
A WORD FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

I had the pleasure of being assigned by the *Politics and Religion Journal* to oversee the publication of the special issue on the Muslim World League (MWL), one of the oldest and most active organizations in the Muslim world. Since 1962, and through its General Secretariat and its many agencies, and the continuous Saudi support, the MWL has been able to reach out, with the help of its cultural and religious activities, to all continents of the world – from Argentina in the west to Japan in the east and from Sweden in the north to South Africa in the south. MWL's activities range from religious, cultural, humanitarian, and sometimes political events.

It is clear from the League's six-decade history that it has gone through two important stages in the development of its philosophy and general orientations. The first phase extends from 1962 to 2005, a phase in which religious and relief work prevailed over the League's activities and was generally characterized by a conservative character and a traditional line represented by the general orientation of Saudi Arabia. With regards to religious issues, the second phase started from 2005 to the present, in which the League began to follow a new path for its activities and work, due to a major campaign launched by King Abdullah to modernize Saudi Arabia and because of the September 11 terrorist attacks, which required from all Muslim organizations and countries to endorse a new path in religious, cultural and even political affairs. Because of these events, the League fell under a torrent of accusations that it supports terrorism despite its historical efforts in fighting extremist groups, and its strong commitment to the Saudi line of Islam adopted by the Kingdom. The year 2017 is considered to be the most important year in the process of modernizing the League, as the new Secretary-General of MWL, Dr. Abdul Karim Al-Issa, assumed the position of Secretary-General, and led an accelerated modernization campaign in which the League became different from what the world had known it throughout the previous decades.

In addition to its traditional activities, the League engaged in the path of civil and religious dialogue between religions and civilizations, and took steps that have not been taken by other religious organizations and institutions previously, and launched many international initiatives in order to bring the cultures and peoples of the world closer and together, and to combat the deep distortion of the image of Islam due to the violence and terrorism that struck the Middle East in the last two decades. The League also engaged in an intense media campaign to publicize itself and its activities, which made the headlines of many mainstream world news.

In this special issue, the authors discuss many topics linked to introducing the League, its efforts and achievements, and the obstacles it faces. The very first article deals with the historical foundations of the idea of establishing organizations in the Islamic world, and the historical sequence that gave birth to the Muslim World League (MWL), and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This article reveals many aspects of the conflict between the emerging Islamic political entities, and

their quest for influence and prominence. A second article deals with the League's efforts in the dialogue of civilizations and discusses the issue from a broad perspective that covers Islamic efforts in general in this regard with a focus on the interfaith initiatives launched by the League. The third article deals with the League's efforts in the relief and humanitarian field, and provides many important figures and data related to humanitarian and relief work. The fourth article deals with the League's efforts in combating the phenomenon of Islamophobia, and the fifth article published deals with the image of the League in the Western media, and the developments and changes of this image from a suspicious and unclear organization in the past decades, to an effective and positive image of the organization after 2017. Finally, the sixth article deals with the Islamic Fiqh Council – the body on MWL that handles the religious aspect of the League's work and is one of its most important organs and branches.

In this issue, the reader will learn about many facts, information and data related to the Muslim World League that have not yet received in-depth academic investigation about its activities and work. Therefore, collecting specialized academic materials in specific fields was difficult for many of the authors of this issue. It is always good to remind that the opinions mentioned in the articles represent the opinions of the authors and do not express the opinion of the *Politics and Religion Journal*.

I can only express my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Miroljub Jevtic, the dynamic and active editor-in-chief of the *Politics and Religion Journal*, for honoring me with this task of being the editor of this special Issue. I would also like to thank him for the tireless and continuous endeavor to highlight the role of the Journal, and raise its scientific and academic value, as well to the Journal's editorial team.

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