

CLARITY

PERIODIC BRIEF ON THE PLATFORM OF WORLD ISLAMIC DISCOURSE AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES



FALL 2010 EDITION



مؤسسة طابه
Tabah Foundation

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Research | P3 |
| Organizational Development | P5 |
| Initiatives | P8 |
| Media | P11 |

Tabah Newsletter Issue 1 Fall 2010

Published by the Office of Communications & External Relations

Copyright 2010 Tabah Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any manner without the express written consent of the Tabah Foundation, except in the case of brief quotations with full and accurate citations in critical articles or reviews.

Tabah Foundation

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Tel: +971-2-558-9541

Fax +971-2-558-9540

www.tabahfoundation.org

Copy Editor and Translation, Amar Benatia

Design and principle photography, Ilyas Curtis

Additional photography, Corbis Images, Hassan Sidkey, Mustafa Davis, and Sohail Nakhooda

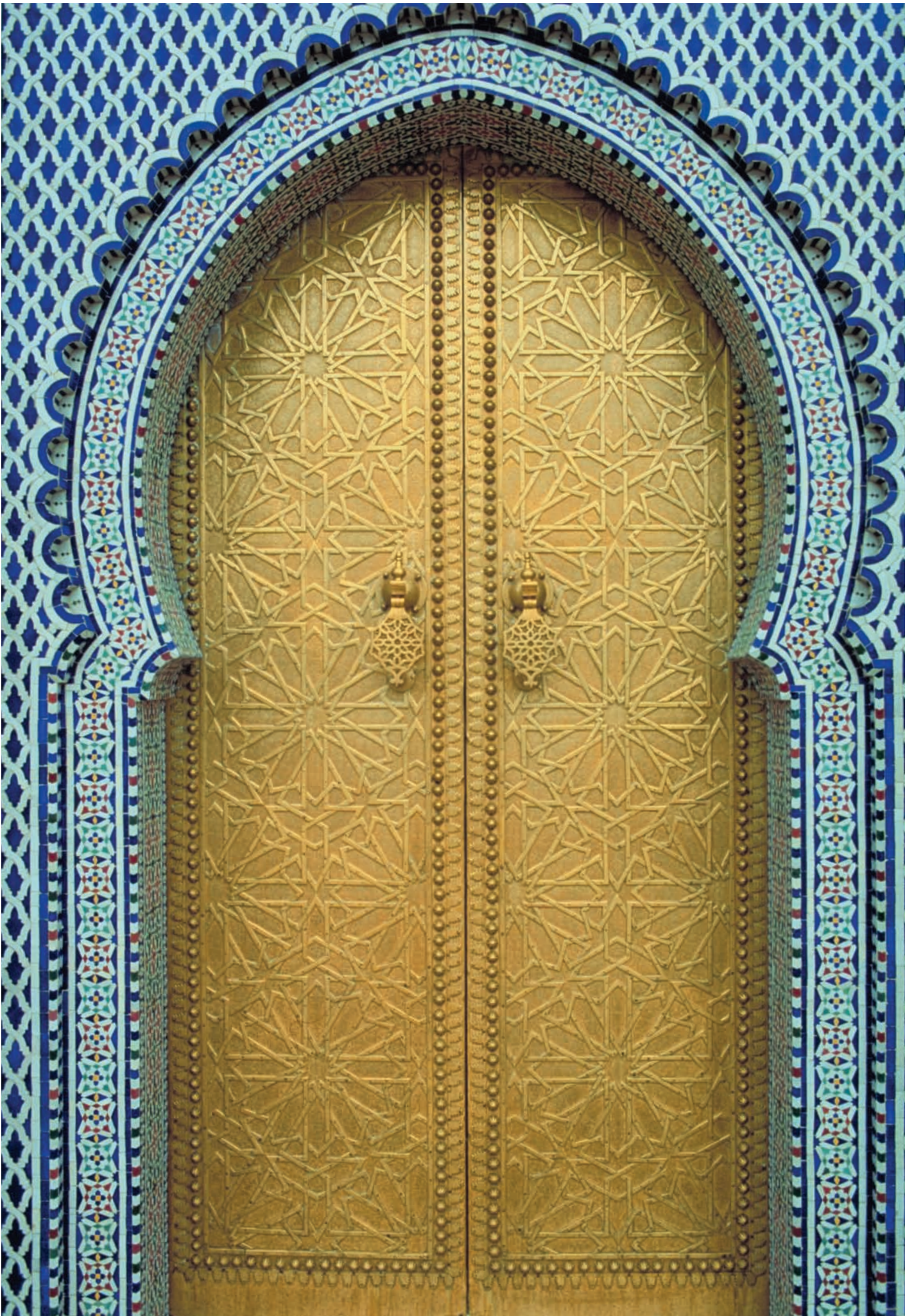
Distinguished Achievements

Tabah Foundation has made a great progress toward the renewal of contemporary Islamic discourse to fit the needs of humanity and bridging the gaps among the different communities, religions, and races coexisting in our larger global community; delivering its noble message, and fostering a common ground for mutual understanding and appreciation of values and principles, productive discussions, and proactive change in the world. Tabah Foundation focused on providing analytical briefs for scholars and simultaneously maintaining constant open communication channels with senior scholars who in turn influence students and the next generation of scholars. Additionally, Tabah works together with organizations that have the same objectives, that strive to create a common ground for rapport, understanding, and exchange of opinions founded in mutual respect.

Despite the short duration since its inception, we hope that Tabah's numerous outstanding achievements in the areas of institutional development, research, and media dissemination will contribute to this progress as the Foundation continues its noble cause. This allows the Foundation to reach a larger segment of relevant entities in various parts of the globe. By focusing on the common traits that bring together the various peoples, communities, and religions of the world, Tabah Foundation continues to build on its first five years to deliver its message to even larger segments of relevant entities in various parts of the globe.



© Ilyas Curtis



General Director's Note

The Need for an Effective Contemporary Islamic Discourse



