seminary and IIIT, went beyond cooperation and dialogue for the benefit of each party. Rather, not only were we institutions talking together and finding ways to cooperate for our own institutional ends, but we were also working together to reach common ends.

Our work together implicitly and explicitly modeled for our students and others, the use of the knowledge, experience and the wisdom of our own traditions to lead towards, not away from each other but to work together toward common ends for the good of each religious community separately yes, but also very much to work together toward common ends for our shared common good as well. This work together across our religious lines was a common gift we had to offer for our respective communities, and also for the good of our wider society.

IN GRATITUDE TO A PRAGMATIC, VISIONARY LEADERSHIP ...

I miss my colleague and friend Jamal, as so many others do too. May our memory of him nurture in us the values, the vision, and the wisdom that guided him to serve so many.

## Visionary Leader with A Clear Mission

Louay Safi

To be in the company of a man with a great vision, robust discipline, simple manner, and far-reaching impact was a privilege for the young man I was when I met Dr Jamal al-Barzinji—a rare lifetime opportunity I was blessed with. I have had the privilege of working closely and interacting with Jamal for over a decade, and I am more than glad to share in this article my insights into his life and to shed light on the significant role he played.

I got to know Jamal up close and personal and had the opportunity to learn a great deal from a seasoned man who was determined to pursue a goal larger than life. I met Jamal on several occasions and our roads crossed in many places throughout the American continent prior to our profound cooperation at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). Our close interactions continued upon my return to Washington, D.C. after experiencing the aftershocks of the collision between Dato Anwar Ibrahim, the then the deputy prime minister of Malaysia, and his boss Mahathir Muhammad, the prime minister who decided to sack his overconfident deputy.

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) at the

International Islamic University of Malaysia fell out of favor with the Malaysian government with the fall of Anwar Ibrahim, who brought in to run the University and to develop its unique curricula and programs. For the entire decade between 1994 and 2004, I met and interacted with Jamal on a regular basis, first in the capacity as the deputy director of the office of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in Malaysia, of which he was the director, and later as a colleague working with him to promote the mission of IIIT in Southeast Asia after I assumed the responsibilities as the director of the South Asian office right after Jamal was named the dean of the *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS).<sup>1</sup> This relatively long and personal relationship allowed me to observe and learn from an exceptional leader with great talents and unique character. For this reason, I did not hesitate when my good friend Dr Imtiyaz Yusuf requested me to contribute an article to this volume. I immediately recognized the importance of sharing facets of the life of one of a few persons who has made a lasting impression on my life and outlook.

Jamal al-Barzinji was a man of many passions and interests. He greatly enjoyed the social life and made sure to bring his friends and associates together to bond over the many dinners he hosted at his residence. These were indeed joyous occasions of socializing that were also precious moments engaging in deep conversation about the issues of the moment, and the many challenges that beset modern Islamic scholarship and society. The fact that many who attended those dinners were accomplished scholars in their respective fields made the discussions particularly rich and stimulating to all invitees. Jamal's social skills and genuine interest in people allowed him to shine as a business

---

<sup>1</sup> Now named as the AbdulHamid AbuSulayman *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences as of 2022.

leader, a social reformer, an organizer of a movement, and an institution builder. Being a leader in each of these different but interrelated tracks allowed him to weave these endeavors into a single thread which he, along with those who shared his vision, used to uplift Islamic scholarship at a moment of stagnation in the life of Muslims. His commitment to Islam and to reviving Islamic thought produced the intellectual vision that he, and other members of the IIIT team called the “Islamization of Knowledge.” I personally have had no issue in understanding the implications of this phrase that many others found confusing. The catchphrase was coined by Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman and its meaning was articulated and publicized by Professor Ismail al Faruqi in a booklet first published in 1982 under the same title and was intended to underscore the need to build Islamic learning around Islam’s foundational values and convictions.<sup>2</sup> Yet, for many people, particularly the skeptics, the motto signified an effort to reduce knowledge to a religious domain and exclude non-Muslim contributions. The critique did not dissuade Jamal, however, from embracing the motto that became the hallmark of IIIT during his lifetime, and he moved on to start a new academic journal in Arabic that carried the title of Islamization of Knowledge and became its first editor.<sup>3</sup>

Jamal was an excellent team player, and this quality was crucial for his success in building IIIT to be a world-class academic institution. His core team was made of old and trusted friends, all of whom were people of creativity and action: AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, the official leader of the team, whose Saudi Arabian upbringing and connections provided IIIT the financial support it needed to pursue its lofty goal; Ahmed

---

<sup>2</sup> Ismail R Al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan* (Wyncote, PA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> The journal’s title was changed couple years ago to “Contemporary Islamic Thought.”

Totonji, whose outstanding public relations across the Muslim world were essential for raising funds and maintaining public relations with a large network of scholars and activists; Taha Jabir al-Alwani, who received his higher education degree from al-Azhar University, Cairo and was the only member of the team who had formal Islamic education credentials; and Hisham Altalib, Jamal's closest buddy who invariably took on many editorial and organizational projects. This core group was supplemented with other teams that included especially talented individuals who shared Jamal's vision, including Sayyid M. Syeed, M. Yaqub Mirza, Iqbal Unus, Anwar Ibrahim, Anas Shaikh Ali, and many others. Core group members were all anchored in Jamal's unassuming and personable character, and his compassionate and engaging style of leadership. He was the conduit and a consensus builder in every project, and the one who took full responsibility of translating ideas into action and goals. Jamal could easily elicit the help of those he knew could best implement the project, even to its smallest detail. He trusted people around him and had no difficulties delegating responsibilities to those who worked with him. His approach to organization was that of management by objectives, which gave the members of his team enough leeway to handle the tasks assigned to them. He trusted his colleagues and the teams he put together, and they trusted him in return, knowing that he had their back and they had his unwavering support.

Our friendship and working relationship began in the Summer of 1994 when Jamal arrived in Kuala Lumpur after a persistent effort on the part of AbdulHamid to bring him to lead the newly established *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS). AbdulHamid enlisted the help of Anwar Ibrahim, then deputy prime minister of Malaysia, who was also the president of IIUM, to convince Jamal to leave his many assignments at IIIT headquarters in Herndon, Virginia, and move

to Malaysia. I was then the acting dean of the *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS) and was privy to the decision to have him take over the responsibilities of the *Kulliyah*. I ended up taking over the responsibilities of the office of IIIT, which he headed for a few months after arriving in Malaysia. I was then a fresh Ph.D. graduate, entrusted early in my academic career with the responsibilities of a relatively large *Kulliyah* with just over a hundred faculty and staff members. I welcomed the decision, as I needed time to conduct my academic research. Jamal and I spent considerable time together planning academic activities to engage the faculty and prepare them to handle a novel curriculum designed to advance the University's mission. IIUM's faculty came from two independent streams: *Shari'a* Studies and Liberal Arts. The two streams were seen as independent and unrelated by mainstream academia, and the goal of the *Kulliyah* was to bring synthesis and harmony to otherwise disconnected fields. The disconnection was not only in the curricula of the two streams, but also in the attitudes and perceptions of the faculty members themselves. To complicate things, these two streams over time had developed an antagonistic relationship, due to the cultural polarization in Arab and Muslim societies between "traditional" and "modern" values. The *Shari'a* scholars had little respect for the social sciences and considered them to be a deviation from the traditional education that was historically the foundation of the Muslim societies. Professors of the liberal arts and social sciences shared a similar attitude toward the *Shari'ah* Sciences, as they saw them as outdated remnants of Islamic education, irrelevant to modern times. It was paramount, therefore, to initiate structured discussions among faculty members to reorient them towards the University that was committed to the interdisciplinary mission of the Islamization of Knowledge.

Jamal and I quickly bonded, and our academic collaboration

grew into a friendship and mutual respect. I must credit this closeness to Jamal's attitude and genuine interest in the wellbeing of those who worked with and around him. He was not only interested in nurturing a close relationship between us, but was also keen to help me develop a closer relationship with AbdulHamid and arranged for a meeting at his residence in Kuala Lumpur to allow both of us to get to know each other in a more personal way, away from the office setting. The meeting unfortunately did not change the nature of my relationship with AbdulHamid and our interaction remained formal and business-like. My relationship with AbdulHamid could be characterized as one of mutual respect but had never risen to the deep and personal trust which I experienced working with Jamal. Before receiving his appointment as the new dean of the *Kulliyah*, Jamal asked me to serve as a deputy director at IIIT, which I gladly did. When the time came for Jamal to assume the deanship responsibilities, he asked me to take over the leadership of IIIT office along with the position of the deputy dean of the *Kulliyah*. I gladly obliged but asked him to accept my resignation from the *Kulliyah* responsibilities, which he did.

Leadership is not a position, but a vision, attitude, discipline, and style. If you want to know the real leader in any organization, community, or society, you must search for the epicenter of actions and activities. The *Kulliyah* that was initially led by a couple of deans during AbdulHamid's tenure, prior to Jamal's appointment, was transformed into a new place in no time after Jamal took charge. The first change he made was to enlarge the dean's office from a small room that could hardly accommodate a couple of visitors, into one large room by breaking down a wall between three offices. He wanted to ensure that he could hold frequent meetings with his deputies and the many and frequent visitors from inside and outside the University. Jamal was a resourceful person, and he used the resources of his networks



across the world to recruit new international students and professors. After he assumed his office, the *Kulliyah* quadrupled in size in less than two years and with it the academic activities multiplied.

Jamal's resourcefulness was not limited to his formal assignments, but was inherent to his nature and permeated all his activities. A particular example is from a trip we took together to the Philippines, which highlights this aspect of Jamal's personality. The trip was part of an ongoing program I initiated soon after I was appointed as director of IIIT office. I was able to convince Jamal and Professor Mohd Kamal Hassan, then the deputy rector of IIUM, to join me on this trip. Dr Altaf Hussain, who was then a graduate student at IIUM and staff member of IIIT, and who is currently a faculty member of Howard University in Washington, D.C., was tasked with the logistics. Kamal was reluctant to accept the invitation, as Mindanao was still then a battlefield between the Philippine military and the Muslim rebels who were engaged in an armed struggle for independence. Upon arriving in Manila, we were informed that the Philippines Airlines' flight which was supposed to fly us to Mindanao was delayed, and the earliest next flight was at least twelve hours later. As we took our seats in the terminal discussing whether we should reschedule the visit to Mindanao, Jamal immediately went on a walk with Altaf and returned with four tickets he booked with a small, chartered airline. The new trip included a flight change at a small island in the central region of the Philippines. We took off in a twelve-passenger airplane and arrived at a resort island so small that the runway occupied half of its size. The second plane was even smaller and could only accommodate the four of us, with only one additional seat, next to the pilot, which remained empty. The plane had no navigation equipment, and the pilot used the empty seat next to him to lay down a map which he used to follow the visible terrain to reach our destination. We finally landed shortly

after sunset in a tiny airport that was under repair, and the nightmare Kamal had anticipated when he wanted to decline my invitation unfolded before our eyes. It was nonetheless one of the many memorable adventures I had in Southeast Asia, a fond memory of my travel with Jamal, and a good example of his resourceful spirit and desire to overcome human follies in every challenge he faced.

Jamal was not a scholar of Islam, nor did he have formal training in any field of the liberal arts or social sciences. He was trained as an engineer but decided after moving to the United States in the early sixties to devote himself to advancing social and intellectual reforms in Muslim societies. At that time, he along with AbdulHamid traveled to Philadelphia to meet with Professor Ismail al Faruqi at the Temple University to share their ideas about advancing social and intellectual reforms in Muslim societies. Al Faruqi was inspired by their creative ideas, as he was a well-read intellectual and also well-versed with the literature produced by the Islamic reformers. During his student days, Jamal was involved along with Ahmed Totonji and Hisham Altalib in founding the Muslim Students' Association (MSA), the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). These organizations provided me with the opportunity to grow intellectually and emotionally long before I met their founders. My earliest memories of Jamal's intellectual concerns date back to a conference held at the IIIT headquarters in Herndon, Virginia, right after the first Gulf War. He critically spoke of the state of the disarray into which Muslim societies had fallen. I then saw a fiery man who was not happy with the state of affairs of his beloved "*umma*." This forthright passion was not typical of Jamal, as he often displayed a calm demeanor and impressive self-discipline and self-control. I only witnessed his anger in his critical references to the state of the Muslim

community across the globe. Outside of intellectual debate, I never saw him, not even once, speaking loudly or angrily, or showing agitation or temper. He was always patient and composed and spoke gently and with utmost respect to people around him, regardless of their age or status.

Jamal's resourcefulness and calmness were the hallmark of his leadership. He shunned publicity and media appearances, and always preferred to work in the shadow of others. He was the backbone of numerous Muslim social, intellectual, and human rights organizations throughout the United States and across the world. In many ways and to a great extent, the success of IIIT was his doing. Not only did he spend much of his daily activities around the Institute, and maintained an office within its premises, but he also spent considerable time in overseeing the business ventures that ran first under SAAR and then later Safa Trust. He began to build his capacity to manage financial systems to support academic work at an early stage of his career and worked hard to develop the skills he later used to manage the private funds that allowed IIIT to function in many Muslim capitals. He spent a couple of years early in his life in Switzerland, working with Yousuf Nada to develop his business and investment skills. He came back to the US to establish the SAAR foundation and later the Safa Group. These financial groups were built as a public trust (*waqf*) to support the academic work of IIIT. The strategic planning was crucial for allowing IIIT, and many other Muslim initiatives, to stand on a firm financial foundation that facilitated their work. And to do all that, he worked hard and spent countless hours traveling and working until late in the night. This relentless and unending toil was taxing on him, and he took every opportunity to nap, particularly during conversations that he did not care about. I remember him taking one nap during a contentious conversation I had with a senior director in one of our IIIT meetings. He never liked arguments, particularly

prolonged ones, and would stay away from them, and napping was an effective way to avoid them when they took place!

Jamal's managerial skills and exemplary work ethics came to the fore during the Summer of 2002 when IIIT offices were stormed by federal agents, led by then the treasury department special agent David Kane. Kane had obtained a search warrant from a magistrate in Alexandria, Virginia, claiming that the Safa Group is funding terrorist organizations in the Middle East, and engaged in money laundering and tax evasion. The detailed description of the offenses alleged in the affidavit filed by Kane were pretty gross, including claims that the Safa Group were responsible for operations against foreign governments resulting in violence and destruction of life and property. I was in my office when the federal agents stormed the premises, and I had an altercation with Kane and his agents, as they were attempting to exceed the limits provided in the search warrant they had obtained. After a couple of hours of searching the offices of IIIT, and a dozen other offices belonging to American Muslim organizations, including those of the Fiqh Council of North America, the agents left with dozens of boxes, mostly manuscripts of articles and books under review for publication by IIIT and other related materials. The claims formed a big lie advanced by Kane under the influence of neocon groups, most notably Steve Emerson and Rita Katz of the Investigative Project on Terrorism, a well-known spy agency working against Muslim organizations, particularly those that support the human rights of the Palestinian people.

The Treasury Department's investigation lasted for several years and was taxing on IIIT and Jamal in particular. He immediately put together an excellent defense team and I was privy to many of the meetings it held to deal with the serious allegations. I also became involved in the media campaign to push back against the neocon narrative against American Muslims, as

many of the leaders of IIIT were media shy. The US Treasury Department spent close to \$50 million to investigate Safa Group and IIIT but could not find even a shred of evidence to justify its claims. The raids, despite the wild allegations used to justify them, were simply a fishing expedition to find whatever discrepancies they could gather to use against a Muslim educational organization devoted to advancing Muslim learning. I have no doubts in my mind that Jamal's leadership was essential, as he was the type of leader who would pay attention to every detail to make sure that the organization and the financial trusts he founded were soundly within the confines of the law. After an exhaustive investigation, the United States Treasury Department returned the materials it seized during the raids, and the dozens of computers it confiscated. The latter were useless, as they were handled roughly to forcefully extract the data in them.

The operation was harsh, particularly on the families of the Safa Group, whose homes were raided. Mona Abul-Fadl, the well-known Egyptian scholar, and the wife of the late Taha al-Alwani, was one of those who were impacted by the raids. She was asleep when her home was raided, and she woke up to see the special police force surrounding her bed with their automatic weapons drawn in her face. She could not reconcile herself with the reckless and knee jerk actions of the Treasury Department agents and continued to be bewildered long after the incident. I met her a few months after the raids and could see with my own eyes the extent to which she was shocked and stressed out by the whole episode on the infamous day of March 21, 2002. She died five years later of cancer, and I am personally inclined to link her illness to the trauma she experienced prior to her death. The incident, however, brought out the fighting spirit in her, and she spoke and wrote frequently during her last years.

