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Ibrahim Negm was born in Egypt. He has earned his High School Diploma from Al-Azhar University, where he has been graded number 4 in the nation of success. He was awarded a distinguished scholarship to pursue Islamic studies at Al-Azhar. He received his BA in Islamic Studies in 1995 and was the class valedictorian. He was awarded a distinguished fellowship to conduct research at Harvard Law School 1996/1997. He was also a visiting Researcher at the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences in Virginia. He was a visiting Scholar and researcher at Oxford University, UK, 2002. He obtained his Ph.D. in Islamic Studies in 2005 from Graduate Theological Seminary, Indiana, USA. He was an assistant professor of Islamic and Arabic Studies at St John's university in New York in 2005.

He served as a full time Director at the Islamic Center of South Shore in New York from 1999 to 2003. He then served as the first Director of the Islamic Learning Foundation in College Point NY in 2004. Dr. Ibrahim Negm is serving as a senior advisor to Grand Mufti of Egypt. In 2016, he was elected as the Secretary General of Secretariat for *Fatwa* Authorities Worldwide. Negm is a preeminent scholar at the *Dār al-iftā'* („the House of *fatwā*“). He is the official spokesperson of the *Dār al-iftā'* of Egypt's supreme body for Islamic legal edicts, advising Muslims on how to abide by their faith in an enlightened manner in constantly changing circumstances on the whole spectrum of issues. He is the founding Director for the *Dār al-iftā'* observatory for monitoring radical *fatwās*. As a prolific author, he has written many books on Islamic legal methodology and contemporary acute religious and cultural issues.

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Ibrahim NEGM

## **GLOBALNI AUTORITET FETVE OKVIR I POGLEDI**

### **A GLOBAL **FATWĀ** AUTHORITY FRAMEWORK AND PROSPECTS**

## Abstract

The menace of extremism and terrorism over the past years has been largely aided through a creation of the chaos of *fatwā* (legal and moral norm in Islam) by extremists. This is an impudent violation of the venerable traditional institution of *fatwā* in Islam. With a hidden agenda in mind, the perpetrators of aberrant and unregulated legal pronouncements as well as false and misconstrued Islamic teachings and principles succeeded in some way to disturb the universal Islamic core values of peace, coexistence, stability and security across the globe. Having this in mind, the *Dār al-iftā'* („the House of *fatwā*“) of Egypt has initiated a global authoritative *fatwā* institution under a single umbrella organization located in Cairo, Egypt, to generate profoundly reliable *fatwās* for the sake of refuting false *fatwās* in the name of Islam. Thus, since its inception, the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* Authorities Worldwide has held five conferences which have resulted in numerous initiatives, which are designed to correct the false and clarify the true and authentic teachings of Islam. Indeed, it aims to develop tools and offer training for the *muftīs*, the issuers of *fatwā*, to enable them to manage *fiqh*-juristic differences as well as to equip them with reliable references for making *fatwā* through an acceptable procedure, aiming to regulate a peaceful relationship not only within Muslim communities but also between Muslim and non-Muslim societies as well as a peaceful relationship between Muslims who abode within non-Muslim societies. In all circumstances, the Muslim *fatwās* must be wisely and peacefully delivered because the very meaning of the term “Islam” is the message of peace. In order to achieve this goal, the Egyptian General Secretariat for *Fatwa* has initiated an e-platform for training and providing *fatwā* skills to the *muftīs*. This e-platform enables *muftīs* to relate Islamic legal norms to the context of real human life. Besides, the institution of the global Egyptian *fatwā* offers: ‘a *fatwā* research center’; ‘a global *fatwā* index’, ‘a futurology observatory for *fatwā*’, ‘*fatwā* services for Muslims living in non-Muslim countries’. This article is about goals and achievements in securing the traditional institution of *fatwā* from a flagrant deviation and distortion of the *fatwā* reliability and validity today.

**Key words:** *fatwā*, *iftā'*, *Dār al-iftā'*, *muftī*, sound *fatwā*, deviant *fatwās*, the General Secretariat for *Fatwā*, Cairo Declaration, Global *Fatwā* Charter.