Strong contemporary challenges facing the Islamic nation dictate the need for a renewal of Islamic discourse to effectively fit the needs of modern life in a more tangible way. Over the past few decades, Islamic discourse has wandered between absence and marginalization, and overgeneralization and a lack of broad vision. It has been characterized by weak content and a general misunderstanding of how to reach the minds of others effectively by speaking to them in a language they can understand, while preserving our principles and values which are deeply rooted in traditional Islamic teachings and its great message.

As such, Islamic discourse has fallen to an extremely low stature, despite the existence of many influential Islamic scholars, and calls for a unifying mission to communicate more effectively with others. Several contributing factors to this situation have emerged which have had a massive impact on contemporary Islamic discourse.

First and foremost, the reigning weakness and poverty which constituted an impediment to the education of a new generation of competent scholars, with sufficient knowledge and adequate background. This would enable them to pursue the mission of disseminating a proper intelligible Islamic discourse deeply-rooted in the timeless Prophetic ideals of mercy and respect for humanity, rich and clear in its content, refined and tangible in its structure. A discourse that meets the needs of contemporary life.

Second, the rise of extremist trends in the public arena with a hostile exclusive discourse characterized by a narrow perspective, contrary to God's compassion conveyed through all His messengers and the greatest quality of His Last Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These trends are trying by all available means to prevail over voices of moderation and compassion which constitute the majority of our nation.

an obvious need has emerged for leading institutions to take control of contemporary Islamic discourse

Third, there are a limited number of Islamic institutions with comprehensive broad views and long-term objectives. Because many Islamic institutions began their efforts on a local or regional basis at best, they generally lack a wide range of tools, means, and knowledge required to be able to reach a more universal level that can bring about productive change. Furthermore, these institutions played a limited role in hosting charity events, social projects, and progressive initiatives.

Consequently, an obvious need has emerged for leading institutions to take control of contemporary Islamic discourse by unlocking dialogue and launching initiatives to transform the Islamic message into words skillfully, by addressing progressively larger audiences worldwide in intelligible, transparent, and tolerant language which embraces others' opinions, no matter how they may differ from ours, yet retains our principles and values.