One of the organizations that Jamal and I shared passion for was the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS). AMSS

maintained an annual meeting that was always organized along with that of the Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers (AMSE). Although Jamal had a doctorate in chemical engineering, his passion was with the Social Sciences, and he attended every conference held by AMSS instead of joining AMSE sessions. Things, however, started to change a bit after I was elected to the office of the president of AMSS and began to move the organization in a slightly different direction. I began to realize upon my return from Malaysia that AMSS meetings were attended by academics and non-academics who were keener on promoting the faith than Islamic scholarship. The quality of the papers presented left a lot to be desired, and young Islamic scholars were absent. My approach was that AMSS must lead and produce new Islamic research, rather than be reduced to a social club and an occasion for reunion of the old guards and the good wishers. I began to place more emphasis on academic/intellectual competence in the conference submissions instead of the emotional appeal to faith and encouraged the participation of non-Muslims who were interested in advancing a serious and non-prejudicial approach to Islamic scholarship and learning. This move attracted a broader academic following and allowed scholars who had had some misgivings about the “Islamization of Knowledge” vision to become a part of the intellectual discourse. The move, evidently, created a schism between the elected leaders of AMSS and the leadership of IIIT, which provided the funding to run the Association. The schism led eventually, several years after I completed my tenure as president, to a complete divorce of AMSS from IIIT. The AMSS leadership was forced to adopt a new name in 2013 and is now known as the “North American Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies.” The split was unfortunate but evidently inevitable to allow the organization to pursue the goal of advancing an evolving Islamic scholarship, and not necessarily a preconceived notions of scholarship in Islam. I

came to know later that the process I initiated was not well received by individuals who favored the old approach. Looking back at the sequence of events that led to my departure from IIIT in 2003, shortly after I completed my tenure as AMSS president, my move to set the Association on the new trajectory might have something to do with my departure.

I made sure when I completed my tenure as AMSS president, that the next president was a leading scholar of Islam in North America, and I lobbied to have Professor Ali Mazrui to take over as the new leader of AMSS, and he did. Mazrui was a brilliant scholar of Islamic and African Studies, and an eloquent speaker with a humorous bent in his public talks. Jamal also maintained a close friendship with Ali Mazrui and admired his scholarship to no lesser degree than I did, and he was keen to invite him to every social or academic event he was involved in. His respect for Muslim scholars was impressive and he made sure that he served them and provided them with the support they needed or required. Another favorite scholar of Jamal was the late Professor Mahmoud Ayoub of the Temple University. Since Mahmoud was visually impaired, Jamal would frequently hold the hand of Mahmoud and guide him to his chair, and he would make sure that Mahmoud was comfortable and well taken care of throughout his visit to IIIT. This was one of the most impressive aspects of Jamal's character. Despite his outstanding achievements and far-reaching influence, he remained well grounded with a healthy dose of humility. Jamal was an unassuming, practical, and compassionate leader who led by example, and not simply by the power of his position and office. I never saw Jamal hesitate in doing the most menial jobs when necessary. I saw him collect the trash left by people after a public function, inspiring others to do the same through his example. Likewise, he never settled for average performance or mediocrity and always demanded and expected excellence, not only in himself but also in the things he

observed around him. He would unfailingly move to straighten a skewed picture frame or a crooked prayer mat. And he was always offended to see scattered shoes at the entrance of IIIT prayer room and would spontaneously pick them up and place them where they belong on the shoe racks, inspiring people around him to help, and giving a practical lesson to those who failed to attain to the simple act of decency and orderly behavior.

My close and formal association with Jamal ended in the spring of 2003 after a brief meeting he presided over, which included three other key members of IIIT leadership, in which he informed me that IIIT was no longer to pay my salary due to the financial squeeze caused by the attorney fees IIIT had to pay to defend itself against the Treasury Department's legal proceedings. He delivered the unpleasant news in his usual calm and friendly demeanor. I was not convinced with the reasons for the decision, but immediately offered to render my written resignation, which I handed over to Jamal the same day. He made sure to comfort me and offer his support to find me a new job. I thanked him and told him I wanted to devote the next few months to the development of the office of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, one of the initiatives Jamal and I supported, and I worked with its founder, Dr Radwan Masmoudi, until it stood on its feet, allowing Radwan to resign from his university post and devote himself to running it. I was by then convinced that the decision to remove me was forced on Jamal by members of IIIT board, even though I had no way to confirm my conviction. Jamal was a team player, and he would not as such go against a formal decision made by the organization. I was sure of that because of his long track record of support throughout my association with him. He promoted my work and nominated me to every program and event involving academic or public presentation and continued to have confidence in my scholarship and capacity to lead when other members of IIIT did not. His track record and our close association and



collaboration in advancing Islamic scholarship was broad and intense, so much so that this article I am writing in his honor does not even scratch its surface. I was quite convinced of his collegial behavior even as he was sharing with me the reasons for letting me go in that eventful meeting. Although I was sad, I was not bitter to see myself thrown out of the organization I devoted myself to, and defended vigorously in public and the media, and before federal agencies during its most trying times. I was confident as I was listening to him that he had done everything he could to dissuade the IIIT board members from moving ahead with that decision.

The end of my formal association with IIIT did not however close the chapter of my friendship with Jamal or any of its leaders, nor was it the end of my collaboration with the Institute and its affiliates. My personal relationship and friendship with Jamal, and the mutual respect we developed over the years, was too strong to be shaken by the trials and tribulations of life. Our association and bond were not about any mutual benefit, but were instead about the meaning of life and our shared commitment to rejuvenating Islamic learning and community. It was a friendship about upholding the spirit of *tawhīd* and the monotheistic principles and values that transform human society across history. It was a friendship made in heaven, and as such was not vulnerable to the tumults of human imperfections and follies. It was indeed a gift from the Most Compassionate and Merciful. I interacted many times with Jamal in the next decade after my formal association with IIIT was dissolved in the most friendly and cooperative ways. And when I was pushed out of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) during difficult and unfortunate times six years later, Jamal stood with me and did his best to inquire about the real reasons for the actions of ISNA's board against me, but to no avail. I was summarily fired from my ISNA position as the director of communication and leadership development during a critical period when I was locked in battle with the Far Right

because of my defense of the American Muslim community after they had misused the Fort Hood massacre in 2009 to implicate the entire American Muslim community in the terrorist attacks. The Far Right used their heavy hitters to influence ten congressmen to write a letter to the Secretary of Defense urging him to prevent me personally, and any other ISNA officials, from visiting facilities under the preview of the Department of Defense. The decision to oust me came as I was fighting back against the Far-Right campaign. Jamal met with then ISNA secretary general to find out the real reasons for ISNA's decision, but he was told to stay out of the situation. The decision came suddenly and unexpectedly, and I spent the year after leaving ISNA working as a senior fellow at the Center of Muslim-Christian Understanding working on the Common Word project, a position that was offered to me by Professor John Esposito, with additional funding offered by IIIT.

When I moved to Doha to join Hamad bin Khalifa University as a professor of Political Science and Islamic Thought in 2011, I continued to meet with Jamal every time I visited the United States. I tried to visit him in the summer of 2014 during a stop in Herndon, where he lived for the better part of his life and where he died. His deteriorating health conditions, however, did not allow me to meet him, and I felt sad that I had to leave the town without having the chance to visit with him for the last time. In less than a year, I received the sad news, along with many of his friends and countless good wishers, of his passing away. Jamal, a restless soul that was devoted to the pleasure of its Creator had completed his journey and finally left this dwindling earth to meet the One in whom he placed his larger-than-life hopes.

I remember telling him jokingly when he entered his seventies that a person who lived for seventy years must be grateful for the long time he was allowed to spend on earth. He agreed with a little smile on his face. Looking back on his life and career, I can say with confidence that during the decade I spent working closely

with him, he had one of the most fulfilling and fruitful life. Every minute I observed and interacted with him, he was busy serving people and causes: reading, writing, meeting, traveling, negotiating, directing, implementing decisions, conducting business, reviewing manuscripts, receiving leaders of Muslim organizations who were seeking guidance and support, and doing all these out of love and deep sense of duty and responsibility.

Farewell my friend! You completed your earthly journey and experienced life with the depth and breadth that very few people could ever have the stamina and determination to do. May you rest in peace, and may we reunite in a better place, high above the fray of this earthly dwelling.

## **Life Lessons Learned from an Exemplary Leader**

Ermin Sinanović and Ahmet Alibašić

There are people whose influence in our lives is far more significant than our time with them. Dr Jamal Barzinji was one of those people for both of us. Even though we did not spend much time with him, his charisma and values have impacted us deeply. For us, he exemplified integrity, hard work, intelligence, constancy, and unwavering commitment.

### **At the International Islamic University Malaysia**

When we were students at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in the 1990s, Dr Jamal Barzinji was the Dean of the *Kulliyyah* (Faculty) of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS) (now renamed as the AbdulHamid AbuSulayman *Kulliyyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHAS KIRKHS)).<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of our

---

<sup>1</sup> “KIRKHS to Be Named AHAS KIRKHS after IIUM Second Rector—International Islamic University Malaysia,” accessed March 4, 2023, <https://www.iium.edu.my/v2/kirkhs-to-be-named-ahas-kirkhs-after-iium-second-rector/>.

studies, it was common for some lecturers and professors at the *Kulliyah* not to have course outlines and syllabi. In such courses, the students would not know the course goals or what to expect throughout the semester. Often, there were no assigned readings other than class notes. The course materials would be improvised and disorganized, photocopied from one book or another, without any apparent logic or arrangement to the material.

Dr Jamal changed all that. He demanded that the professors produce course outlines and identify course readings before the semester started. By the time we graduated, every course had a syllabus and an outline. If there was no textbook, the course materials could be combined and obtained at the campus bookstores and library. The professors were more punctual. The usual Muslim lateness, often 15-20 minutes, was cut down, and the classes began on time. We are sure that it was not only Dr Jamal who was responsible for the change, but that he did in fact have a significant role in bringing about these transformations. Within just a few years, the *Kulliyah* looked much more professional in every aspect, despite the very modest infrastructure in which it was situated back then, as we testified during a recent visit to the Petaling Jaya campus.

As already indicated, we did not interact much with Dr Jamal as students. Once, Ermin needed the Dean's signature to obtain permission to register for extra courses over the usually permitted limit. The students advised him to go to Dr Jamal's deputy, as they thought that Dr Jamal would turn down the request. His reputation among the students was that of a by-the-book administrator who would not be talked into bending the rules. Sure enough, Ermin requested a meeting with the deputy dean, who agreed to sign his request. As a student, Ermin liked that he could avoid dealing with Dr Jamal directly to get the signature he wanted. Later, when he got to know Dr Jamal better, he realized that Dr Jamal would have most likely signed the permission, too,

after hearing his justification. Yes, Jamal was firm, yet reasonable and compassionate.

### **Ermin's Reflections About Working with Dr Jamal at IIIT**

In 2013, I joined the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) at its Herndon office. When Jamal interviewed me for the position of Director of Research and Academic Programs, he asked me about my publication plans. I said that an article a year sounds reasonable. He asked, "Why only one?" He always held people to a higher standard and demanded excellence from them, yet importantly Jamal led by example. One could not but be at his best when around Dr Jamal because he would not accept anything less than that. He would bring out in people untapped qualities they often did not know they possessed.

Once, when we were waiting for him to lead the prayer, he walked in and asked why we did not start on time. My answer was that we were waiting for him. He explained that if he or anyone else was delayed, it was more important that we begin the prayer on time. He asked me to lead the prayers from then on. He delegated responsibility to people he trusted.

I had another similar experience concerning the evaluation of publications awaiting to be published by IIIT. He respected my opinions and would often accept them without question. When, one time, I waited for his response regarding a manuscript, he told me that if I was confident about the quality of a manuscript, I could proceed and did not need to wait for his decision. It was more important that the work be done on time. Dr Jamal wanted people to take responsibility for their work and not delay doing what they believed was right.

It was a joy listening to him during academic discussions. His comments were direct but always aimed at improving the presented work. He thought of perspectives and interventions that

nobody else would foresee. Dr Jamal's knowledge was encyclopedic. Many commented on him being the Dean of Islamic Studies, although he was a chemical engineer by training. Yet, it took only a few minutes of listening to Jamal to realize that he was well-versed in many areas of Islamic religious sciences of the Qur'an, *Qira'āt*, *Tajwīd*, and *Sunna*. He could talk about these topics in a specialized manner, referencing both classical and contemporary works in these areas. Dr Jamal was a prime example of a life-long pursuit of knowledge and excellence.

During his illness, he would invite me to his home for consultations or telephone me to discuss various issues. In one such meeting at his home, he asked me to present future research plans for IIIT. After my presentation, he told those present, "Your role is to help Ermin fulfill these plans." Things at IIIT took a different turn after he departed from this world. But I felt a deep sense of gratitude because of his endorsement. Even though he was constantly busy, Dr Jamal always had a forward-looking perspective. He anticipated new developments and always inquired what we should do going forward. He possessed a clear sense of vision and a future-oriented outlook.

### **Ahmet's Reflections on Experiences with Jamal**

Few people impressed me in my adult life the way Dr Jamal did. As we grow more experienced, we come to realize the truth of the saying that "the difference between great men and great mountains is that great mountains get bigger as we near them while the great men get smaller." Yet this was not the case with Dr Jamal—the better I came to know him, the greater my respect for him grew. My impression was not from some sort of vague, indescribable, subjective charisma, but on the contrary, I can pin down his personal qualities which made a deep impression on me. First was his integrity. Without going into detail, suffice it to say

that Dr Jamal passed the test of integrity where it matters most: when the interests of his family and children were at stake. Many people easily pass the test of personal integrity, but fail when their children enter the scene. Dr Jamal never succumbed to such pressures. In that sense, he constantly reminds me of the caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (634-644 CE)—the second of the *al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn*, the second of the first four caliphs of the Islamic community.

Another quality which has made a lasting impression on me is Dr Jamal’s forbearance in the face of many tribulations, which would easily discourage most people, but not him. He could not return to his homeland of Iraq after departing from it to pursue further studies first in the UK and next the USA. His adoptive country, the USA, unjustly harassed him and made his travel for medical reasons, including domestic travel, mentally and physically exhausting. I watched him go through arduous medical treatment while continuing to care about public affairs and the well-being of other people. I was there when he, already exhausted by his illness, received the news of the sudden death of his son. His calm reaction as he prepared to head back to the United States left me and others speechless. His responses to other tests of life were no less impressive.

Dr Jamal was an inquisitive personality, willing to learn about anything and everything and benefit from others’ vast knowledge and experience. His restless soul would not accept “no” easily. I vividly remember his request to me to solve the problem of sliding papers from tables at the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo lecture hall during a 2010 conference. I realized there was no quick fix, but he hesitantly accepted that we could not do anything about it on the spot. I am glad to report that the problem was fixed when the hall was renovated years later. Many assumed that Dr Jamal was a man of very strong personal opinions. And many others were surprised to learn how much consultation,



questioning attentiveness, and respect for different views he devoted before making up his mind. He was an authoritative person but not an erratic or arbitrary authoritarian, though I understand that many people would rather avoid dealing with him out of fear of his strict adherence to institutional policy.

Another reason I held him in deep respect was his frankness and honesty. To cite one example, I had an impression that he very much appreciated my work. However, when somebody suggested that I be given a certain role in the publication production of the IIIT publications in the Bosnian language, he did not hesitate to tell me and others that, in his opinion, I was not yet ready for it. At that moment, I respected his view because I knew that his assessment of my work was honest.

Finally, this section would have been much longer and richer had I managed to spend the final days with Jamal, as he requested. Out of concern for his wellbeing, I hesitated, which I regret until today. However, I find solace in the hope that we will meet again in the shade of *'Arsh al-Rahmān*—the heaven of the Merciful.

In everything he did, Dr Jamal led by example. He would serve food at this home during joint meals. He would clean up without expecting that someone else would do it. No task was too small. His life is a lesson in leadership in every area of life.

The main lessons we learned from Dr Jamal were:

1. Be firm, but reasonable and compassionate
2. Hold people to a higher standard and demand excellence
3. Delegate responsibility to the trustworthy people
4. Take responsibility for your work, and do not delay doing what is right
5. Pursue knowledge and excellence as a life-long effort
6. Have a clear sense of vision and be future-oriented

Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān (d. 655) a companion of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ narrated a *hadith* transmitted in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, in which he likened *Sayyidina* ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to a door that will be broken. Implying that things will never be the same after him, and the gates of afflictions (*fītan*) will be open. After Dr Jamal left this world, we had a feeling, which we shared with a few friends, that his departure from our community and our institution felt like a departure of *Sayyidina* ‘Umar. Indeed, the door that was broken has not yet been mended.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, volume 9, book 88, number 216.



PART THREE

## **Historical Context and Academic Contributions**



## **Lasting Contributions to The Academic Study of Islam**

Abdulaziz Sachedina

Dr Jamal al-Barzinji was a dedicated Muslim intellectual and educator. Islam for him was an activist ideology that demanded involved commitment to improve society materially, as well as intellectually, to shoulder greater responsibilities towards all of humanity. His life was exemplary. His humility matched his brilliance in formulating Islamic teachings in the modern context of American society. His activism was contagious, influencing one and all who knew him. The founding members of International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) were a group of forward-looking Muslim intellectuals who wanted to found a center of excellence in educational research and Islamic thought whose main interest would be to carry out long term reforms in Muslim Societies and the dissemination of this research through publication and translation, teaching, policy recommendations, and strategic engagements. The Institute was established as a non-profit organization in America in 1981.

From its inception, IIIT was to remain a democratic organization committed to improving the political and social

outlook among culturally diverse Muslim communities in North America and around the world under the collective leadership of Dr Barzinji that included his colleagues: Dr Ismail Faruqi (d. 1986), Dr Abdul Hamid AbuSulayman (d. 2021), and Dr M. Yaqub Mirza. The group shared a vision of making Islam a relevant philosophy and a fundamental source of human nobility for the financial and intellectual advancement for Muslim communities in North America. IIIT and the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) undertook the “Islamization” of a social scientific approach: bringing Islamic Studies in the public arena of the modern secular academic environment of North America. Dr AbuSulayman, who was internationally renowned educationist, reform thinker, and author of a number of important books, was dedicated to the idea that the concept of worship of God (*ibadat*) was inclusive of all human activity that benefits the wellbeing of the totality of God’s creation. He was Chairman of IIIT and was the Founding President of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) between 1989 and 1999.