### A NOTE ON TERMS

- *Fatwā* is an Arabic word which can mean “clarification”. Technically, a *fatwā* is a religiously legal and moral opinion on Islamic law (*sharī'iah*) given by a qualified jurist in response to a question posed by a private individual, judge, or government.
- *iftā'* denotes the clarification of the legal ruling on a particular issue or point of concern.
- *Dār al-iftā'* (The House for *fatwā*) is an official Islamic institution where decisions concerning Islamic law are issued.
- *Dār al-iftā' al-Miṣriyyah* (The House for *Fatwā* of Egypt) is an Egyptian official Islamic advisory, judiciary and governmental body established as a center for Islam and Islamic legal research in Egypt in 1313 AH / 1895 CE.
- *Muftī* is an Islamic jurist qualified to issue a nonbinding opinion (*fatwā*) on a point of Islamic law (*sharī'iah*). The act of issuing *fatwās* is called *iftā'*. *Muftīs* and their *fatwās* played an important role throughout Islamic history, taking on new roles in the modern era.
- **Aberrant and deviant *fatwās*:** These refer to every Islamic legal verdict that is inconsistent with the sound criteria of *fatwā* such that it violates the honor bestowed upon humankind, violates the public order and shared ethical values, encourages familial and societal disruptions, and undermines national and international stability.
- **The General Secretariat for *Fatwā* Authorities Worldwide:** An umbrella organization comprising *fatwā* authorities from Muslim countries that aims to service Muslims across the globe. Its members include *muftīs* from over 35 countries.

# A GLOBAL FATWĀ AUTHORITY FRAMEWORK AND PROSPECTS

## I

### The *Dār al-iftā'* of Egypt

As one of the oldest *fatwā* authorities in the world, the *Dār al-iftā'* of Egypt has, over its long history, actively sought to dispense sound *fatwās* to solicitors in conjunction with upholding its values and promoting a robust *fatwā* methodology as a holistic way to benefit scholars in Egypt and beyond.

The presence of the *Dār al-iftā'* of Egypt is no less notable and pivotal than its past. Seeking to address the present chaos of *fatwā* issues, which has caused a worldwide culture of violence as well as the threat of religious inspired extremism and terrorism, the *Dār al-iftā'* of Egypt has developed a multi-track strategy at both the domestic and international level. On the domestic front, the *dār al-iftā'* sought to execute the major operation of renewing and streamlining religious discourse as well as weeding out any irruptive aberrations and adulterations. In addition, the *Dār al-iftā'* has ventured into new avenues, becoming the first religious institution to break into the world of social networking, emerging as the leading Islamic religious institution with the greatest number of followers on social media.

The *Dār al-iftā'* has also expanded its *fatwā* work system, stepped up its scholarly convoys abroad, and provided numerous forms of scholarly support and training to *fatwā* authorities in different countries. These efforts have attracted the interest of international bodies such as the European Parliament, which has sought to establish a partnership with the *Dār al-iftā'* to create its first body for religious *fatwā* reference. It is also noteworthy to note that the UN, the biggest international organization, praised the vital and constructive role of the *Dār al-iftā'* of Egypt in responding to extremist discourse and exclusively intolerant groups.

On the international level, the *Dār al-iftā'* of Egypt has taken the lead in countering misleading and deviant *fatwās* that loom large among Muslim populations in non-Muslim countries. Taking this into account, the *Dār al-iftā'* took the charge and held its first international conference in August 2015 under the title: *Fatwā: Realities, Challenges, and Future Prospects*. One of the most important outcomes of this conference was the establishment of the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* Authorities Worldwide. The task of this Secretariat is to liaise between *fatwā* authorities and juristic assemblies with the objective of generating profoundly reliable *fatwās* for the sake of refuting false *fatwā* claims and acts in the name of Islam. The aim of this is to stimulate the faithful people to seek the reliable sources

of Islam which are responsive to the present conditions of human life. In addition to that, the Secretariat aims, on the one hand, to enable Muslims, wherever they are, to participate effectively in promoting and achieving world peace, human development and stability as well as to refute the claims and actions of religiously inspired extremists and terrorists who use Islam as a pretext for their aggressive behavior. And, on the other hand, the Secretariat seeks to develop a scholarly training system to reinforce the values of moderation and tolerance in Muslim religious leaders worldwide, who are supposed to assume the responsibility for a revival of religious discourse as well as to point out to the ruinous effects of *fatwās* issued by ill-intended non-specialists.

Besides, the additional objectives of the Secretariat include:

- 1) Enhance inter-authority exchange of scholarly, practical, and regulatory experiences.
- 2) Establish a mechanism for providing scholarly and practical counsel to *fatwā* authorities with the goal of developing and optimizing their performance.
- 3) Benefit the capacity of the *Dār al-iftā'* of Egypt as the primary defender of the sound principles of Islam by building scholarly partnerships with other *fatwā* authorities worldwide to promote moderation in their respective countries.
- 4) Provide real-life models of a renewed religious discourse, develop and design programs, reinforce ideas, and propose alternatives.



ILLUSTRATION ~ Working presidency of one of the sessions at the conference of the World General Secretariat for *Fatwās* in Cairo in 2022.

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Radno predsjedništvo jedne od sesija na konferenciji Svjetskog generalnog sekretarijata za *fetve* u Kairu 2022.