These three factors contributing to the recent decrease in productive Islamic discourse have been Tabah Foundation's main concern since its establishment. Through innovative communication approaches, the Foundation continues to convey its noble message of enhancement and renovation of Islamic discourse based on knowledge and academic research.

On behalf of myself and Tabah Foundation, I express my sincere thanks and gratitude to all individuals and institutions for their great support and contributions to our success over the previous five years. May Allah accept your deeds and bless all your efforts.

Ali Zain Al-Abidin Al-Jifri
General Director
Tabah Foundation



Research

Tabah Research provides a platform for scholars and academics to undertake the development of a renewed Islamic discourse that engages the critical methodologies of the Shariah disciplines with issues of concern to the global community. Through this endeavor Tabah seeks to elucidate the inherent potential within the deep structures and dynamic principles of the Shariah disciplines to provide refreshing new insights and possibilities for current debates. It is Tabah's hope that the findings, recommendations, and materials produced by this enterprise will serve as a resource for Muslim and non-Muslim opinion leaders worldwide.

Over the past five years, Tabah Foundation has earned a reputed position in the field of Islamic research and strategic studies by establishing an integrated research infrastructure which rivals major international research centers and institutions. Due to its research ability and proficiency, the Foundation was hired and appointed by several government entities and strategic study centers for research purposes. Contributing to this success is the ongoing ex-

pansion of a comprehensive library comprising a wide range of references and sources as well as a network of world-class researchers who follow the highest standards and methods of scientific and academic research.

"materials produced by this enterprise will serve as a resource for Muslim and non-Muslim opinion leaders worldwide".

Access to these sources enabled the Foundation to publish 16 original studies which included analytic briefs, Tabah papers, memoranda, and articles, in accordance with the most advanced scientific and academic research methodology. Among the most notable studies published on today's relevant issues our worldwide community faces are: "Ethical Implications of Nanotechnology," "Reasonable Absorption," "Missing Learning Tools," "Ethics and Virtual Worlds," and "Islamic discourse between the conclusive and the variable."

Conferences, Workshops, Lectures, and Seminars



Tabah Foundation General Director among Scholars at a panel for the Mardin Conference in Turkey

Tabah Foundation continues its involvement in many international conferences and forums. Numerous contemporary issues were discussed at such high-visibility events as the Muslim Conference in Europe in 2006, the United States and the Islamic World Conference in Qatar in 2007, and The Prospects of the Islamic Religion Conference in Rome in 2007. Tabah also participated in “The reality of tourism in Islam” conference in Sana’a, Yemen in 2009, Hashemite Scientific Conferences in Jordan on “What we want from dialogue among civilizations” in 2009. Tabah also contributed by providing working papers for “Common Word, theory and practice” at Zayed university in collaboration with the University of Carolina in 2009, and with a working paper in the conference “Towards an Arabic Islamic Contribution to Contemporary Human Civilization” and in “Love in Quran” conference organized by Al Al Bayt Al Malakiya for Islamic Thought. Tabah’s most recent participation was in “Mardin the Abode of Peace” conference at the Artuklu University in Turkey about the categorization of abodes—between the Abode of Peace and the Abode of War and the Dubai Summit “bringing Peace to Somalia” that was held in March of this year.



One of the seminars organized by Tabah Foundation in Abu Dhabi

Organizational Development

Tabah Projects seeks to meet its goals via best practices of management methodologies informed by the highest Islamic ethical principles, whereby a new standard for Islamic development projects can be forged.

Educational and Cultural Development Projects

Development of The Zayed House for Islamic Culture



Following a presidential decree to develop Zayed House for Islamic Culture (ZHIC) under the Diwan of the Crown Prince, a three-year agreement has been made between Tabah Foundation and Zayed House to fulfill the vision of its founder, the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan (may Allah have mercy on him), of educating new Muslims and non-Muslims alike about the great contribution Islamic culture has made to humanity and continues to make.