One of the closest working colleagues of Dr Barzinji was Dr M. Yaqub Mirza, with a PhD in Physics. He was a co-founder of the IIIT and trustee (1984-2003) of the mutual fund that operates in accordance with Islamic financial principles. His management of the financial wellbeing of IIIT was crucial to the implementation of several projects that were defined by Dr Barzinji and his team. Dr Mirza has served as the President and CEO of Sterling Management Group, Inc. (SMG) that guaranteed the smooth and legitimate running of IIIT. Dr Barzinji trusted and relied upon the integrity of Dr Mirza to establish the legally and spiritually sound financial foundation of IIIT.

To be sure, Dr Barzinji’s major objective remained persistent throughout his life as an educator. His lifelong purpose was to prepare modern educated Muslims to assume greater

responsibility for their transformation as citizens of modern nation states with solid grounding in the universal moral and spiritual teachings of Islam. The unique aspect of his vision for the *umma* was encapsulated in his emphasis on the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center in Virginia that served as a spiritual and moral auxiliary of college education about Islam. His intellectualism was combined with the religious/spiritual personal piety and practice that saw the future of the community in teaching the activist aspects of Islamic tradition. The ADAMS Center became the testing ground for the inclusive vision that Dr Barzinji sought to be applied across North America. It was the critical moment in history to think about ways of keeping the youth interested and committed to their religious faith.

The 1970s in the history of the Muslim community in the West will be remembered as the period that changed the destiny of the Muslims forever. Islamic tradition was in competition with a number of modern ideologies that included secular and religious agendas for the placement of the community in the unfamiliar terrain of anti-religious and anti-traditionalist stress of modernity. The challenge was to accommodate one's religious life (whatever was left of it) in the non-believing, at times, hostile environment of the secular age. Understandably, the traditional approach to the basic information about Islam was superficially understood or practiced in the community. The forces of modernity were at work to destroy whatever was left of the inherited Islam of the 'pious elders,' with no grounding in rational or logical elaboration of essential Islamic principles. The youth were abandoning the religion of their ancestors, not because they were opposed to it, but the main reason, as it gradually became clear, was the inability of the inherited tradition to persuade the questioning minds of the young Muslims. Comparatively, whereas the elementary and secondary secular education was based on critical processing of the information, "Sunday School" Islam was spoon-fed, and that



also, without any encouragement to question inherited cultural-cum-religious practices.

The most important event of the late 1970s that changed the way religion was studied academically was the Islamic Revolution of Iran in '78-'79. The event challenged the dominant social science paradigm in the Western studies of religion as a whole, and Islam in particular. It was common among Western scholars of Islam to interpret the incongruities of Islam as “anti-modern” and as an ideology that was the main cause of “backwardness” of Muslim peoples with consequences for their social and political development. The appearance of Ayatollah Khomeini—a ‘cleric’, as the political-religious leader of the revolution to overthrow the Shah—was in contradiction to the well-argued social science thesis about political change in traditional societies that would take place under the leadership of modern, educated, secular Muslims. It was asserted time and again that Middle Eastern countries needed to set aside their dream of tradition-based Islam of the seminaries which was premodern and least relevant for the modern nation state. This paradigm shift in Islamic politics was so unconventional that the sociology of religion dealing with leadership and followership had to forge new categories or adopt fundamentalist Christian terminology to explain the sudden change spearheaded by a traditionalist Muslim ‘cleric.’ The adoption of ‘fundamentalism,’ ‘Islamic awakening,’ or ‘revivalism’ in the Muslim world since the 1970s was one of the favorite academic or journalistic designation for Muslim ‘militant’ ideologies that was interpreted as anti-modern and anti-secular. The designation of Islam as a “threat” to democracy and human rights was gaining notoriety, and almost regarded as a major threat to Western national and international interests. By the time the major political crises occurred in the Middle East countries in the late 1970s, the search for Islam as a bastion of traditional values was replaced and augmented by ‘political Islam.’

A cursory look at the books and articles published in 1970s and 1980s demonstrates the point that the epistemological chaos in social sciences led to the predicament of interpretation of the new religiosity that was branded as 'irrational' (read: anti-Western) and against 'modernity' and 'secularism'—the two sociopolitical toolkits for unraveling change in Muslim world. The final characterization of the 'political Islam' as equally problematic conceptual innovation, namely, 'Islamism' hardly conveyed anything religiously conceivable in what was unfolding in the Muslim world among the newly and relatively 'liberated' peoples from the yoke of their inapt post-colonial governments protected by the Western supplied nuclear arsenal. All the talk about human rights and democratization under the aegis of international law and international relations quickly became self-contradictory when the political hypocrisy of the North failed to demand and deliver improvement of the downtrodden population of the oil rich OPEC countries under their autocratic rulers. The support of Iraq under Saddam was a blatant repudiation of all the political values that the West prided itself with.

The half century from the 1970s will go down in history as a wasted opportunity to change the human condition globally. Contemporary conditions across the Middle East and North Africa have reinforced the double standards of the world powers that have not been able to improve a singularly unjust treatment of the Palestinians in the Middle East. The contemporary political scene calls into question and repudiates the real impact of the modernization and secularization whose beneficiaries have been the upper class, mostly Western-educated and corrupt rulers and bureaucrats in the Muslim world. The unremitting litmus test still remains the endless violation of human rights of the people that need to be defended by the sovereign states of the region.

### **The Academic Study of Islam Since the 1970s**

The most perplexing aspect of the introduction of Islam in the curricula of religious studies in colleges in the '70s and '80s was the attribution of deficiencies, whether real or imagined, that were noted in the secular western definitions of religion and applied across to all 'non-Western' religious traditions, including Islam. This Western conceptualization of religion led to the deliberate disqualification of the study of Islam as having its own scriptural and theological resources to speak for itself. Whereas Christianity and Judaism were academically researched by the culturally sympathetic Christian and Jewish scholars, respectively, Islam was represented by anyone who had a doctorate from a well-established program in Near Eastern or historical and political studies. Much of what was said or taught about Islam was determined by hegemonic politics and the epistemology of the West. The extent to which Islamic Studies in academia was treated differently became obvious to me in job interviews in the '70s and '80s when I was typically asked if I believed the Qur'an was the word of God. In the early days of my job search, the question did not appear to me to be anything more than a probe into my personal belief (even though improper). And, although I did not object to it, when such a question became part of my job application and interview, it dawned upon me that the question was not neutral; it was supposed to alert me that probably in keeping with the "rigors of academic study" of religion I could not be a believer and a scholar of Islam at the same time. In fact, my candidacy to teach Islamic Studies was scrutinized meticulously to impede me from assuming an academic position to do the *da'wa* (preaching to convert non-Muslims)<sup>1</sup> without first forsaking my

---

<sup>1</sup> Recently, I have been made aware that some of the "believing" Muslims are engaged in recruiting converts through *da'wa*. With my experience of almost half a century with religious studies, I discovered that a number of teachers in religious studies had a 'confessional' attitude toward their

membership in the community to assure my objectivity in dealing with my own tradition.

As an academic discipline, Islamic Studies was represented by the academic circles that were laboring under modern and secular pre-understandings about religion and politically saturated Muslim cultures and societies. Although the studies in the language and civilizations of the Islam were essentially textual, the philological-lexical part of the Near Eastern studies, their treatment under linguistic and literary methods had an academically different agenda. Ideologically this approach was informed by political “Orientalism” that scrutinized the textual resources of the classical age to draw critical conclusions about the contemporary Muslims’ political and social development under a system that collated religion and politics, not unlike medieval Christianity. Whereas Christianity became thoroughly modernized and secularized under the impact of the Enlightenment, according to this approach, Islam awaited its reformer(s) to usher in the transformation of Muslim societies under modernization through secularization—essentially privatization of religion and limiting its access to public space. The latter innovative approach was to spearhead a continuous struggle to devalue and define Islam as a “political” religion, deficient in what defined the authentic part of Western studies of, for instance, Christianity, or Eastern traditions like Buddhism and Hinduism. “History of Religion” was coined as a dominant methodology to deal with non-Western ‘deficient’ traditions like Islam that was critically in need of separating Islam from theocratic ‘distortions’ introduced by the Irano-Semitic political cultural traditions.

---

students, whom they wished to be converted to their respective traditions, including Tibetan Buddhism. It is quite ironic that making these students confessional ‘atheists’ was never an issue; only the opposite was against the secularity of the discipline.

### **Dr Jamal al-Barzinji's Intellectual Legacy**

The establishment of IIIT as an institution to represent the research and teaching of Islam as a religious, social-political, and philosophical tradition was a major undertaking when the Muslim world was embroiled in major political changes across the Middle East. The Institute introduced an innovative approach of bringing together senior Muslim scholars in academia and patronizing them to afford academic credibility to the Institute that claimed academic neutrality in dealing with primary sources of classical Islam (9th-11th centuries). The prevalent thesis in secular universities that one had to abandon one's connection to the faith community was set aside, and the fresh approach to juridical methodology and critical textual studies was undertaken by a few scholars who saw the need to attract academics and their modern approaches to the study of religion in general. For instance, the *maqasid* methodology became the catch phrase for reformist agenda, when *ijtihad*, based on interpretive jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) was legitimized by IIIT under the scholarly production of Dr Taha Jabir al-Alwani, the major architect of innovative and extensive methodology founded firmly on authoritative textual hermeneutics. The support to this judicious project of *maqasid*-based jurisprudence was Dr Barzinji's vision of socially active Islam that could find a legitimate voice in IIIT. The inclusiveness of the project was underscored by including Dr Mahmoud Ayoub, a theologian and exegete of the Qur'an, and Dr Ali Mazrui, a prominent historian of Africa. Behind this innovative approach was none other than Dr Barzinji. I still remember his aspiration to attract all young scholars of Islamic history, politics, and tradition to IIIT, encouraging them to contribute their scholarship to the advancement of the academic and religious goals of IIIT. By including among its publications serious works promulgated by al-Shatibi and other prominent legal scholars of Islamic religious law, Dr Barzinji demonstrated his openness to assemble scholars

from different disciplines and schools of thought at the Institute. It was rare to see the coming together of different minds and approaches. He welcomed new thought and methodology to inspire illustrious upcoming doctoral students to make a commitment to advance moral excellence and practice in the community.

### **Epilogue: Wither Reform?**

Like any human institution, its survival for generations to come depends upon the transformation of the founders' initial creation to a thriving institution that nurtures the future generation of scholars and practitioners. When Dr Alwani died in 2016 the Institute mourned its intellectual pillar and there were some concerns as to who could take his place. Dr Barzinji had a keen sense of the need for an intellectual center at IIIT for its continuation in future. A similar situation had arisen when Dr Ismail al Faruqi was murdered in 1986. He was the brain behind the project that had become known as "Islamization of Knowledge." For Dr Barzinji to assume the intellectual leadership of the Institute was a challenging issue since he was not a well-established scholar of Islam. His connection with Islam was his personal life and aspiration about Islam's future in the West. He tirelessly traveled and oversaw different branches of IIIT internationally, guiding them and setting their educational agenda. With his illness, he became aware of the impending urgency about finding a capable person to lead the Institute. His conversations during his last days in 2015 were obviously contemplating on the continuation of his mission for the community. His wide and extensive experience with Muslim youths and communities around North America made it clear to him that there was a need to continue the scholarly and community outreach and leadership that IIIT had provided since 1981. Nevertheless, he was also aware that he did not have a

natural heir to continue the work. His noble goals were shelved as soon as he passed away and the next generation of those who headed IIIT were not scholars or administrators who could steer the Institute to become the hub of intellectual and reformist Islam. The mission that the collective leadership had provided in the 1980s required a keen interest in furthering the objectives of the IIIT that had communal interests as its main focus. Abandonment of that had a direct negative impact on Islam as a practiced tradition and IIIT as a medium through which true Islamic identity and practice were to continue through their educational programs. The ADAMS Center, where I met Dr Barzinji for the last time, will always stand out as the major objective for the establishment of IIIT as the intellectual nucleus of Islam and modernization. The question that drove IIIT through different challenges of conceiving its exemplary leadership and role for the community revolved around a most urgent question for educated Muslims and their families: “How do we live as Muslim Americans today?”

The entire project of IIIT can be summed up by what Dr Barzinji reiterated time and again: As long as the community remains indifferent to the next generation’s moral and spiritual needs, we will have failed to meet our social and political obligations for the future of the world. What made Islam a viable tradition was its message to preserve human dignity and moral agency at all times.

Many of us were recruited as senior scholars and we participated with a clear commitment in this vision of socially relevant Islam as long as Dr Barzinji was alive. The moment he closed his eyes to meet with his Lord, IIIT terminated its most important experimentation with community and intellectual wealth that had been deposited in its publications and libraries. This severance of connection to the “pillars” of the Institute’s vision and practice, has created not only an intellectual lacuna but

also moral-spiritual void that was the main identification of the collective leadership of IIIT. A new period of reformation begs the critical question: For whom? The founders and the funders of IIIT were realistic in their approach to education of the youths and knew the limitations imposed by the natural fact of the temporality of their sojourn on earth. IIIT today has the moral duty of continuing the vision nurtured by its highly visible past and move forward.



## ***Maqāṣid* as a Strategic Project for the Muslim *Umma***

Jasser Auda

### **Introduction**

This essay is a narrative of my journey with one of the strategic assets of the Muslim *Umma* and our *Ustadh*, Dr Jamal Barzinji (Allah bless his soul) starting from hearing about the Islamic work he did in the eighties of the previous century, up until I worked with him on a number of strategic intellectual projects during the last decade of his blessed life. I will specifically discuss the following projects: International Institute of Islamic Thought's (IIIT) *Maqāṣid* Publication Series project, the International Peace College South Africa Graduate School, and the Maqasid Institute. I will also explain how his legacy continues in a number of ways.

“To Allah we belong and to Him we return. The Muslim *Umma* lost this morning one of its strategic assets, visionaries, leaders and pioneers, Dr Jamal Barzinji, President of the International Institute of Islamic Thought, and a dear brother and mentor”. This was the opening statement of the obituary that I wrote on the day we and the Muslim *Umma* lost Dr Jamal

Barzinji, on September 26, 2015. The Muslim *Umma*, to me and to Muslim leaders of Islamic thought and action like Dr Jamal, is not made up of “countries”, nations, races, or tribes, but rather it is made up of all the followers of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and all the other Prophets of Allah, worldwide, and in every era. It is true that Dr Jamal during his life was identified with the Kurdish, Arab, Iraqi, American, and other labels, lived in several countries and traveled all over the world, yet I observed that he identified himself, first and foremost, as a Muslim.

However, Dr Jamal Barzinji was not just a regular kind of a Muslim; he was one of the rare Muslims who carried the burden of working, and more importantly strategizing, for the Muslim *Umma*. There are so many Muslim strategists in every government, company, and organization all over the world, however, very few of them—if any—take the role and responsibility of strategizing for the Muslim community (*Umma*) wherever it exists around the world. Still fewer invest their lives for the promotion of an Islamic ethos. For Dr Jamal, the Muslim “community” was not an isolated Muslim majority or minority population anywhere, including the United States where he ended up living. But rather, Dr Jamal recognized the global community of Believers in the Truth from all backgrounds and walks of life, i.e., the Qur’anic Arabic concept of the “*Umma*.” Allah says in the Qur’an, 21:92:

*“Truly this community (Umma) of yours is one, and I am your Lord; so, worship Me.”*

I have also witnessed how Dr Jamal naturally and smoothly included all humanity in the scope of his good-will and hard work, and how he believed that any good that Muslims do in the world is for the best interest of the whole humanity. In all of these senses, Dr Jamal Barzinji, was a strategic asset for the *Umma* and humanity: a visionary, leader, and pioneer whom we lost.

Amongst the countless blessings of Allah Almighty in my life is that I had the chance to meet, learn from, and work with a number of Muslim scholars and leaders from the generation that preceded me in loving and serving Islam, including Dr Jamal. I first knew of him through a lecture that discussed the scope of the “Islamization of Knowledge” project, delivered by our late teacher, Shaykh Muhammad Al-Ghazali, which he later published in Cairo—back in the eighties of the previous century.<sup>1</sup> Shaykh Al-Ghazali explained to us that the Islamization of Knowledge call is not a movement *against* contemporary sciences, but rather an attempt to *correct* the mistakes that some philosophers, scientists, and historians made in understanding humans, life, and history—especially the history of Islam.<sup>2</sup> These mistakes, the Shaykh explained, should be corrected by the Revelation, i.e. the Qur’an, and consequently Muslims should build on the foundations of contemporary human achievements in all facets of knowledge and not deny their merit.

The introduction of the idea of “Islamization” by the late Shaykh Al-Ghazali in these lectures and later books that he published with IIIT<sup>3</sup> mended a gap that I personally felt at that time as a university student between the traditional Islamic knowledge that I was learning in the study circles of Al-Azhar Mosque, and “secular sciences” that I was also learning at the same time in Cairo University. I was looking for an intellectual project that could resolve the dissonance between these two intellectual worlds which I was living in: religious and worldly, old and new, Islamic and non-Islamic, the East and the West, etc., and I thought that I found an answer in the “Islamization” project that

---

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Al-Haqq Al-Murr* (The Bitter Truth), first published in 1988 by Dar Al-Shuruq, Cairo.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. vol. 4, 1992, “*Islamiyyat al-Ma’rifah*”.