- 5) Design programs that ensure the integration of efforts between *fatwā* authorities to contribute towards correcting erroneous and falsified concepts, thereby reducing the hostilities and distortions leveled against Islam, resulting from extremist activities.
- 6) Build bridges to narrow the gaps of differences between *fatwā* authorities through the various forms of scholarly consultation.
- 7) Launch initiatives to support moderate scholars worldwide.
- 8) Engage mechanisms to counter the chaos of *fatwās* and extremism.
- 9) Disseminate refined and trustworthy *fatwās* worldwide with an aim of participating in the formulation of a worldwide constructive scholarly philosophy of *fatwā*.
- 10) Create programs to train cadres of *muftīs* and Islamic legal scholars and expand their *fatwā* experience.
- 11) Develop mechanisms to support national and international peace and stability by implementing procedures to counter stringent ideas.

By its noble objectives and reliable mission, the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* is becoming the first global *fatwā* establishment of its kind. It brings together the various *fatwā* authorities from around the Muslim world under the wise and strong leadership of the Grand Mufti of Egypt dr. Shawqī 'Allam\*<sup>1</sup> as the first chairman of this Supreme Council of the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* Authorities Worldwide. The General Secretariat consists of the founding members and new joining members. As the personal adviser to the Grand Mufti of Egypt, dr. Ibrahim Negm was elected on 17 October 2016 as the Secretary General of the Secretariat as well.

The role of the Secretary General is very important. He is responsible for overseeing the general policies set by the General Secretariat to achieve its objectives, implement its decisions, and follow up on all its work. In addition, the Secretary General tracks the work progress of the General Secretariat, devises the organizational structure of the Secretariat's employees after obtaining the approval of the President, provides all financial and accounting counsel to the General Secretariat, oversees personnel affairs and organizes the General Secretariat's work. He also directly supervises the scholarly councils and coordinates their work, supervises the work of the council committees and follows up on the execution of the decisions, regulations, and ordinances related to the activities of the scholarly committees. the Secretary General is responsible for conducting the administrative and financial affairs of the General Secretariat under the supervision and

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<sup>1</sup> Shawqī Ibrahim 'Abdel-Karīm 'Allam is the 19<sup>th</sup> Grand Muftī of Egypt. He received his Ph.D. in 1996 at the Al-Azhar University in Jurisprudence and *Sharī'ah* law. He served as the chairman of the Department of Jurisprudence at the School of *Sharī'ah* of Al-Azhar University's Tanta branch. In 2013, he was elected the Grand Mufti by Al-Azhar's Council of Senior Scholars. The office of Grand Muftī of Egypt, *Dār al-iftā' al-miṣriyyah* (The House for *Fatwā* of Egypt) is very influential not only in Egypt but also across the Muslim world. It is the government's first and primary source of religious authority. This office issues some 5,000 *fatwās* a week, including both the official that the Grand Muftī himself crafts on important issues and the more routine ones handled via phone and Internet. Dr. Shawqī 'Allam is known as a moderate mufti, who renounces fanaticism, extremism and terrorism. He does not have any political or party allegiance.

direction of the President of the Supreme Council. Finally, the Secretary General enjoys all the powers the President of the Supreme Council delegates to him.



ILLUSTRATION - Offise *Dār al-iftā'* in Cairo.  
ILUSTRACIJA - Objekat *Dār al-iftā'* u Kairu.

## II

### Initiatives of the World General Secretariat for *Fatwā*

Since its inception, the General Secretariat sought to implement a range of initiatives and scholarly projects with the purpose of providing practical and effective solutions to the challenges that the traditional institution of *fatwā* faces by promoting coordination between *fatwā* institutions worldwide. To date, the General Secretariat has introduced around twenty initiatives all of which have generated more than thirty outcomes ranging from instruments, declarations, scholarly encyclopedia, theoretical and practical guide, computer program, a research center, etc. The aforementioned initiatives have been configured into eight work-streams namely inter-*fatwā* authority cooperation, *fatwā* training and education, *iftā'*-related monitoring, *fatwā* authority management, Muslim minorities, moderation, fighting extremism, translation and publishing.

The initiatives of the starting activities were multifaceted and primarily aimed to explore mechanisms and channels for the effective communication between *fatwā* authorities around the world that will provide an exchange of scholarly and technical expertise. It likewise sought to pool efforts to address the challenges facing the Muslim universal community and the world at large.

**The first initiative** in this regard was the organization of international conferences with an aim to introduce and employ the right ways in regulating the procedure as well as the consolidation of moderate methodology for of global *fatwā* issues. So far, the General Secretariat has held four conferences apart from the founding conference.