The aim of Tabah Foundation is to oversee the development of ZHIC and eventually see it counted amongst the ranks of distinguished international institutions. The Foundation has made significant progress in this area and has laid a strategic and educational plan for the coming five years. The Foundation has also supervised the formulation of advanced educational curricula and informational material to serve the needs of new Muslims in accordance with the highest educational standards, which are predicated on extensive studies on the cultural, psychological and social aspects of prospective students' backgrounds and aptitudes. Tabah Foundation adopted these standards which conform to the curriculum development methodology implemented at the University of Toronto, Canada and contracted with Al Razi Consultancy Group for execution. In addition, a teachers' guide has been developed with the latest teaching methods utilizing interactive audio and video learning, as well as a comprehensive and integrated plan for teaching Arabic language to non-Arabic speakers.



Zayed House Campus, Al Ain, UAE



Imam Dawud Yasin, a convert himself, leads introductory Islamic workshop for recent converts to Islam

significant progress in promoting high-level education and Islamic culture

Tabah Foundation oversaw the authoring of two books aimed at Muslims and non Muslims audiences, entitled 'Misconceptions about Islam' and 'Islam and Muslims'. The Foundation also provided consultancy advice to ZHIC with regards to participation in educational and cultural conferences, forums, seminars and lectures inside and outside the UAE. Among these were the participation in the hosting of student delegations from Johns Hopkins University and Pepperdine

University. In addition to that, Tabah Foundation also arranged training programs for a group of Imams and Muslim women from America, which included preparatory courses on Islamic law, Islamic creed, legislative history and Islamic moral conduct. Evening courses were also organized dealing with different subjects such as moon sighting and principles of Islamic daawah work.

Management Consulting



© Bryan Denton/Corbis

New students undergo registration

Development of the Finance and Educational Departments of Dar Al-Mustafa

Tabah Foundation implemented a comprehensive restructuring process for the finance and educational departments of Dar Al-Mustafa to align them with departmental requirements within the organization. The Foundation helped develop finance policies and procedures and updated the organization's accounting systems to provide automation of all financial operations and transactions. In the field of education, the Foundation, along with Dar Al-Mustafa, established several discovery workshops to determine the optimal criteria for student admission and learning continuation.



© Bryan Denton/Corbis

European Academy of Sciences and Islamic Culture

Tabah Foundation cooperates with the Brussels-based European Academy for Islamic Sciences & Culture to help manage the Academy's operations as well as provide financial and administrative support. A preliminary assessment into the Academy's operations accurately assessed its financial needs and ensured the Academy had correct legal status and accreditation. A refined business plan outlining the next phase of the Academy's development was created from this in-depth assessment, and the Foundation supervised a complete study to establish an endowment (Waqf) to fund these next-step objectives. Additionally, and in an effort to introduce them to the Academy, the Foundation organized meetings and visits for senior Muslim scholars where various lectures and



Sheikh Habib Ali Al-Jifri gives a lecture at the Academy in Zayed Hall

speeches were given, as well as awareness seminars for teachers to promote and stress the values of moderation within the academy.

Tabah Development Program

Tabah Foundation is investing in the future with a worldwide program to train and place skilled individuals in job positions at various institutions and companies. The Foundation developed the fundamental framework and operations of the program, including the creation of a management committee to determine student admission and continuing performance criteria and establish agreements between students and the program. Academic disciplines and specializations were also identified and prioritized along with the preferred academic institutions to cooperate within these disciplines.

Several new students have been officially enrolled in the program, and the Foundation has developed an annual budget and strategic plan for expanding the program in 2010 to be able to provide financial support to existing students. The program has had global reach, attracting up to

26 students representing 9 different nationalities to study in 7 countries who were admitted at renowned universities and institutions such as Al-Azhar University, Oxford and Cambridge. These students are expected to graduate between the years 2010 and 2013.



Initiatives

Tabah Initiatives operates around the need in the world today for the global Muslim community to return to timeless ideals and values from which it has lapsed.

Alive in Our Hearts: Al Mahabbah Awards



The initiative was launched and developed by Tabah within the "Alive in Our Hearts" program. Headed by H. H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, a Board of Trustees was created which included the membership of world's prominent scholars, intellectuals, media professionals and businessmen. The Initiative aims at stimulating the spirit of love for the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in people's hearts by encouraging creative talents all over the world to express and demonstrate their love and respect for the Prophet (PBUH) through various channels. Al Mahabbah Awards were launched to recognize the best accomplishments of individuals and organizations in this context. Since their inception, the Al Mahabbah Awards have successfully risen to prominence in the global arena and have experienced a dramatic increase in participation and audience size.