<sup>3</sup> For example, *Kayfa nata’amal ma’a al-Qur’an al-Karīm* (How do we deal with the Blessed Qur’an?), International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1991.

our Shaykh was talking about. This made me go and research the project and the institute that was promoting it i.e., The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).

It was the start of a studentship with a number of scholars—who were contributing to the IIIT Arabic publications and lecture series—back in the eighties and nineties, including Dr Taha Al-Alwani, Dr Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, Dr Muhammad Emara, Dr Muhammad Kamal Imam, Dr Mona Abul-Fadl, in addition to IIIT’s co-founder Dr Ismail al Faruqi. Over the years, I started to learn more about the other co-founders of IIIT, in addition to Dr Faruqi and Dr Al-Alwani, namely, Dr Jamal Barzinji, Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Dr Hisham Altalib, and Dr Ahmed Totonji. When I immigrated to Canada in the early nineties and got involved in the leadership of the Muslim Students Association of the United States and Canada (MSA), I learnt that members of the same group have founded the MSA and several other key Western Muslim organizations as well. As I became more active within Western Muslim movements and organizations in the US, Canada, and the UK, I became more interested in IIIT and its scholarship, which ended up being a major resource for my Masters and Ph.D. theses in Islamic law that I wrote afterwards.

I followed the projects, writings, and lectures of the IIIT founders and scholars, including Dr Jamal Barzinji, throughout the nineties and 2000s. However, I did not have the honor of meeting Dr Jamal one-on-one until 2005. At that time, I was living in London, UK, directing a new research center under Al-Furqan Foundation, which was called, Al-Maqāṣid Research Center in the Philosophy of Islamic Law,<sup>4</sup> and I had published my first book,

---

<sup>4</sup> Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation is a London-based non-profit institution which is primarily concerned with promoting, “the study, cataloging, publication, preservation and conservation of Islamic manuscripts throughout the world.” It was founded by the late Shaykh

*Fiqh Al-Maqāṣid (Teleological Jurisprudence)* with IIIT. On one occasion, I learned from IIIT-UK Director, Dr Anas al-Shaikh-Ali, that Dr Jamal Barzinji was going to visit London and I requested to meet with him to discuss a manuscript of a new book.<sup>5</sup> I sent a draft of the beforehand to Dr Jamal.

When we met in London and I gave him a presentation on my new book, Dr Jamal told me, “This is not a book. It is an intellectual project. What are you trying to achieve with it?” I answered: “My objective is to restructure the current understanding of Islam as a way of life via its objectives/*Maqāṣid*.” He said: “But this is a book only on the theory of the Islamic law”. I answered: “This book is only starting with the fundamental theory of Islamic law, but I would like to do future research and books to extend the systems approach that I am proposing in it to various sciences and disciplines.” I explained how I view the “*Maqāṣid* Project” as a continuation of the Islamization of Knowledge Project and we discussed the dire needs of the Islamic movements and organizations to the renewal of Islamic thought. He asked me about my academic background and I pointed out that—like him—I have a PhD in engineering that is only a background education and not a career. I told him that I was soon to be defending a PhD in Islamic Studies at the University of Wales, UK. Then, I outlined the path I took with the traditional and professional streams of knowledge that I studied, and explained how my PhD in Systems Analysis informed the “systems approach” that I took in my PhD research in Islamic jurisprudence, and the Islamic organizations that I was active in, etc. He was very supportive of this.

---

Ahmed Zaki Yamani, in 1988.

<sup>5</sup> Jasser Auda, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘a as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008). IIIT kindly supported the translation of this book into: Arabic, Bosnian, Italian, Turkish, Malaysian, and Indonesian languages.

The next decade after that conversation (2005-2015) was a journey with Dr Jamal, working with him in a number of capacities and meeting with him in several countries, to develop and execute a strategic intellectual project for Islam and Muslims: The Maqāṣid Project. I am aware that Dr Jamal worked over many previous decades on many other strategic projects and organizations for the *Umma*, and with many others of his students in many other countries. However, I will focus in this essay on my experience with Dr Jamal Barzinji's legacy as it relates to the *Maqāṣid* Project as an intellectual project for the *Umma*. It is a narrative of my journey that he mentored in three dimensions: research, education, and institution building. I will discuss research—specifically through the IIIT *Maqāṣid* Publication Series project, education—specifically through the International Peace College South Africa project, and institution building—specifically through the Maqasid Institute project.

***Maqāṣid* for Islamic Research:  
IIIT *Maqāṣid* Publication Series**

The conversations I had with Dr Jamal about the *Maqāṣid* Project were largely about how the traditional *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a* theory could develop and expand to deal with current disciplines and address current phenomena. Dr Jamal had a special interest in politics and economics from an Islamic perspective, and they were areas that he asked me to research and give lectures on at the IIIT seminars. And since he was in charge of the Research and Publications committee at IIIT, our discussions on the *Maqāṣid* approach translated into working on a IIIT *Maqāṣid* Publication Series, especially in English as published by the IIIT-UK office. The books—produced between 2006 and 2015—have had a significant impact on the renewal of Islamic thought in our time.

The term ‘*maqṣid*’ (plural: *Maqāṣid*) refers to a purpose, objective, principle, intent, goal, end, *telos* (Greek), *finalité* (French), or *Zweck* (German). *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘a* are the objectives/purposes/intents/ends/principles of the Islamic law, the spirit of the law and the wisdom behind the Islamic rulings. Most of the current *Maqāṣid* Studies revolve around the history of the traditional theories of *Maqāṣid* as they apply to jurisprudence. Some can be traced back to early theorists, and others to the well-known schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*madhāhib*). Yet, seminal works of contemporary *Maqāṣid* scholars were hardly known in the Arabic language and simply do not exist in the English language. This was the gap that IIIT under Dr Jamal’s leadership worked to mend.

When the early history of the *Maqāṣid* is researched or referenced, the focus tends to be on one or more of the following topics: the opinions of the companions related to public affairs during the time of the rightly guided Caliphs and the emergence of *Maqāṣid* as a formal theory based on the positive corollaries of the commands associated with corporal punishments. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 255H/869CE) and Abu Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 322H/934CE) emphasized what is beneficial for the body and soul. Abul-Ma‘alī al-Juwaynī (d. 478H/1085CE) suggested that the Islamic *Sharī‘a* was intended to protect the inviolability of faith, souls, minds, private parts, and the money of people. Based on Al-Juwaynī’s proposition, early scholars classified the *Maqāṣid* as essentials (*ḍarūriyyāt*), needs (*ḥajīyyāt*) or embellishments (*taḥsīniyyāt*) based on their urgency and clarity. Abu Ḥāmid Al-Ghazalī (d. 505H/1111CE) ordered the objectives of his teacher, Al-Juwaynī, and renamed them as the preservation of faith, soul, mind, offspring and wealth. Al-‘Izz Ibn ‘Abdus-Salām (d. 660H/1262CE) placed a spotlight on the link between juridical rulings and their purposes. Shihābuddīn Al-Qarafī (d. 684H/1285CE) reasoned that the preservation of honor needed to

be added based on the positive corollary for the punishment for slander (*qadhf*) or breaching honor. He also clarified the differences between the prophetic intents, i.e., legislation, judgeship and leadership. Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728H/1328CE) and his students Shamsuddīn Ibn Al-Qayyim (d. 751H/1350CE), Najmuddīn Al-Ṭūfī (d. 716H/1316CE) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774H/1373CE) contributed to the *Maqāsid* approach by providing a detailed critique of juridical circumventions (*ḥiyal*), studying public interest (*maṣlaḥa*), and included wider values such as justice, virtue, rights, and knowledge. Abu Ishāq Al-Shāṭibī (d. 790H/1388CE) advanced the *Maqāsid* in unprecedented ways in his *Muwafaqāt* (Correspondences) by treating the *Maqāsid* as fundamentals of jurisprudence (*uṣul al-fiqh*). Finally, the theories of Abu Bakr al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (d. 365H/973CE), Ibn Babawayh al-Qummī (d. 381H/991CE) and Shah Waliullah Dehlawī (d. 1175H/1762CE) uncovered the wisdoms (*ḥikam*) behind the rulings of the *Sharīʿa*. All of these scholars, among many others who may have been lost in the annals of history, sought to overlay the Islamic Law with the objectives of the *Sharīʿa*. *Maqāsid* students who research the contributions of these pioneers from past and present, however, tend to lack sufficient introspection and critique. In fact, most adopt descriptive or documentary approaches. The absence of direct reference to the Qurʾan and *Sunna* as the standard and basis of critique is common, although there is a number of contemporary scholars who used the Qurʾanic concepts and objectives to critique blind imitation of the inherited theories of *Maqāsid* and develop them in a way that helps the realization of *Maqāsid* in our time. However, it is common for scholars to generally overlook the impact of political, philosophical and scholastic environments of the past and present on the output of these forerunners. It is precisely in these blind spots that the keys to truth and knowledge needed for contemporary challenges may be found. This is not to question



the scholars' sincerity or belittle their contribution, but rather to better understand them and build on them for the present and future. Those who shaped the *Maqāṣid* Studies during its long and rich history broke the mold of imitation, suffered ridicule and loneliness, and left a legacy of standing with the truth however unpopular it is. Contemporary *Maqāṣid* scholarship must continue to honor this legacy by benefiting from and building on all their contributions while remaining critical and cognizant of contemporary needs in all fields of knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the IIIT *Maqāṣid* Publication Series aimed at introducing the topic through the contributions of contemporary scholars. Shaykh Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, was a pioneer in the field of *Maqāṣid* and an early contributor, especially in the Arabic language.<sup>7</sup> Reviewing his books in English and translating his seminal works were amongst the objectives of the *Maqāṣid* Publication Project.<sup>8</sup> Another contemporary was Shaykh Mohammad Al-Tahir Ibn Ashur, who made a major contribution to the field of *Maqāṣid* through his seminal work, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a*. The first book in the *Maqāṣid* Publication Project was the translation of Ibn Ashur's book to the English language by Professor Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi, and the first edition was published as a collaborative effort between IIIT and Al-Furqan Foundation in London. I had the honor of writing the introduction of this book, which was also published by IIIT in several later editions. In addition to my book mentioned above, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a: A Systems Approach*, several seminal books in

---

<sup>6</sup> Jasser Auda, *Re-Envisioning Islamic Scholarship: Maqāṣid Methodology As A New Approach*, ed. Sharif H. Banna (Claritas Books, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Dr Taha's earliest writing on *Maqāṣid* was within the research he did for his PhD in *Uṣul al-Fiqh*, which was published in 1980: *Al-Razi's Al-Mahsul*, Imam Muhammad Bin Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>8</sup> I wrote a long review of: Dr Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, IIIT, 2005.

the same series followed, including: *Imam al-Shāṭibī's Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law*, by Professor Ahmad al-Raysuni (2005); *Towards Realization of the Higher Intents of Islamic Law: Maqāşid al-Sharī'a: A Functional Approach*, by Professor Jamal Attiah (2007), *Maqāşid al-Sharī'a Made Simple*, by Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali (2008), and many other titles.

This series contributed greatly to a new research direction in Islamic Thought worldwide. Since their publication, they have been regularly cited in *Maqāşid*-related research all around the world. Different regions focus on different themes, depending on their local and regional needs and their vision for Islam to address those needs. For example, in the Arab world, many research projects focused on the Islamic political theory (*al-siyāsa al-sharīyya*), and how *Maqāşid al-Sharī'a* could be a methodology for new thought in this area. This interest in *Maqāşid* became much clearer after the "Arab Spring" due to a number of considerations. First, Islamic political movements lacked an agenda that is both authentically Islamic, yet appealing to the masses. The traditional opinions and the heritage of ideas in this area were not up to the aspirations of the revolutionary movements, especially the youth in the Islamic movements, and a *Maqāşid* approach promised a way forward. When constitutional debates were at their highest over issues of the application of the *Sharī'a* and national identities, *Maqāşid* was quite commonly used argument, especially as a common ground that the revolutionary forces could agree on. As the years go by and the anti-revolutionary forces win this round over traditional Islamic voices, *Maqāşid* still offers a hope for a more balanced and relevant Islamic ideology for the next wave of change in the Arab world. On the other hand, the Arab world witnessed the recent failures of the Salafi extremist ideology to produce theoretical guidance and practical solutions that touch people's lives and are

faithful to their concerns. The Shi'a extremist ideology also proved to have failed to be relevant to the average Muslim's life and his/her concerns. *Maqāshid* is one of the foremost methodologies that could face both of these extreme ideologies and the terrorist movements that they both produce in the Middle East.<sup>9</sup>

In the West, the Islamic studies in academic circles witnessed a growing interest in *Maqāshid* studies, and the *Maqāshid* Series that Dr Jamal strategized for was a major catalyst. A growing number of courses are including works on *Maqāshid*, especially in the English language, in the curricula on Qur'anic Studies, Islamic law, Islamic thought, Muslim women and Islamic political movements. In Southeast Asia, there are two growing applications of *Maqāshid* research, Islamic finance and Islamic governance. In Muslim-majority ASEAN countries, the tension between the Islamic national identity and a growing sense of multiculturalism has encouraged more researchers to look for common ground for governance in the ideas of the *Maqāshid*. The commonalities between the *Maqāshid* principles and national common values, such as the Indonesian *Pancasila* (the five principles of divine unity, civil humanity, national unity, wisdom, and justice) resulted in more interest in *Maqāshid* studies in national universities and research centers. Similarly, politicians and Islamic activists have been calling for the principles of *Maqāshid* as grounds for national unity in Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines. In India, although Shah Waliullah Dehlawi applied *Maqāshid* thinking to his well-known seminal works on Islamic law, and despite the

---

<sup>9</sup> For a long discussion on this issue, refer to my book: Jasser Auda, *Al-Dawlah al-Madaniyya: Nahwa Tajawuz Al-Istibdad Wa Tahqeeq Maqāshid al-Sharī'a (Civil State: Towards overcoming authoritarianism & realizing Maqāshid al-Sharī'a)*, Al-Shabakah Al-Arabiyyah, Beirut, 2015. Translated to: English, Italian, Malayalam, Bengali, & Malaysian 2016-2021 (also abridged and published by Tawasul, Rome, under the title: *Lessons on Civil Society: Post-Islamism and Post-Secularism*, 2020).

“*Maqāšidi*” thought of Allama Iqbal, *Maqāšid* has not been activated in the legal thinking in the Indian subcontinent, which remains largely and traditionally Ḥanafī. However, there has been a growing movement of translating the same works on *Maqāšid* from the *Maqāšid* Series Project into the Indian languages. These initiatives are taken by the new generation of Muslims scholars, who are keen to bring the Islamic thought in the region to contemporary times, especially given the isolation of the Muslim community in India and its negative impact on their social and economic status.

On the other hand, and with a lot of input from the ideas that the IIIT *Maqāšid* Publication Series offered, a new field of Islamic education that could be labeled “Applied *Maqāšid* Studies” emerged, which I will discuss next within a theme of *Maqāšid* for Islamic Education, a project at the International Peace College South Africa that Dr Jamal, supported in a major way during its foundational phase.

### ***Maqāšid* for Islamic Education: International Peace College South Africa**

In side discussions during an international conference in Amman, Jordan, dedicated to the life and works of Dr Ismail Faruqi,<sup>10</sup> Dr Jamal Barzinji told me about the dynamics of his working with Dr Faruqi on the first draft of the Islamization of Knowledge

---

<sup>10</sup>In this, I presented a critical review of Dr Faruqi’s Ph.D. thesis in Philosophy, titled: *On Justifying the Good*, from Indiana University in 1952, and analyzed its impact on his later thought in the Islamization of Knowledge project as well as the Atlas of the Islamic World project. My article was published as: Jasser Auda, “*Qira’a fī uṭrūḥāt al-doctūrā lil-marḥūm Isma’īl al-Farūqī: ḥawlā ithbāt al-khair*” (A Critical Reading of Ismail al-Faruqi’s PhD Thesis: On Justifying the Good) (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, Virginia, 2013).

proposal.<sup>11</sup> At the heart of the project was an attempt to renew Islamic education, hence the project of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), for which Dr Jamal moved to Malaysia to work on as a Dean of the *Kulliyyah* (Faculty) of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences during the nineties. Based on these discussions with him, as well as other discussions on the experiment of Al-Sharq University in Beirut and given the complications in the Arab World since the “Arab Spring” of 2011, I proposed an educational project to embody the *Maqāṣid* thought in South Africa, particularly at the International Peace College South Africa (IPSA).

My links in South Africa were also initiated by Dr Jamal. In a 2009 meeting with Cape Town’s Governor at the time, Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool, Dr Jamal kindly gifted him a copy of my book, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī’a as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach*. Ambassador Rasool found the approach to be very useful for coming up with new ideas that balance the principles of Islam with the needs of modern governance, as he mentioned in several forums.<sup>12</sup> More importantly, this kind gesture from Dr Jamal started a special friendship between me and Ambassador Ebrahim, whom I later met in Los Angeles, California, in 2012, and since then co-lectured with him on many fora in a number of countries. He was also the first Chairman of the Board of the Maqasid Institute about which I will talk about next.

And given that Ambassador Ebrahim was a former Chancellor of the International Peace College South Africa (IPSA), he invited

---

<sup>11</sup> Ismail R. Al Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan* (Wyncote, PA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982).

<sup>12</sup> Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool gave a lecture titled “*Maqāṣid Al-Sharī’a as a Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach by Jasser Auda*” at the IIIT Hospitality Suite at the 2016 ISNA Convention.

me to establish an Honors Degree and a Graduate School there. We met several times in Doha, Qatar, Cape Town, and in Virginia, USA, and we finally proposed to Dr Jamal a project for that Graduate School and a proposal for “Al-Shāṭibī Chair for *Maqāṣid* Studies,” which I have been occupying since then until today. It was one of the last recommendations, which IIIT considered to be a will, from Dr Jamal, that IIIT-Board approved the funding that we needed to start the project. After his passing, they were kind enough to offer funding for one year—may Allah reward them. So far, this program has graduated over 100 students (with the Honors Degree, in addition to 12 students from the Master’s Program who are currently writing their theses). The credit of this achievement goes to the ideas and support of Dr Jamal.

### ***Maqāṣid* for Building institutions: *Maqāṣid* Institute**

In 2012, while I was teaching at the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies.<sup>13</sup> Dr Jamal invited me to move to Virginia and work with him at IIIT, with a mandate to establish programs for development of the *Maqāṣid* thought. After consultations with the IIIT stakeholders, I was invited as a “Visiting Scholar” with a purely-research mandate. I met with Dr Jamal in Doha, Qatar, in 2013, and discussed with him the prospects of building a Research Center of *Maqāṣid* Studies at Qatar Foundation, as well as the idea of opening an office/branch of IIIT in Qatar. When both ideas did not meet success in the Doha decision-making circles, I talked with Dr Jamal online and suggested forming a new and independent research center—in the UK—that would focus on the research, education and dissemination of the *Maqāṣid* thought. He asked me how I was going to fund it, and my answer was that I

---

<sup>13</sup> Now merged into the College of Islamic Studies at the Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Doha, Qatar.

was going to write up a proposal and send it to him. He was kind enough to smile and agree, even though I did not have a chance to meet with him afterwards due to his illness. At the end of 2015, Dr Basma Abdelgafar and I made a plan for a new research center, the Maqasid Institute. It was first registered in the UK, with help from Shaykh Sharif Banna, who is currently a Board Member at the Maqasid Institute, then eventually, since 2017, registered in the United States.

Today, the Maqasid Institute (MI) has its own “New *Maqāṣid* Methodology” (NMM) as its intellectual identity; its own *Journal of Contemporary Maqāṣid Studies* (JCMS), which has prominent scholars on its advisory and editorial boards and is already a reference in academic circles; a *Maqāṣid* Research Network (MRN) with over 1000 researchers from more than 60 countries; a monthly newsletter to stay in touch with members; trained hundreds of graduate students from all over the world to use NMM in their research; formed 6 specialized research groups with an aim to apply the new *Maqāṣid* methodology in various disciplines; appointed senior fellows and scholars to teach graduate courses in various subjects in a number of colleges and universities; launched its own Moodle-based MOOCs online program; built its own e-library that has thousands of references on *Maqāṣid* research; and last but not least, held its first Maqasid Institute Retreat for its fellows and staff worldwide in Istanbul, Turkey in July 2022.<sup>14</sup>

## Legacy

It is narrated that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said:

“When the son/daughter of Adam dies, his [or her] good

---

<sup>14</sup> Please refer to Maqasid Institute’s website for the annual reports at <https://maqasid.org/>

deeds will stop except for seven deeds: 1. knowledge that he [or she] taught, 2. a pious offspring that he [or she] left behind, 3. a book that he [or she] bequeathed, 4. a mosque that he [or she] built, 5. a shelter for the refugees that he [or she] constructed, 6. a channel that he [or she] unblocked, and 7. a charity that he [or she] decided in their life while healthy, which will continue after their death.”<sup>15</sup>

I believe, and Allah knows best, that Dr Jamal left a legacy in all of these seven areas of perpetual good deeds that the Prophet ﷺ talked about. The “pious offspring” are his children who continue to pray for him and carry out his philanthropy work on his behalf and through his foundation, The Barzinji Foundation, May Allah bless them all.

However, one of Dr Jamal’s children has a lot to do with the *Maqāṣid* as a Strategic Project for the Muslim *Umma*, especially the Maqasid Institute. I did not have a chance to meet with Dr Jamal’s son, Dr Zaid Barzinji, except in 2017 when he took a course with me for the first time. Currently, Dr Zaid occupies the position of the Executive Director of the Maqasid Institute, and since then the Maqasid Institute grew under his leadership from a small classroom at the IPSA College in South Africa, into a significant international organization, as explained above.

---

<sup>15</sup> Narrated by Ibn Majah Hadith No. 200. Also narrated by Muslim 1631, Abu Dawud 2880, Tirmidhi 1376, Nasa’i 3651. Ibn Majah: Ibn Majah, Muhammad. Ed. Shu’uib Al-Arna’ut et al. Beirut: Al-Risalah, 2009; Abu Dawud: Abu Dawud, Sulaiman. Al-Sunan. Ed. Shu’uib Al-Arna’ut. Beirut: Al-Risalah, 2009; Muslim: Muslim, Abu al-Hussain. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Ed. Mohammad Foad Abdul-Baqi. Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, w.d.; Nasa’i: Al-Nasa’i, Ahmad. Al-Sunan Al-Kubra. Ed. Shu’uib Al-Arna’ut. Beirut: Al-Risalah, 2001; Tirmidhi: Al-Tirmidhi, Mohammad. Al-Jami, Al-*Ṣaḥīḥ* Sunan a-Tirmidhi. Ed. Ahmad M. Shakir. Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-‘arabi, w.d.



I once had *Iftār* (Ramadan breaking of the fast) and prayed *Tarawīh* (Ramadan Night Prayers) with Dr Jamal in his home in Virginia. It was only the two of us and he insisted that I lead the prayers and recite the Qur'an for both of us, despite the usual tradition that the most senior and knowledgeable of the congregation leads, especially in his own home. After we prayed, he said he liked my recitation, and advised me to focus on the studies of the Qur'an. Combining all the ideas from the projects that I talked about in this essay, I am currently applying his advice and in fact, focusing solely on the Qur'an in my current research, teaching and advocacy. May Allah reward our *Ustadh* for his precious advice.<sup>16</sup>

In this essay, in the spirit of the intellectual and strategic discussions that I used to have with our *Ustadh* Dr Jamal Barzinji, I mixed some scholarly matters with the narration of some of my personal memories and impressions. The goal of the essay, however, is to remember our *Ustadh* and pray for him. I owe a great deal to Dr Jamal, and his reward is only from Allah, for his mentorship and support throughout my journey, especially that decade when I worked with him. It was a decade that I will always be proud of and thank Allah for it.

## References

- al Faruqi, Ismail R. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan*. Wyncote, PA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982.
- Auda, Jasser. *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach*. London: International Institute of

---

<sup>16</sup> I am grateful to The Barzinji Family Foundation and The Mirza Family Foundation for their support to the Maqasid Institute and the Qur'anic Studies project.

Islamic Thought, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Re-Envisioning Islamic Scholarship: Maqāşid Methodology As A New Approach*. Edited by Sharif H. Banna. Claritas Books, 2021.

## **Working in Cooperation American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences**

Katherine Bullock

By the time I started to work with Dr Jamal in 2003, he had been a socially engaged Muslim in the US for more than thirty years. These years of service gave him a clear vision of what Islam could offer the USA (and by extension other countries) in light of the problems and issues it faced. His grassroots service to community endeavors, as highlighted in this volume's introduction, was founded in his commitment to the renewal of Islamic thought as a main need for the advancement of society. In this chapter, I reflect on our time together while I was editor of the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (AJISS, 2003-2008). I spotlight our shared vision for AJISS's role in academia; a mutual conviction about women's role in that vision; and two lessons I learnt from his example as a supervisor and mentor.

Let me first narrate how I came to AJISS. I embraced Islam in 1994 after several intense years of study and spiritual seeking. I had just finished the first year of doctoral studies in Political Science at the University of Toronto. Soon afterwards I adopted

*hijab*. Unexpected hostility, overt or veiled, from fellow graduate students, professors, administrative staff, and strangers on the street, led me to change my dissertation topic. Instead of a study of Ancient Greek cultural relativism, I compared Muslim women's perceptions of *hijab* with Western culture's antagonism toward it. It was a lonely time. I was overjoyed to discover the *Association of Muslim Social Scientists* (AMSS). I found a community and belonging—those who were not hostile to my embrace of Islam, my wearing of *hijab*, my seeking academic knowledge as a believer in a secular academic space, my conviction that Islam was a desirable way of life in an age of atheism, agnosticism, and materialism. I presented as many papers as I could at the annual Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) conferences.

I came to Islam with an already developed sense of volunteerism and of the importance of community service for the betterment of society. Islam reinforced these convictions and practices, with numerous Qur'anic verses and *hadith* about service to God through service to humanity. I loved the *hadith* that taught us that actions are by intention. It countered the bitterness in my prevailing culture that “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” Such adages make one doubt if volunteering is worthwhile: we do not want our attempt at charitable work to lead to hell! Time and time again, I found Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings supported the good that I had known and cleared away the debris of confusion.

So, it was easy for me to be drawn into volunteerism at AMSS and American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences (AJISS), where I started as book review editor in 2000, and then editor from 2003-2008. I wanted AJISS to be a journal of academic excellence. A journal of Social Sciences and Humanities that should explore Muslim experiences from an empathetic but critical lens. This was not a space to foster anti-Muslim racism, we faced enough of that elsewhere but to speak our story from within. Criticism, reform,

and challenges—these should all be welcome, with a maximum latitude of freedom of expression and perspectives.

Having received invitations in the past to act as a peer reviewer for AJISS submissions on topics that I knew nothing about, I began the job recognizing that to raise the profile of AJISS, some changes were needed. I overhauled the peer review process. I established and expanded the database of reliable topic experts. I ensured a firm double-blind peer review process to guide the acceptance or rejection of articles. I created a standard review form for reviewers to fill in. I ended the monetary compensation that used to be attached to peer and book review (sorry folks). I worked with authors to ensure their submissions were up to a minimum standard before being sent for review, or to make the changes recommended by reviewers. I rejected those manuscripts that were too far from that. I ensured that rejected articles were given letters with clear reasons explaining the rejection with the hope that these would serve as guides for better scholarship. I also created an active and reliable advisory team to help me make decisions for the first round of peer review. In the days before online submissions, and all work was done through email, I created letter templates for acknowledging receipt of submission, and the various versions of accept and reject that were personalized as needed. I created standard publishing contracts for book reviewers and authors. This was to ensure consistent practice and create ongoing resources should I depart. I added a new section to AJISS called “Forum,” which allowed authors a space to articulate perspectives in a shorter non-peer reviewed format.

In all of this energetic activity Dr Jamal al-Barzinji played a supporting backstage role. I will reflect further on that later. Here I just want to note that the signals I received in our regular correspondence and phone calls about AJISS was a shared commitment to academic excellence and of the importance of

sound social scientific and humanities' scholarship in exploring Islam and Muslims' situation in the contemporary world. Dr Jamal recognized that academic scholarship should aspire to objectivity, but that objectivity did not mean one did not have positions and perspectives to advance. Objectivity to me means to be fair, consider counterarguments, not to be blindly partisan or apologetic, to advance a persuasive argument that does not hide uncomfortable facts or twist things to support one's view.

There are two things about Dr Jamal that I will never forget from our editorial meetings during the economic crash of 2007-2008, related to this view about the need for academic excellence and Islamic viewpoints. First, he spoke about how the economic crisis was causing people to suffer. His compassion for their hardship was apparent and sincere. That compassion has always stayed with me. It was instructive and inspiring, something to emulate. Second, he shared his view that Islamic economic practices could avert such an economic crisis as well as assist those who needed it. He wondered what constructive role AJISS could play throughout that time. There must be some way, he suggested, that we can share the teachings of Islamic economics to provide leadership to US society, to bring about better public policy that could alleviate suffering and lessen the causes for it. This vision, too, has always stayed with me: the conviction that Islam has something to offer wider society. This memory underpinned my recent study of *zakat* in Canada, where I learned what traditional *zakat* teachings could offer to ameliorate problems in the current welfare states, such as dehumanization and the welfare trap. When Muqtedar Khan reminds us that we should lift Islamic work out of identity politics and into the ethics of good governance, I hear in it an echo of Dr Jamal.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I have no idea what their relationship was, nor if either of them would like me to make this connection. M.A. Muqtedar Khan, *Islam and Good*

Dr Jamal and I worked hard together to pitch AJISS to university presses. I left before that goal was achieved. It was a circular problem: current circulation rates affected the presses decision not to proceed; circulation rates were related to marketing and subscription rates; subscription rates were related to the perceived usefulness or status of AJISS in the hierarchical academic world; the perceived status was related to the quality of submissions and published articles; raising subscription rates required top quality submissions. The entire AJISS team worked hard to achieve this: me, the managing editor, the book review editor, the copyeditors, the advisory editorial team, the peer reviewers, the authors, the marketing director. All with the support of Dr Jamal in the background.

Even in this day and age, there are those Muslims that would restrict women's education to a high school level; they would have a narrow curriculum providing only what a woman needs as a housewife and mother—as if a woman cannot offer society anything more than cooking, cleaning, laundry, and supervising children. Dr Jamal, as is evident from my narrative so far, was not one of these. He believed with conviction that women had a right, even a duty, to be socially engaged individuals alongside men. He knew that this required advanced education and scholarship. A society running only on men's brain power with women restricted to the home does not advance with prosperity for all. Muslim thinkers responding to the calamity of European invasion and occupation recognized this. Better education for women was one of the first reforms Muslim intellectuals in occupied countries advocated.

Dr Jamal knew that the philosophy of socially engaged individuals, as outlined in the introduction, was not a modern

innovation for Islamic society, but instead, based firmly in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Dr Jamal once suggested that I write a book for the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) spotlighting women's roles in the home and in the wider society at the time of the Prophet ﷺ. I have often regretted not taking him up on this offer. At the time I felt I could not take on such an important task in light of my then current juggle: my home responsibilities with three children under ten years old; AJISS editor; teaching a course at the university; attempting to establish a new charitable research institute and a new publishing company.

This brings me to my final reflection on the two lessons which I have learned about supervising and mentorship from Dr Jamal. I am sure that I was offered the position of editor because my involvement at AMSS conferences and performance as book review editor had been satisfactory. They must have trusted me, for Dr Jamal did not micro-manage my work. He gave me a free hand to implement all the changes I have detailed above. I had full authority to accept or reject articles and to write my editorials. Even when I rejected a piece advocating for the Islamization of knowledge for the forum section, I was not questioned. I recognize this as a blessing and praise him highly for this. The only time I remember being questioned was when I had rejected a book review that praised Saudi Arabia as a democracy. The reviewer complained that AJISS was anti-Saudi. Dr Jamal asked me to explain why I rejected the book review. I explained I did not think Saudi Arabia met the criterion of a democratic country, hence the review was not objective enough. Dr Jamal accepted my explanation and no more on the matter was said. I learnt an important lesson about trust and management from him through these experiences.

Second, throughout my term at AJISS, women scholars were advisory editors, peer reviewers, and published authors. We were



not included as tokens—I never felt that women were taken for anything other than experts. From my experience, Dr Jamal and his colleagues at IIIT and those involved at AMSS, looked upon us as scholars. This is true respect. This is not always the case with Muslim men or Muslim institutions. Dr Jamal supported me wholeheartedly as editor of AJISS.

In sum, Dr Jamal was, *mashaAllah*, an excellent mentor, professional, respectful, a team player, supportive of my vision and work, and had a keen understanding of the issues alluded to above, of the need for Muslims to have a platform to publish high quality scholarly work, from which to speak our own narratives, to include women in that, and he worked with us very hard to try to achieve it.

### **Reference**

Khan, M. A. Muqtedar. *Islam and Good Governance: A Political Philosophy of Ihsan*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

PART FOUR

## **Legacy of Social Activism**



## **The Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning**

Younus Y. Mirza

**“Respect For Humanity Is the Foundation of All Interaction”**

**—Dr Jamal Barzinji**

In this article, I will discuss the history and development of the Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning and how it has actively worked to live out Dr Jamal Barzinji’s Legacy. Through its various programs and initiatives, the Barzinji Institute has intentionally sought to continue Dr Barzinji’s legacy of intellectualism and activism. Instead of simply writing about Dr Barzinji, the Institute has focused instead on consistent and sustainable programs that put his ideas into action.

### **Emerging out of 9/11 Climate of Fear and Mistrust**

First, the Project emerged out of a post 9-11 climate of fear and mistrust between “Islam and the West.” After the tragic day, Dr Barzinji participated in various meetings with government and political leaders to help explain that Islam as a religion was not the source of the attacks. I personally remember Dr Barzinji giving a Friday sermon (*khutba*) shortly after 9/11 explaining the true

essence of Islam which was recorded by major media stations like CNN. Dr Barzinji would eventually meet with then President George W. Bush to help articulate America's stance that it was *not* at war against Islam. To help further clear this misunderstanding, Dr Barzinji and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) worked with various universities to endow chairs of Islamic Studies and programs of interfaith understanding, such as those at George Mason University and Hartford Seminary.<sup>1</sup> Dr Barzinji as the President of IIIT at the time was adamant about investing more resources in the United States and with mainstream educational institutions and organizations, especially in higher education.