The Al Mahabbah Awards were distributed in two large ceremonies organized in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Under the patronage of H.H. General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, the Award ceremony in Abu Dhabi in 2008 was a great success with a number of attendees that exceeded 4,500 compared to 1,400 in 2006. Likewise, the awards nominations have increased in number from 15 in 2006 to 200 in 2008.

Media attention has also increased significantly. Only one TV channel covered the 2006 ceremony, but that figure rose to four channels in 2008. The Foundation's YouTube channel traffic figures of the 2008 awards ceremony indicated the Al Mahabbah Awards were watched by more than 2



American rap group Native Deen on stage at the second Al Mahabbah Awards in Abu Dhabi



Al Habib Ali AlJifri, HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyah, Sheikh Dr Mohammed Saeed Ramadan Al Bouti, and Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah at Al Mahabbah Awards

million viewers in comparison to 200,000 viewers for the 2006 awards ceremony.

The staggering success of the Foundation's Al Mahabbah Awards ceremony was recognized by the 360 International in 2009 as the Best Cultural Event in the Middle East.

Alive in Our Hearts Forums

Aimed at invigorating youth participation and fostering a connection with Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him), the Foundation developed and implemented the “Alive in Our Hearts” discussion forums in Yemen in 2008, as part of the Foundation's larger "Alive in Our Hearts" Program. Through a series of lectures, hymns, competitions and entertainment, the forums reached out a message of love to the youth in order to enable them to follow the meanings disseminated in all aspects of their moral, social and psychological lives and to keep them on the moderate path. Events were held in Yemen in Tarim (Al-Nasra Festival), Mukalla, and Shabwa and were attended by more than 100 000 person.



“Litaarafu”

(That you may know one another)

Based on the verse of the Quran which states, ﴿We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another﴾, the Foundation launched a program called "That you may know one another". This program aims at introducing Islam, and the character, morals and teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to non-Muslims.

The Foundation organized several well-received conferences and lectures, namely a particularly successful workshop in Amman, Jordan, which focused on the mechanisms of productive dialogue with others. The workshop received significant media attention and was attended by key, high-level contacts, including the Jordanian Minister of Youth.

In the aftermath of the Danish cartoons controversy, Tabah Foundation gathered more than a hundred signatories of the nation's prominent scholars from different disciplines, from East to West who unanimously addressed the world in general and Denmark in particular, through a signed declaration condemning the publication of Jyllands-Posten cartoons. And in order to promote open communication, productive dialogue, and freely exchanged opinions, Tabah Foundation also organized familiarization seminars for students, educators, and academic staff, including a visit to the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. More than 70 students and educators from Denmark and some Arabic Islamic countries participated in this visit, which accompanied a four-day conference, in addition to another visit of a group of Muslim youth to Denmark in coordination with the Danish Youth Council. These two events enabled both parties to have a better understanding of some sensitive matters like respect for sacred values and the media role in aggravating some global issues. Then after that, the Danish Youth Council (800,000 members) invited Tabah Foundation to attend a culture exchange conference in Turkey where Tabah gave a lecture entitled “Refuting suspicions about Islam”



A Danish delegation visits Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Mosque during Friday prayer services



Tabah staff welcoming a Danish Delegate at upon their arrival at Abu Dhabi Airport Lounge

A COMMON WORD

كلمة مشتركة



Bosnian Mufti Dr. Mustafa Cerić meets with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican



HH Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan welcomes delegates to one of the forums held in Abu Dhabi at Zayed University

Under the management of Al Al Bayt Al Malakiya for Islamic Thought and in collaboration with the Foundation, "A Common Word" initiative was launched in October 2007 from Abu Dhabi (www.acommonword.com). 138 Muslim scholars presented an open letter authored in English by H.R.H Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal and reviewed by prominent Muslim scholars entitled, "A Common Word Between Us" to the leaders of Christian churches and all Christians worldwide. The letter invited them to recognize the common ground between Muslims and Christians: the Unity of God, the necessity of love for Him, and the necessity of love of the neighbour.