**Dr Younus Y. Mirza and Dr Jamal al-Barzinji sharing views  
at the 2013 IIIT Summer School**

The 9/11 attacks fueled an already strong movement of Islamophobia which continued to gain momentum in the years

---

<sup>1</sup> Other chairs and programs that Dr Barzinji worked on were at the Nazareth College in Rochester, the San Jose State in California, and the Western Ontario University in Canada.

ahead. Despite the tremendous efforts of Muslim American organizations to better explain Islam and their communities, a large portion of Americans continued to harbor fear and mistrust of Muslims, mainly because they relied on media and entertainment for their information. A key factor of whether a person has Islamophobic views is whether they had ever even met a Muslim, which many Americans never had. The Islamophobia movement reached its climax with the election of Donald Trump who campaigned on “the Muslim Ban,” which specifically targeted Muslims, especially those from Muslim-majority countries. In many ways, the “Muslim Ban” represented the polar opposite of what Dr Barzinji advocated for many years, such as harmonious relationships between American and Muslim-majority countries, a global understanding of the world, and (higher) education as a means for social transformation.

### **The Beginning of the Barzinji Project**

Unfortunately, Dr Jamal Barzinji passed away in 2015, leaving his family and friends to discuss how they should preserve his remarkable life and legacy. The group was represented by my father, Dr M. Yaqub Mirza, who had discussed with Dr Barzinji firsthand his ideas for education reform in Muslim majority countries and had worked closely with him on the various university projects. Dr Mirza had become a Shenandoah University (SU) trustee and felt that SU would be able to continue this legacy, especially in it being nimble, teaching-focused, and entrepreneurial. He approached President Tracy Fitzsimmons to discuss the various options since she had met Dr Barzinji several times and had gotten to know him fairly well. Collectively they came up with the “Barzinji Project for International Collaboration to Advance Higher Education,” which would work on reform of education with a special focus on Muslim-majority societies. The original proposal stated that: “Together participating universities

will explore issues surrounding higher education reform in a range of political, cultural, and economic environments, recognizing that globalization requires higher education institutions to collaboratively develop best practices that are effective in various local contexts, prioritizing cross-cultural communication as a tool for co-construction.” Key to the project would be the embrace of Dr Barzinji’s belief that higher education was a means for social good and that it should have a global and collaborative focus. The Project thus adopted his quote that “respect for humanity is the foundation of all interaction” as a key building block and embraced his legacy as an “intellectual education and community builder who advocated for collective action on pressing contemporary issues.”

I was eventually hired as the first Project Director by the then Provost, Adrienne Bloss, who was a key formulator and advocate for the Project. At the time, I was on a pre-tenure sabbatical at another college but becoming Director of the Project was appealing for me, because it was an opportunity for me to help live out Dr Barzinji’s legacy, as he was somebody I knew personally, respected, and liked. As noted above, I had grown up listening to his sermons and had even assisted him as a teaching assistant for one of his classes regarding the *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa* (the higher objectives of Islam). As a child, I distinctly remember experiencing his hospitality by going to his house for dinners and seeing him serve food to his guests. In particular, I admired his ability to be an intellectual and community builder simultaneously, always keeping in mind the connection between theory and practice. Moreover, leading a truly global project was exciting (especially in an era of nativism) and combating Islamophobia through in-person exchange had always been a key part of my pedagogy.

## **Selecting Partner Institutions**

Among our first tasks for the Project was to identify the international universities that we were going to work with. We selected two schools that Dr Barzinji had a relationship with: the University of Sarajevo (UNSA) and the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Specifically, Dr Barzinji was a former dean at IIUM and had lived in Malaysia for a couple of years with his family. Additionally, part of the thought process was to choose universities in countries that were not stereotypically considered part of the “Muslim world,” as many Americans are unaware that Bosnia and Malaysia have Muslim-majority populations. These two universities would allow participants to compare education in Muslim-majority countries but in vastly different contexts, one in Europe and the other in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, we sought to pick universities that were indigenous to the region and not “Western” or “American” implants. Dr Jamal was adamant about working with local institutions and organizations, seeing them as being in closest contact with the grassroots and not simply those which are elite and in an ivory tower. While there are many branches of American universities around the world, the Project was intentional in choosing institutions that developed indigenously and were well-integrated in the region.

The Project then organized delegations made up of faculty, staff, and students to visit the partner institutions. This structure is similar to Shenandoah University’s Global Citizenship Project, which sends Shenandoah groups all over the world for Spring Break trips. Our partner institutions developed delegations with a similar makeup, and we first hosted them here at both Shenandoah University and at our US partner Bridgewater College. Through the visit, they learned about key initiatives that the Virginia institutions were working on related to fostering positive discussions in society such as Civil Discourse, Town Hall, and Reflective Structured Dialogue (RSD). The US delegates then



visited UNSA and IIUM and in turn learned about how the Universities worked to preserve their history and institutional memory as well as form a unified mission statement. The visits culminated in a Fall Colloquium where the various delegates shared their experiences and discussed future collaborations.



**The first phase culminated in the Fall Colloquium (2019) to discuss innovation in higher education. Topics included dialogue and discourse, race and ethnicity, education in a diverse society and successful global exchanges.**

Key outcomes of the exchanges were that delegates and universities wanted more sustained interactions with each other in the form of conferences, workshops, forums, and visiting researcher funds. Delegates believed they had just scratched the surface in terms of the partnership and felt that more could be accomplished with further and deeper discussions. This later realization led to a RSD workshop at UNSA and several conference presentations which included those at the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA). There was also a strong sentiment that more could be done in terms of leveraging technology. While the Project was primarily focused on in-person travel, delegates felt that the relationships could be sustained through WhatsApp groups and that

discussions, lectures and forums could be held via Zoom.

### **Leveraging Technology to Sustain Relationships:**

The Project was compelled to realize this last point of leveraging technology as the pandemic hit in early 2020 making in-person travel impossible. Initially we started to organize virtual forums of topics of interest at the various universities, such as “Ramadan Around the World” and “Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis.” Our partner IIUM even organized a virtual conference on “Equality, Religious Harmony and Peace” demonstrating how productive and fruitful conversations could continue despite the physical distance. The virtual forums eventually led us to explore Collaborate Online International Learning (COIL) where professors from different parts of the world create a shared module in their course where their students work on a joint project. The module lasts for 4 to 14 weeks and usually includes an ice breaker where students get to know each other, do a shared assignment and a joint presentation. COIL offers faculty and students an opportunity to engage in international experience without traveling and gives them an opportunity to work with people from around the globe. COIL thus fulfills a key goal of Dr Barzinji of diversity, equity, and inclusion as it exposes students to various cultures and experiences which ideally leads to more tolerance and understanding. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of students are unable to study abroad because of the lack of financial support, which provides an international experience at relatively low minimal cost.

Additionally, COIL has a strong interdisciplinary focus where faculty from different fields work together on a shared United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The aim is not as much in developing a particular discipline but rather working towards a shared goal and solving world problems. The

interdisciplinary nature of COIL fits nicely with Dr Barzinji's belief that Muslims and Muslim societies should invest in Islamic Studies and be open to engage in intellectual activities with the Western and American institutions of higher education. For instance, Dr Jamal was one of the founders of the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (AJISS) that sought to foster a relationship between traditional Islamic studies and the new development in social sciences. Shenandoah University has now become a recognized leader in COIL with one of our fellows being selected for an ACE/Fulbright and presenting at various conferences regarding virtual exchange.

### **The Creation of the Barzinji Institute**

As the Project grew and Amy Sarch took over as the new supervisor (since Adrienne Bloss the former supervisor had retired), we decided to rename the "Barzinji Project" as the "Barzinji Institute" to give our activities more permanence, as a "project" signals that the initiative was temporary, while an "institute" is more long standing and research inducive. We further realized that COIL and virtual exchange had become so much part of our work that we decided to include it in our name: "Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning." While we continue to work towards international collaboration to advance higher education, the new name is similar to other programs and offices around the country that have made virtual exchange and COIL as core parts of their mission.

In addition to changing to the new name, we included a new service project on the UN SDG of Zero Hunger as a testament to Dr Barzinji's commitment to *zakat* (alms). Dr Barzinji was a key donor and advisor to the Foundation for Appropriate and Immediate Temporary Help or FAITH which works on a variety of projects from temporary housing, protection from

domestic violence, and food security. The new Zero Hunger project will be a collaboration between the three universities from around the world—Shenandoah University, Yarmouk University (Jordan), and IIUM—to work on alleviating food insecurity in their various locales and then share notes on best practices. Moreover, while the Institute retains its core mission of engaging in Muslim-majority countries, it has expanded and become truly global with connections in the Middle East, South America, and Western Europe. The global nature of the Institute is in line with Dr Barzinji’s international business relationships which ranged from Chile to Zimbabwe.

In summary, the Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning represents the legacy of Jamal Barzinji by helping clear misunderstandings between the United States and Muslim-majority countries through exchange visits and working on collaborative, joint projects. Through the pandemic period, the Project invested heavily in virtual exchange and COIL allowing for more sustained and active partnerships. We have now moved from a “Project” to an “Institute,” demonstrating the permanence of the initiative, and we continue to expand in order to put into action Dr Barzinji’s mission and vision.

## The Builder of the ADAMS Center

Imam Mohamed Hag Magid

It's very difficult to write about a man of such high caliber such as Dr Jamal Barzinji. His personality and impact not only on our local community, but on the greater Muslim community around the globe, is hard to put into words. He truly embodied some of the most important qualities a leader must have. The humility and compassion he showed to the ones who were in the most in need was unparalleled. He helped so many people in countless ways. May Allah Almighty rest his soul.

My encounters with Dr Jamal always left me in awe. I remember the first time I met him was at the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center monthly potluck before I was officially introduced to him. I was watching him as he went table to table with a trash bag in hand, cleaning up after others. As I went to assist him, attempting to take over, he pulled the trash bag away from my reach insisting that he will take care of it himself. There couldn't have been a better introduction to the man that Dr Jamal was.

After I had been officially introduced to him and the ADAMS community in the 90's, I remember hearing him give one of the

most profound *khutbas* (Friday sermons) I've ever heard to this date. He had just returned from Malaysia and was giving the *khutba* for Thanksgiving weekend on gratitude. This had such a strong impact on myself and the whole community, so much so, that we decided it would become a tradition for Dr Jamal to give the Thanksgiving weekend *khutba* every year.

Dr Jamal had such a deep and applicable understanding of *fiqh* (Muslim jurisprudence) and a love for the Qur'an that showed through his thoughts and actions. For many years he was one of the main leaders of our Sunday *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis) class at ADAMS. The way he taught was unlike any other. Many of his former *tajweed* (recitation of the Qur'an) students today still comment about how particular he was about this science. Every detail mattered. His love for the Qur'an inspired so many to take on the challenge and become *hufaz* (memorizers of the Qur'an), even in their older age.

I benefited from Dr Jamal's wisdom and experience a great deal. He was always so generous with his time to me. Every time I would reach out to him to seek advice on anything, he made himself available. Regardless of how stressful times may have been or how deep the issues were, he would always stay calm and collected, never raising his voice to me or around me.

Dr Jamal was such a great advocate and resource for applying Islam in an American context that he was always very strategic in his thinking. His ability to interoperate contemporary issues/events and connect them to *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a* (objectives of Islamic law) was also very unique, that to this day, his experience of building communities has contributed to my understanding of how to manage and lead a community in America.

One of Dr Jamal's greatest concerns was to support the Muslim scholars in America by giving them the proper resources to address the needs of the Muslim community holistically. He

cared deeply to develop the capacity of Muslim scholars and enable them to perform more than just Islamic rituals such as leading prayer, officiating marriages, and funerals. He cared that we do more—that we serve as problem solvers not only within our local communities, but the wider Muslim community in America and beyond.

Dr Jamal also shared with me his concern for the next generation of Muslim American scholars. He wanted to do everything in his power to ensure that our future leaders received the proper training and preparation to be well equipped for the heavy responsibility they will carry. He wanted to ensure that we have a succession plan for when we choose to move on from a position and that in the meantime we delegate as much of our word as we can to breed and train the next generation of Muslim leaders from within the community. Because of his vision and support, I am proud to say that most of the teachers and *khatibs* (preachers) at ADAMS are from the second-generation Muslims born in America.

He also inspired me to make it one of my main priorities to create and participate in programs that focus on training Imams, such as the series of workshops I do with a few of my colleagues in collaboration with “Center for Islam in the Contemporary World” (CICW) at the Shenandoah University, Leesburg, VA. CICW aligns perfectly with Dr Jamal’s passion for preparing our future scholars as it serves as an academic center engaged in research, teaching, training, and outreach on issues related to Islam and Muslims in contemporary contexts. I would like to thank the leadership at CICW for supporting and continuing the legacy of Dr Jamal al-Barzinji.

Dr Jamal witnessed the birth of this All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center from its inception. He not only watched it grow from a few people praying in a small house to where it is

today, he was one of the first to give with great generosity. Although his monetary contributions were impactful, his desire to lead when it came to the planning and execution of the various phases of ADAMS Center continues to allow this community to flourish beyond what one could have imagined.

In his final speech to the ADAMS community, he highlighted the priorities of the community. It was powerful to hear a man who was not feeling well at the time give a speech as if he knew it was his last time addressing the community. This speech touched countless hearts. I will always remember the advice that he gave us all with such a loving and caring heart. Although he witnessed the groundbreaking, but not the completion of Phase III expansion project, I still believe that he made it possible to have this dream of such a large community materialize. While the contributions came from more than one family, he was one of the driving forces behind where we are today. I pray that Allah continues to shower him with blessings for his efforts on this earth and give me the strength and courage he had to carry his teachings and legacy till my last days.



## ***Islah* is the Goal of Social Engagement**

Iqbal J. Unus

The year was 1972. The place was *Masjid al-Amin* in Gary, Indiana, the first headquarters of the budding Muslim Students Association of the United States and Canada (MSA). A group of Muslim student activists sat around a table to review, report, discuss and decide where they were headed, with a vision to make a mark on the social discourse in a continent they had barely settled in yet.

I had arrived in the United States two years earlier and was just dipping my toes in the proverbial water as president of the Muslim student body in Atlanta, Georgia and involved with the Southeast region of MSA. An invitation to observe the meeting of the MSA executive committee had brought me to this event. A half century later, I can still visualize the scene. Even though there were security concerns in the area, chairs were laid out for those who would care to observe the proceedings. At the head of the table sat the president of MSA, a chemical engineering doctoral student at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, LA.

Various executive committee members were presenting their reports, some with expected vagueness and promises, punctuated

with the customary '*in sha'a Allah*' and '*ma sha'a Allah*'. The president stopped them in their tracks. "I want numbers. I want to know what you actually did," he said emphatically.

It struck me that this was a unique group with a unique leader. Socialized in an environment where openness was not prized and commitments were treated casually, I felt a pull and said to myself "these are the people I want to be with; this is where I should belong." The group's openness of its deliberations and its focus on accomplishments were clearly the result of the leader's priority.

That was my first face-to-face meeting with Dr Jamal al-Barzinji, whose footsteps I followed to serve as president of the MSA in 1975, and whose lifelong example of a leader focused on results, not illusions, served me well as I advanced to various assignments under his long shadow.

I joined the general secretariat of MSA at its transitional headquarters in Indianapolis in January 1977. There, from an office close by, Dr Jamal, as the first general manager of North American Islamic Trust (NAIT), helped strengthen the foundations of what is now a significant institution engaged in service to the American Muslim community. This was just the beginning of institution building which became his lifelong calling.

The establishment of the MSA by foreign and immigrant Muslim students was a watershed event of the 1960s. Every decade that followed presented its own challenge. The Iranian Revolution in the 1980s brought Islam into focus and made it a subject of interest among Americans. The Gulf War in the 1990s made Islam a household name. With each event, Muslims first braced themselves for the inevitable and unwarranted backlash, and then found within themselves new strength and pride in their own identity. Yet, their ambitions were kept in check and their aspirations awaited fulfillment.

Then came the infamous 9/11. The destruction of the Twin Towers in 2001 spurred tremendous curiosity about Islam. Muslim social engagement had to burst open, not simply as a line of cultural defense, but as a public expression of the Islamic ethos. America had to witness a socially engaged Islam to overcome the media's caricature inculcating dislike and distrust of Islam and Muslims. Jamal Barzinji was ready for the challenge.

Social engagement is defined by what one does, often voluntarily and without compensation or compulsion. It is delineated by who one interacts with and it is determined by what the two sides exchange in the process of their interaction. Social engagement is productive and desirable when the exchange benefits society or a community at large and could be harmful and destructive when it infringes upon the well-being of that society or community. Acts of beneficial social engagement involve a sense of empathy, an ability to compellingly communicate, and a willingness to place one's own benefits subservient to those of others. The goal of social engagement is, from the Qur'anic perspective, a state of *islah*, as Prophet Hud said to the people of 'Ad, "I only desire (your) betterment to the best of my power." (Qur'an 11:88), *إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ*

A sharp focus on *Islah*, or reform, of how, why, and what Muslims think about their legacy, their purpose, and their future was at the heart of the outstanding publication enterprise that the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) is best known for. Dr Jamal al-Barzinji guided this undertaking superbly with a steady hand and a sharp focus on relevance and quality.

Once he asked me to abridge a significant work of an esteemed scholar, translated from Arabic into English by a well-qualified translator. The translation was well done, faithful to the nuances of the Arabic language, with long chains of hadith references and personal anecdotes of the author's experience. It

would be excellent reading for a culturally sensitive reader, but would it appeal to the general American reader, Muslim or not? I took my first draft of the abridgment to him, and he rejected it without ceremony. He said I was too gentle with the author's personal anecdotes, and too cautious to not temper with cultural nuances of the work Dr Jamal asked me to go back to work. Be "brutal", he advised, which I did. When I presented the final draft, Jamal Barzinji said that was exactly what he wanted. The finished work was published as I had abridged it.

I experienced that style of critique at other times, too—straightforward assessment, specific suggestion, and appreciative acceptance when the work was done right.

Since its founding in 1981, IIIT has been the home base for Dr Jamal's energetic intellectual leadership and service. Although trained in a discipline remote from the domain of Social Science, he could hold his own in any discussion among scholars of Social Science disciplines. His penetrating questions impressed his audience. His critique, when critique was in order, disarmed them. I felt that the source of this remarkable ability was his focus on the core of the discussion, not its periphery. My own interaction with IIIT leaders and associated scholars confirmed their respect and consideration of his perspective on various issues, and well deservedly so.

In a nutshell, social engagement is a process that encompasses communication, interaction and exchange. In communication, Dr Jamal was persuasive and persistent when necessary. In interactions with others, he was friendly but focused on the desired results of that interaction. In exchanges resulting from communication and interactions, he would not be short-changed but recognized the give and take approach to achieve the desired results.

And persuasive he was. An amusing incident that typified his

persuasion skills happened when, arriving a little late at an airline gate, he managed to persuade the gate agent to have a plane that had left the gate come back to let him in, generally a no-no in flight operations. I don't know how he pulled that off, but I sensed from other interactions that his secret was to make the other party feel that they had more ability, more power, and more creativity than they thought they had. That usually left the other party defenseless.

I had the opportunity to work and travel with him when a major donor asked IIIT to recommend a few American universities as recipients of major grants. The IIIT advising group worked methodically and diligently to make recommendations that would withstand any scrutiny. In one case, it had to negotiate a compromise when the criteria of our recommendations did not match the needs and policies of a selected institution. I worked on gathering and analyzing data that helped the group rank potential beneficiaries. Dr Jamal was focused and deliberative throughout, with no thought of taking short-cuts or disbursing favors.

Leaders of a wide range of Muslim initiatives felt the impact of Dr Jamal Barzinji's social engagement over a long period of time. This impact included the establishment and growth of major Muslim organizations and professional societies that were born out of the womb of what some fondly called "mother MSA" Leaders from a wide spectrum of organizations—from the intellectual to the practical—set up or advanced to the betterment of the Muslim community and engaged in inter-religious collaboration, sought his counsel and encouragement. His advice to them was pragmatic and idealistic at the same time. He saw no contradiction between practical business-like effort and uncompromising fidelity to the Islamic ethos in achieving the desired state of *Islah*.

In my time at the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) as

well at IIIT, I had managed numerous conferences, and had done a decent job of that, if I may say so myself. There was one—albeit a small one—where things didn't go quite as well. Dr Jamal approached me and said something to the effect that we had been managing conferences for some thirty years and asked what happened here. I shared some reasons which didn't sound convincing to me, either. I don't remember his words, but I do remember the “we” in them. The ability of leaders to associate themselves with a situation in which the goal is not to berate but to together seek improvement and solutions, is a mark of good leadership. Dr Jamal Barzinji was one such leader.

For a few years, a sumptuous barbeque dinner at his home followed by inspiring conversation served as the culmination of IIIT's Summer Institutes for students and scholars. Dr Jamal and his family were gracious hosts, leaving their guests looking forward to the following year's invitation.

As the *de facto* leader of an intellectual movement as well as several strategic initiatives, Dr Jamal was prominent where it mattered most. Always separating the kernel from the chaff, he helped emerging Muslim initiatives stay focused on results. In any discussion I had with him, I came out wondering how long I may have wandered around without that focus.

With unwavering commitment to *Islah* as the goal of social engagement, Dr Jamal Barzinji lived his professional life always seeking “*betterment to the best of my power.*”

## Contributors

**Professor Anis Ahmad** is a social scientist and Meritorious Professor, he specializes in Islamic thought and jurisprudence. He is meritorious Professor of comparative ethics and religion and founder Vice Chancellor of Riphah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Prime Minister of Pakistan appointed him Chairman National Rahmatulil 'Almin Authority in March 2022. President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan HE Dr Arif Alvi conferred on him the prestigious *Sitara-e-Imtiaz* (2022), for his services in recognition of his outstanding contributions as a religious scholar and his devotion to the study and dissemination of Islamic knowledge.

He is the Editor In-Chief of the journal *Islam and the West*, published from Islamabad since 1997. He has published more than 90 research papers on socio-political and educational issues and contributed articles in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Islamic World* (New York and London); *Encyclopedia of Islamic Economics*, (London UK); and *Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Turkey); *The Muslim World Book Review*, (Leicester UK). His latest books include *Jinnah's Islamic Vision of Pakistan* (2021), *Al-Fatihah: A Thematic Study* (2021), *Issues in Islamic Society and State*, (2019)

and *Gender, Law and Society in Islam*, Islamabad (2019).

**Dr Ahmet Alibašić** is a Professor of Islamic civilization and Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, University of Sarajevo. He was educated in Malaysia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Currently, his research and teaching interests include Islam in Europe, good governance, church-state relations, and Inter-religious Dialogue. Most recently, he has been one of the editors of the *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* (2009-2021) and *the Journal of Muslims in Europe*. Dr Alibašić also heads the Center for Advanced Studies in Sarajevo and serves as an executive director at RESILIENCE.

**Dr Hisham Yahya Altalib** was born in Mosul, Iraq, in 1940. He holds a B.Sc. in Electrical Engineering from Liverpool University (1962) and a Master's degree and Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering from Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana, U.S.A, 1972 and 1974, respectively. While he was studying to become an electrical engineer, Dr Altalib became active in Islamic work first in the UK and next in North America, which he continues to this day. He has held several positions in various Islamic organizations, including founder and director of the Leadership Training Department of the Muslim Students Association of the United States and Canada (MSA); Secretary-General of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO), and founding member of SAAR Foundation and member of its Board of Directors. He is also founding member and current President of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). He is the author of *Training Guide for Islamic Workers* (2001); *Inviting to Islam: Ethics of Engagement* (2014); *Parent-Child Relations: A Guide to Raising Children* (2016). He has conducted many training camps and seminars in the United States and abroad.



**M. Omar Ashraf** holds an M.B.A. from University of Central Oklahoma (1981) and an M.S. in Industrial Engineering from North Dakota State University (1976). He has been Executive Vice President of Sterling Management Group, Inc. (“SMG”) from 1998 to 2016, Vice-President of Sterling Advisory Services, Inc. since its inception to 2016, Vice President of Mar-Jac Investments, Inc. (“Mar-Jac”) from 1990 to 1998 and Executive Vice President of Mar-Jac Poultry, Inc. and a member of its Board of Directors from 1996 to 2016. He has been involved in the management of Mar-Jac Poultry, an integrated poultry company located in Gainesville, Georgia, since 1986.

**Professor Jasser Auda** is a scholar of Islam. His latest contribution is a *New Maqasid Methodology* that aims to bring about a restructuring of Islamic scholarship around a complex network of the higher objectives/*Maqasid* of the Qur’an and Prophetic traditions. He is the President of *Maqasid* Institute Global—a think tank registered and building research and educational projects in a number of countries. He is al-Shatibi Chair for Maqasid Studies at the International Peace University in South Africa; a Founding and Board Member of the International Union for Muslim Scholars; a Member of the Fiqh Council of North America; a Member of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, and the Chairman of the Canadian Fiqh Council.

Professor Auda has lectured on Islam and its law in dozens of countries, and has written 25 books in Arabic and English, some of which were translated to 30 languages. He is currently working on a *maqasid* / objectives-based commentary on the Qur’an.

**Professor Malik Badri** (1932-2021), was a Sudanese author, clinician and professor of psychology whose claim to fame was as founder of the modern Islamic psychology. His first influential book, *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists* (1979) a new path in

the field of psychology. It opened the vistas of Muslim psychologist, social scientists away from the Prophetic proverb of not following into the “lizard hole”.

His most important other publications include; *The Psychology of Arab Children’s Drawings* (1966); *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study* (2000); *Islam and AIDS: Between Scorn, Pity and Justice* (2009); *‘Abu Zayd al-Balkhi’s Sustenance of the Soul: The Cognitive Behaviour Therapy of a Ninth Century Physician* (2013); *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study* (2018). Among his research papers published in English are: “Islam and Analytical Psychology,” “Islam and Alcoholism,” and “The Catastrophe of AIDS” all of which are foundational publications in the field of Islamic psychology.

**Sister Suzanne al-Barzinji** the wife of *Almarhum* Dr Jamal al-Barzinji has been an active member of the American Muslim community for more than 45 years. Beginning in the early 1970’s, she worked within the national Muslim Student’s Association (MSA) to organize events and connect newly immigrated students, providing a safe haven for them to practice their faith. In the 80’s and 90’s she played a role in the establishment of the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) and the launch of a growing number of its services. She was a founding member of the ADAMS Women’s group that organized educational programs, *halaqas*, and frequently cooked to feed the members of the community alongside fundraising efforts. In a time before full-time Islamic schools were available, she took the initiative to develop and run the ADAMS Sunday school program for many years to provide supplemental Islamic education to the children of the community.

Additionally, she worked closely with refugee agencies and social workers to welcome and resettle the growing flow of refugees arriving from Bosnia and Iraq. During the last 15 years,

Suzanne has devoted an increasing amount of time to supporting local social assistance organizations such as the Foundation for Appropriate and Immediate Temporary Help (FAITH), an organization dedicated to the welfare and needs of poor Muslims in the greater Washington DC area, as well as *Mozaic*, which focuses on settlement and assistance for refugees. One of her many initiatives at *Mozaic* is focused on raising funds for and providing new Eid clothes to refugee children for their first Eid in America. Leveraging her background in the study of the Arabic language, in 2006 she published a book on Arabic and Muslim names.

Sister Suzanne also developed a deep interest in the growing amount of often ignored mental health issues afflicting many within the Muslim community. This prompted her to establish a *Mental Wellness Program* within ADAMS to begin addressing issues which had long been considered taboo, and to provide information, training, support and therapy for those in need. Alongside her community and charitable efforts.

**Dr Zaid Barzinji** is a founder and the executive director of the Maqasid Institute. He is an economist, and a member of the International Union of Muslim Scholars and the International Islamic Fiqh Academy. He has over 25 years of experience contributing to and leading educational institutions and NGOs. Prior to joining the Maqasid Institute, Zaid had 15 years of professional experience in the field of advanced analytics and artificial intelligence and was Vice President of risk modeling at a top US financial institution.

Zaid obtained his Ph.D. in Economics, specializing in the International monetary system, from the University of Utah and his Bachelor in Islamic Economics from the International Islamic University Malaysia. He is a commentator on business and economic affairs at several major media outlets. His current

research interests are focused on developing a maqasid approach to sustainable development, artificial intelligence, and global strategic studies.

**Dr Katherine Bullock** is a lecturer in Islamic politics in the Department of Political Science, University of Toronto at Mississauga. She is a TV host for Sound Vision Foundation's Canadian Muslim News and Director of Special Programs. She is also the President of Compass Books, dedicated to publishing top-quality books about Islam and Muslims in English. Her own publications include: *Muslim Women Activists in North America: Speaking for Ourselves* (2005); *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes* (2007) which has been translated into Arabic, Chinese, French, Malayalam, Tamil, and Turkish.

**Douglas Carnes**, graduated from University of Georgia in 1972 with a BBA degree in Accounting. During the year 1985-2006, he was the Vice President of Poultry Operations Mar-Jac Poultry. For last 20 years, he has also served on the National Boards and Committees of Poultry Associations in USA. Currently, he is a member of Board of Directors of Mar Jac Poultry, Inc Gainesville GA.

**Professor John L. Esposito** is Distinguished University Professor and Founding Director of the Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and The Bridge Initiative: Protecting Pluralism—Ending Islamophobia at Georgetown University. In 2019 he was S. Rajaratnam Professor of Strategic Studies, Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore.

His more than 55 books include: *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam* (2002); *Shariah: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2018); *The Future of Islam* (2010); *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (2007); *Religion and Violence* (2016);

*Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (2002); *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (1999); *Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring* (2015); *Islamophobia and the Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century* (2011). Esposito's writings are translated into more than 45 languages.

**Professor President Emerita Heidi Hadsell** is attached to the Hartford International University Connecticut, USA, where she taught courses in Interreligious Ethics. She graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science; a Master's Degree in Comparative Religion at Columbia University and received a PhD degree from the University of Southern California in the study of Religion with a concentration in Ethics.

**His Excellency Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim** is currently holding the office of the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia. He was also Malaysia's Minister of Education from 1986 to 1991, during which he introduced the National Education Philosophy in 1988 to replace the system inherited from the British colonial, besides undertaking substantial reform to improve the educational system, including the introduction of Life Skills subject, as well as KBSR and KBSM. Anwar previously helmed the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) as its President from 1988 to 1998 and set its course to be one of the renowned international universities. During his ABIM leadership, the intellectual rigor among Muslim youth was conspicuous as he commanded a plethora of Muslim intellectual giants' works to be translated into Malay. Anwar also held teaching positions at Oxford University in London, Johns Hopkins University and Georgetown University in the United States. Anwar ranked number 20 as the most influential politicians in top world 500 Muslims by the Jordanian Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre (RISSC) in 2022. He has published a number of papers and a book titled, *The Asian*

*Renaissance* (2008); as well as writing forewords to several books. His latest work, outlining his grand vision for Malaysia, was published in Malay language titled *MADANI: Visi dan Kerangka Dasar Reformasi* (2022) *SCRIPT: For a Better Malaysia* (English version, 2022).

**Jerry Pete Martin** Graduated from University of Georgia in 1973 with a BBA degree in Accounting. Mr. Martin is associated with Mar-Jac Poultry, headquartered in Gainesville, Georgia, U.S.A since 1985 till present. He is the former Chief Executive Officer and Vice President Operations. He has worked at the Mar-Jac Poultry in different positions since 1985 until present. Starting as Assistant Complex Manager—1985-1990; Complex Manager—1990-2005; Vice-President of Operations—2005-2018. Currently, he is a member of Board of Directors of Mar Jac Poultry, Inc Gainesville GA.

**Imam Mohamed Magid** is the Executive Imam of All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center in Sterling, Virginia. He is the Chairman of International Interfaith Peace Corps (IIPC) and the former President of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). He is also the Chairman of *Muflehun*, a think tank which focuses on confronting violent extremist thought through research-driven preventative programs within a religious paradigm.

Imam Magid has a long history of commitment to public service through organizations, such as The Peaceful Families Project. Imam Magid has co-authored three books: *Before You Tie the Knot: A Guide for Couples* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014); *Reflections on the Qur'an* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011); and *Change from Within: Diverse Perspectives on Domestic Violence in Muslim Communities* (Peaceful Families Project, 2007).

**Dr M. Yaqub Mirza** is President and CEO of Sterling Management Group. Dr Mirza is also Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Amana Mutual Funds (with assets of nearly 5.50 billion USD). He is a member of the Board of Directors, University Islamic Financial Corporation, a banking subsidiary and a former member of the Board of Trustees, George Mason University Foundation, Inc. He is a member of the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee and Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of Shenandoah University and advisor to the Byrd School of Business, Shenandoah University. Dr Mirza is also President and Trustee of Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) at the Shenandoah University. He is also a member of the Council of Advisors, Muslim Philanthropy Initiative at Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Indiana University.

Dr Mirza is the author of *Five Pillars of Prosperity: Essentials of Faith-Based Wealth Building* (White Cloud Press, 2014). Also co-author of *Heavenly Returns What the Abrahamic Faiths Teach Us about Financial and Spiritual Well-Being*, (Amazon, 2022). Dr Mirza holds a PhD in Physics and MA in Teaching Science from the University of Texas at Dallas.

**Dr Younus Y. Mirza** is a Visiting Researcher at Georgetown University and the Founding Director of Global Virtual Learning at Shenandoah University. He wrote his dissertation in Arabic and Islamic Studies from Georgetown University and has taught at Millsaps and Allegheny Colleges.

His current research focuses on the relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an and the shared stories between them. He is a co-author of the book *The Bible and the Qur'an: Biblical Figures in the Islamic Tradition* (2018) and has published in various journals such as the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (JAAR), the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* (JQS) and *Islam Christian-Muslim*

*Relations* (ICMR). In his teaching profession, he has been profiled by Interfaith America and has won a teaching award for his First Year Seminar course. He teaches courses on the Qur'an; Biblical and Qur'anic Prophets; Marriage and Sexuality in Islam and Islam and Other Religions.

**Mahmoud Mohamed** is former Vice President of Finance of Mar Jac Poultry (1984-2011) headquartered in Gainesville, Georgia, U.S.A. Currently, he is a member of Board of Directors of Mar Jac Poultry, Inc Gainesville GA.