The initiative resulted in progressive responses from Christian academia and organizations; church leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Rowan Williams; and some politicians, including former UK Prime Ministers Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. Furthermore, Yale University published a full-page statement in the New York Times; a historic document signed by 300 Christian leaders (mostly Evangelical), commending the Muslim initiative and regretting the sins perpetrated by Christians' Crusades and present (war on terror) against the Muslims. This was announced in a press conference jointly held in Abu Dhabi by Habib Ali alJifri, Prof. Miroslav Volf, Founder of Yale Center for Faith and Culture, and Dr. Aref Nayidh, on the initiative and the Yale response. In addition to that, a conference entitled "Loving God and Neighbor in Word and Deed" initiated by Prof. Miroslav Volf was held at Yale university kicked off by Senator John Kerry the former US presidential candidate and H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal who spoke to about 200 Christians and Muslims from around the world.

The Common Word initiative resulted in the successful establishment of the Catholic-Muslim Forum whose first round was held in Rome in November 2008, and received considerable media attention; in fact, more than 600 articles in English were written. Many postgraduate-level academic theses were written on the subject at prominent institutions, including Harvard University, the Theology Institute in Germany, and the Institute of Islamic Research in Britain. The initiative won the prestigious Eugen Biser Award in a ceremony held in Munich, Germany, which honored Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal, Habib Ali alJifri, and Bosnian Mufti Dr. Mustafa ef. Cerić in recognition of the impact the initiative had in furthering interfaith dialogue, peace, and coexistence.



H.R.H Prince Ghazi speaks at the Common Word Conference held at Yale University.

Documentary Films

Using the documentary film form as an effective media tool to promote Islamic discourse for human understanding, the Foundation created several expository films that were screened worldwide.

"Deen Tight"



©Mustafa Davis / Tabah Foundation



©Mustafa Davis / Tabah Foundation

Deen Tight concentrates on the struggle between traditional religious values and modernity, critically portraying the positive and negative effects of American pop culture on Muslim youth. The film was edited by award-winning editor Ruth Schell, and the creative consultant was four-time Academy Award nominee Robert Richter. The most prominent aspect of the movie is that it features Muslim celebrities, including the poet Amir Sulaiman (featured on HBO's "Def Poetry Jam"), Producer DJ Be Like Muhammad, Kumasi of "Black Wallstreet," DJ Kid Dragon, and Fanatik, among others.

The film was a great success, as it was screened in California, at the University of Michigan, Arizona State University, and during a seven-city tour of the UK sponsored by the United States Embassy of London and the British

"one of the most important Muslim-produced films this decade."

Arts Council. Deen Tight was also featured by BBC and received more than 30 international screening requests, including a public screening request from former U.S. Ambassador to Sweden to show the film at Georgetown University, a curriculum screening request by University of Michigan professor Dr. Sherman Jackson to include the film screening as part of his Comparative Religion course, and a screening request by Nawawi Foundation Chairman-of-the-Board and Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, who has called the film "one of the most important Muslim-produced films this decade."

"Common Ground"

Common Ground showcased the different efforts and opinions that societies have struggled with in the wake of the Jyllands-Posten cartoons debacle. It also features rare insight on how other cultures deals with similar contemporary struggles.

The film was successful on a global scale. It was named an official selection of the Beirut Film Festival and was introduced at the Dubai Film Festival. Anasy Media Production has since purchased the rights to the movie.



©Mustafa Davis / Tabah Foundation

Launch of Al Madina Satellite TV Network Channels



Tabah Foundation recently completed the registration and licensing of the Al Madina Channel with Abu Dhabi Media Zone and twofour54. Al Madina Network includes two channels; Al Madina TV Channel, a cultural Islamic general TV channel, and Al Hemma TV Channel, an Islamic educational channel recently acquired by the Foundation. The Foundation has also signed a contract with Abu Dhabi Media Zone for office and studio space in addition to all infrastructural requirements. With the launch of the network, Tabah Foundation aims to create high-quality, meaningful, and interactive programming that helps bring together different societal segments by promoting peaceful coexistence.