**Professor Abdulaziz Sachedina**, is the holder of the Endowed IIIT Chair in Islamic Studies at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

Dr Sachedina's publications include: *Islamic Messianism* (State University of New York, 1980); *Human Rights and the Conflicts of Culture*, co-authored (University of South Carolina, 1988); *The Just Ruler in Shiite Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1988); *The Prolegomena to the Qur'an* (Oxford University Press, 1998), *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (Oxford University Press, 2002), *Islamic Biomedical Ethics: Theory and Application* (Oxford University Press, February 2009), *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights* (Oxford University Press, September 2009), *Islamic Ethics: Fundamental Aspects of Human Conduct* (Oxford University Press, 2022), in addition to numerous articles in academic journals.

**Professor Louay M. Safi** is a professor of Political Science and Islamic thought at the Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU) in Qatar, and Senior Fellow with the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), Washington DC. Dr Safi has taught at several universities, including Wayne State University (WSU), Michigan, (1988-92), the International Islamic University of Malaysia (1994-99), George Washington University (2001-2002),



Indiana University and Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) (2009-2010), and Georgetown University (2010-2011).

Dr Safi is the author of 22 books, including *Islam and the Trajectory of Globalization* (Routledge, 2022), *The Foundation of Knowledge* (2014), *The Qur'anic Narrative* (Praeger 2008), and *Tensions and Transitions in the Muslim World*, (University Press of America, 2003).

**Sister Wafa Shalabi**, is a close friend of Suzanne and Dr Jamal al Barzinji. They share companionship since their high school and professional days in Syria, Saudi Arabia and USA until today.

**Dr Ermin Sinanović** is the Executive Director of the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) at Shenandoah University, where he is also a Scholar in Residence. His most recent co-edited volume is *The Muslim Resolutions: Bosniak Responses to World War Two Atrocities in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2021). He has published articles and chapters in various scholarly journals. Dr Ermin curates the “Islam on the Edges” podcast for the *Maydan* at George Mason University. His research is on global Islamic revival, contemporary Islamic thought, and the institutionalization of Islam in the Balkans and Southeast Asia. Ermin studied at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and the Maxwell School of Syracuse University. He speaks Bosnian, English, Arabic and Malay.

**Dr Iqbal Unus** is Board Chair of The Islamic Seminary of America (TISA), and Board Member of Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). He was president of Muslim Students Association of the U.S. and Canada (MSA, 1975) and held several positions at Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers (AMSE, 1980s). He served as trustee of Amana Mutual Funds Trust (1989-2022), and as director-at-large of United Nations Association of the National Capital Area (UNA-NCA, 2016-2022).

## CONTRIBUTORS

He collaborated with the Research Committee of the U.S. Mosque Survey 2011 and was a Fellow at Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (ACMCU) at Georgetown University (2012-2013).

Dr Unus served in executive positions, including secretary general of Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), between 1977 and 1989. In 1990 He joined International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), serving for 30 years as director of administration and director of The Fairfax Institute (TFI).

Dr Unus has published several articles in *Islamic Horizons* (USA). He has also published two children's books and a book chapter in "Governance in Muslim Community Organizations" in *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square: Hopes, Fears, and Aspirations*, (2004), and Iqbal J. Unus (eds.); *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical and Scriptural Analysis* (2011); *The Wonderful World of Water* (2010); *Muslim American Life* (2014); *A Caliph for Our Time: How Abu Bakr's Inaugural Address Can Transform Leadership Today* (2022); *Moses on Leadership: A Qur'anic Narration* (2014); *How Millennials Can Lead Us Out of the Mess We're In: A Jew, a Muslim, and a Christian Share Leadership Lessons from the Life of Moses*, (2020).

**Joel Williams** graduated from the University of Georgia in 1979 with a Bachelors of Poultry Science. In 1984, he joined the Mar-Jac Poultry as a Breeder Hatchery Manager where in 1987, he was promoted to the position of Live Production Manager; in 2004 was promoted to the position of Complex Manager and in 2017, he became Vice President of Operations the Mar-Jac Poultry until present. He has worked at for a period of 39 plus years.

**The Barzinji Family** article written collectively by Dr Jamal al-Barzinji's children namely, Iman, Fadwa, Ghaida, Jamal, Sohaib, Zaid, Ali and Firas.

# Index

## A

- Abdelwahab El-Affendi, Dr, 56  
Abdul Ghani Shindala, 49  
AbdulHamid AbuSulyaman, x  
Abu Bakr al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī,  
137  
Abu Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, 136  
Abu Ishāq Al-Shātibī, 137  
Abu Zayd al-Balkhī, 136  
Abubaker Al-Shingieti, Dr, xxii  
Abul-Ma‘alī al-Juwaynī, 136  
Adrienne Bloss, 160, 164  
Advancing Education in Muslim  
Societies (AEMS), 56  
Ahmad Al Qadi, 60  
Ahmad al-Raysuni, 139  
Ahmad Sakr, Dr, 52, 60  
Al Waleed bin Talal Al Saud,  
Prince, 44  
Al-‘Izz Ibn ‘Abdus-Salām, 136  
Ali Mazrui, 104, 126  
*alim*, xviii  
All Dulles Area Muslim Society  
(ADAMS), x, xix, xxiii, xxiv,  
xxv, 39, 57, 73, 74, 76, 121,  
128, 166, 167, 168, 169  
*al-siyāsa al-shar‘iyya*, 139  
Altaf Hussain, Dr, 98  
Alwaleed Foundation, xxii, 44,  
45  
American  
Muslim, xvi, xvii, xviii, xxii,  
xxiv, 25, 26, 27, 33, 34, 53,  
57, 58, 74, 76, 101, 107, 171,  
179  
Muslim activists, 27  
Muslim community, xviii,

INDEX

- xxii, xxiv, 25, 33, 34, 58, 76, 107, 171, 179
- Ayatollah Khomeini, 122
- B**
- Ba'athists, x, 51
- Bill Clinton, 30
- Buddhism, 125
- C**
- Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW), xxvii, 33, 39, 168
- Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy (CSID), xxi
- Christian, xvii, xxii, 43, 44, 45, 46, 86, 88, 107, 122, 124, 125 terminology, 122
- D**
- da'wa*, 25, 124
- ḍarūriyyāt*, 136
- Diyafa*, xxv
- Dzulkifli Bin Abdul Razak, Tan Sri Dato', xx
- E**
- Ebrahim Rasool, 142
- Ermin Sinanović, Dr, xxix
- F**
- festschrift*, xxv
- American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE), 15
- American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (AJISS), 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 164
- American Muslim Council (AMC), 53
- American University in Cairo (AUC), 44
- American University of Beirut (AUB), 44
- Amira Sonbol, 44
- Amy Sarch, 164
- Anas al-Shaikh-Ali, Dr, xiii, 56, 95, 134
- Anis Ahmad, Dr, 53
- Anwar bin Ibrahim, Dato' Seri, xiv, xx, xxi, xxviii, xxix, 42, 43, 56, 62, 92, 93, 95
- Arif Khan, 35
- Association of Muslim Scientists & Engineers (AMSE), xxi, 53, 61, 103
- Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), xxi, 53, 61, 62, 66, 99, 102, 103, 104, 120, 149, 153, 154
- ayahs*, 16

*fiqh*, 126

*fiqh al-aqalliyyat*, xxiv

Fiqh Council of North America  
(FCNA), xxv, 33, 57, 76, 101

*fiqhi*, 28

*fitan*, 115

## G

Gary Moore, 34

George H.W. Bush, 30, 31

George W. Bush, 30, 44, 158

## H

*hadith*, xxvii, 36, 115, 149, 172

*ḥajīyyāt*, 136

*ḥajj*, 5

Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, 136

*halal*, 65

*haram*, 65

Hartford Seminary, xiii, xxii, 85,  
86, 88, 89, 90, 158

*hijab*, 149

*Ḥikma*, xvi, 137

Hinduism, 125

Hisham Altalib, Dr, xix, xxi, 27,  
32, 42, 60, 95, 99, 133

*ḥiyal*, 137

Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān, 115

*hufaz*, 167

## I

*ibadah*, xvii

Ibn Babawayh al-Qummī, 137

Ibn Kathīr, 137

Ibn Taymiyyah, 137

Ibrahim Abu Rabi, Dr, 86

*iftar*, 16, 146

*ihram*, 5

*Iḥsān*, xvi, 10

*ijtihād*, 58, 126

Ilyas Bayunus, Dr, 60

*Imam*, xxiv, 4, 17, 55

Imam Mohamed Magid, 36, 76

Imtiyaz Yusuf, xxv, 93

Ingrid Mattson, Dr, 87

interfaith relations, xxi, xxiv

International Center for Religion  
& Diplomacy (ICRD), xix

International Institute of Islamic  
Thought (IIIT), x-xiv, xix-xxi,  
xxiii, 20, 37, 42-43, 45, 52, 55-  
56, 58, 61, 66, 73, 75, 86-90,  
92, 94-95, 97-101, 103-106,  
111-112, 114, 119-120, 126-  
128, 130, 132-133, 135-136,  
138, 141, 143, 146-147, 153-  
154, 158, 172-175, 177, 185,  
187

International Islamic University  
of Malaysia (IIUM), xi, xii, xx,

INDEX

- 53, 62, 66, 92, 93, 95, 98, 109,  
120, 142, 161, 162, 163, 165,  
182, 185, 186
- Iqbal Unus, Dr, xix, 60, 63, 95
- Iraq, x, xviii, 14, 29, 48, 49, 50,  
51, 52, 73, 113, 123, 177, 179
- Islah*, xxviii, 18, 19, 170, 172,  
174, 175
- Islamic  
awakening, 56, 122  
community, 113  
education, 76, 95, 96, 141, 142,  
179  
institutions, xx, 25, 89  
jurisprudence, 67, 134, 136  
morality, xv  
movement, 55, 67, 134, 139  
Revolution, 122  
scholar, xxiii, 13, 20, 93, 103,  
106, 178  
sciences, 17  
scripture, 29  
Studies, xxii, 17, 112, 113, 120,  
124, 125, 134, 143, 158, 164,  
177, 184, 185  
thought, x, 42, 67, 94, 119,  
131, 134, 135, 140, 148, 176,  
185, 186  
values, xxvii, 62, 75  
virtues, xv, xvi
- Islamic Medical Association  
(IMA), 61
- Islamic Society of North  
America (ISNA), xviii, xix, 63,  
99, 106, 174, 183, 186, 187
- Islamization of Knowledge, xi,  
xxi, 61, 94, 96, 103, 127, 132,  
134
- Ismail al Faruqi, x, xiii, xvi, xxi,  
xxv, 41, 42, 53, 60, 61, 94, 99,  
127, 133
- J**
- Jamal Attiah, 139
- Jamal Badawi, Dr, 60
- Japan, 27, 28
- Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, Dr, 56
- Jewish, 124
- John Henry Sununu, 31
- John L. Esposito, xxix, 41
- John O. Voll, 44
- jumu'a*, 57
- K**
- khalifa*, 12
- L**
- Lois Lamya al Faruqi, 41

**M**

- madhāhib*, 136
- Mahmoud M. Ayoub, Dr, xxii, 104, 126
- Mahmoud Rashdan, Dr, 60, 63
- Malaysia, ix, x, xi, xiv, xx, xxi, xxviii, 19, 27, 43, 61, 62, 66, 92, 93, 95, 103, 109, 120, 140, 142, 161, 167, 177, 180, 182, 186
- Malik Badri, 62
- Maqāṣid*, 126, 130, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 160, 167, 178, 180
- Mar-Jac Poultry, xx, 70, 72, 75, 78, 79, 80, 81, 178, 181, 183, 187
- maṣlaḥa*, 137
- Md Nur Manuty, Dr, ix
- Michael Spindler, 31
- Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi, 138
- Mohamed R. Mansoor, Dr, 85
- Mohammad Al-Tahir Ibn Ashur, Shaykh, 138
- Mohammad Hashim Kamali, 139
- Mohd Kamal Hassan, Dr, 62, 98
- Mona Abul-Fadl, Dr, 102, 133
- Muhammad Al-Ghazali, Shaykh, 132
- Muhammad Emara, Dr, 133
- Muhammad Kamal Imam, Dr, 133
- mujahid*, 41, 46
- Muqtedar Khan, 151
- Muslim American, 42, 75, 128, 159, 168, 187
- Muslim Ban, 159
- Muslim community, xvi, xix, xxiv, 4, 24, 25, 38, 51, 57, 58, 61, 63, 76, 89, 100, 107, 121, 131, 141, 166, 167, 174, 180
- Muslim Students Association of the U.S. and Canada (MSA), xviii, 24, 25, 52, 55, 60, 66, 99, 133, 170, 171, 174, 177, 179, 186
- Muslim Students Society (MSS), 50, 52
- Muslim World League of Saudi Arabia, 25
- Muwafaqāt*, 137

**N**

- Najmuddīn Al-Ṭūfī, 137
- Nancy Pelosi, 30
- nasīḥa*, 30
- Newt Gingrich, 31

INDEX

- North America Islamic Trust 186  
 (NAIT), xx, 24, 25, 52, 55, 61,  
 66, 171
- O**
- Osman Ahmad, 60
- P**
- Paine Webber, 34  
 Prophet  
 Hud, 172  
 Muḥammad, xvii, xxvi, xxvii,  
 73, 115, 131, 144, 153
- Q**
- qadhf*, 137
- R**
- Rābiṭat al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*, 25, 26  
 Radwan Masmoudi, Dr, 105  
*Raḥma*, xvi  
 Ramadan, xiv, 6, 7, 16, 17, 146,  
 163  
 Rita Katz, 101
- S**
- ṣadaqa jāriya*, 34, 59  
 Safwat Saka Amine, 26  
*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 115  
 Saudi Arabia, x, xxi, 26, 94, 153,  
 Sayyid M. Syeed, 95  
 Shah Waliullah Dehlawī, 137  
 Shaikh Muhammad, 13  
 Shamsuddīn Ibn Al-Qayyim, 137  
*Sharī‘ah*, xx, xxv, 38, 66, 96, 135,  
 136, 138, 139, 142, 146, 160,  
 167  
*Shia*, 17  
 Shihābuddīn Al-Qarafī, 136  
 Steve Emerson, 101  
*Sunnah*, 18, 73, 112, 137, 153  
 Suzanne Barzinji, x, xvi, xxviii,  
 xxix, 6, 22, 23, 25, 29, 36, 37,  
 85, 179
- T**
- tafsir*, 167  
 Taha Jabir al Alwani, Dr Shaykh,  
 57, 102  
*taḥsīniyyāt*, 136  
*Tajdīd*, 18, 19, 51  
*Tajwīd*, 112, 167  
 Tanveer A. Mirza, Dr, 38  
*Tawḥīd*, xv, xvi, xxvii, 106  
 Tijani Abu Jidairi, Dr, 60  
 Tracy Fitzsimmons, 159
- U**
- ummah*, xiv, xxiv, xxvii, 26, 39,



55, 56, 67, 71, 99, 121, 130,  
131, 135, 145  
University of Sarajevo (UNSA),  
161, 162  
*uṣul al-fiqh*, 137

**V**

Violent Religious Extremism  
(VRE), xix

**W**

*waqf*, 25, 32, 100  
World Assembly of Muslim  
Youth (WAMY), xxi, 53

**Y**

M. Yaqub Mirza, Dr, xvi, xviii,  
xix, xx, xxi, xxix, 28, 31, 32,  
42, 60, 72, 85, 95, 120, 159

Younus Y. Mirza, Dr, xxix

Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, Dr, 133

Yvonne Haddad, 44

**Z**

Zaid Barzinji, 145

*Zakah*, 33, 38, 75, 151, 164

Ziauddin Sardar, Dr, xiii, 56

Dr. Jamal al-Barzinji (*Rahimahullah*—‘May Allah ﷻ have mercy on him’) a socially engaged global Muslim passed away on 26 September 2015. He lived a life enlivened by a full commitment to the Islamic faith with a spirit of social engagement. Dr. Jamal al-Barzinji’s life illustrates an example of an American Muslim rooted in the principles of *Tawhid* (the unicity of Allah ﷻ and embodied in the praxis of the Islamic virtues of *Rahma*—compassion and mercy, *Ihsan*—benevolence, *‘Adl*—justice, and *Hikma*—wisdom. The fruit of his Islamic social engagement is exemplified through his intra-religious and interreligious engagements with people from different walks of life he met and who came to know him during his lifetime.

This felicitation volume in the honor of Dr. Jamal al-Barzinji is a compilation of articles to memorialize and keep alive his legacy as an exemplary model of a socially engaged global Muslim. It contains contributions by people from different fields such as business management, institutional organizations and academia who were closely associated with Dr. Jamal al-Barzinji and whose lives were impacted by his personality as an exemplary personality of Islamic social engagement through the values and ethics of religious humanism, moderation, tolerance and constructing peaceful interfaith relations in the United States and around the world.

Associate Professor Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf is currently non-Resident Research Fellow at the Center for Contemporary Islamic World (CICW), Shenandoah University, Leesburg, USA. Formerly, he was an Associate Professor and the Coordinator for the Islamization of Knowledge Program and also the Islam and Buddhism Program at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC-IIUM) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Dr. Yusuf specializes in the study of Religion with a focus on Muslim-Buddhist relations and dialogue, Islam in Thailand and Southeast Asia.



Center for Islam in the Contemporary World  
Shenandoah University



Islamic Book Trust  
Kuala Lumpur