**This first conference:** *Fatwā: Realities, Challenges and Future Prospects* was held on 17-18 August 2015 under the kind aegis of the President of Egypt Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

This was a prelude for the foundation of the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* Authorities Worldwide as the first international *fatwā* organization to coordinate between the various bodies engaged in *al-iftā'* across the globe. This General Secretariat for *Fatwā* of Egypt was conceived to improve the framework of *fatwā* competency of the world *fatwā* agencies and to increase their peaceful social impact. Indeed, its aim is to build a strong and sustainable coalition of the global *fatwā* authorities committed to promoting a moderate *fatwā* methodology in order to not only curb but to entirely eliminate the phenomenon of pseudo-*fatwā* by developing original solutions to all problems facing the local and global Muslim communities.

**The second annual conference** was about *Fatwā Training for Mosque Imams in Muslim Minority Countries*. The topic of this conference was selected with great care to reflect our belief that imāms, the Muslim preachers, living in the West serve as the nucleus for propagating Islam and correcting errors and misconceptions about Islam abroad. Consequently, the conference topic and themes mark a very important step towards implementing a system for a revival of religious discourse and undermining the efforts of the groups practicing “political Islam” that have become a prominent feature in Muslim populations in the West. In addition, the conference likewise saw the importance of training the mosque imāms/preachers on how to understand and apply legal texts, address the contexts of the lived reality of their community, and master the tools and techniques of moderate and responsible religious discourse.



ILLUSTRATION – Conference “Renewal of *Fatwā*: Theory and Practice”.  
ILUSTRACIJA – Konferencija ”Obnova *fetve*: teorija i praksa”.

**The third conference:** *The Role of Fatwā in Creating a Stable Society* came at the most opportune time as it coincided with events that wreaked havoc across the world. Its focus was on the question of the role of *fatwā* in combating corruption and destruction for the sake of creating peace and stability in societies. Since the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* was established to counter violence, hatred and extremism in the name of Islam, it is obvious that it took a strong stance against these social evils.

**The fourth conference:** *Fatwā Renewal: Theory and Application* brought to the fore the importance of *fatwā* renewal and explored the means of how the modern *al-iftā'* can amend and improve reality, elevating it to the highest civilizational levels. It likewise explored the potential of modern *al-iftā'* to contribute towards stimulating all aspects of life and examine how civilizational developments can be deployed to serve the work of *al-iftā'*. The conference adopted specific regulations to guide extrapolation from our legislative heritage. It strongly warned of the danger of out-of-context historical of *fatwās*.

**The fifth conference:** *Managing Juristic Differences: A Civilizational Approach* addressed the means of managing juristic differences in order to foster a system that will encourage the Muslim legal jurists, the *fuqahā'* and the Muslim legal counsellors, the muftīs, to engage in the affairs of the Muslim *Ummah* in constructive and effective ways.

**At this conference** a renewed perception of juristic differences was adopted. This was a beginning of the solution to contemporary problems. Accordingly, the conference defined the civilizational foundations and contemporary approaches to dealing with matters of juristic differences. The conference recommendations included the development of media programs and social activities in which scholars from the various juristic schools may participate to serve as a guide to followers of different juristic schools in order to promote inter-judicial tolerance.

**The second initiative** of the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* was the adoption of *the Cairo Declaration on fatwās*. In view of the menace of terrorism that has peaked worldwide by ill agenda-oriented organizations erroneously alleged to belong to Islam, which caused the rise of Islamophobia, the *Cairo Declaration* represents the true message of Islam in defense of clear Islamic principles against a misrepresentation by extremists who have hijacked Islam. Consequently, the General Secretariat has issued the *Cairo Declaration* to advance the principles of cooperation and coexistence for Muslim minority populations worldwide. This Declaration serves as a reference for *al-iftā'*, which regulates the intra-Muslim relationship as well as the relationship of Muslims with non-Muslims in non-Muslim majority countries.

**The third initiative** in this endeavor was the *Global Fatwā Charter*. It came as a result of the recommendations that were issued at the conclusion of the General Secretariat's third international conference. Among these was a request to expedite the drawing of a global charter for *al-iftā'* that will serve to delineate the general principles for issuing wise *fatwās* and implement the optimal procedures for dealing with *fatwā* aberrations and deviances.

The *Global Fatwā Charter* delineates the general principles of reliable *al-iftā'* and the optimal procedures for addressing false *fatwās*. In fact, the Charter aims to render *al-iftā'* one of the means of solving societal problems

as well as to make a useful contribution to the social and psychological stability of societies towards a progressive development. Its target is to remove the chaos of *fatwā* and to serve as an assistive guide in the various social, legal, educational and media fields.



ILLUSTRATION – First climate-related *fatwā* prohibiting environmentally harmful practices issued in Egypt.  
ILUSTRACIJA – Prva *fetva* povezana s klimom kojom se zabranjuju prakse štetne za okoliš izdana je u Egiptu.

The fourth initiative was the initiation of *Imām al-Qarāfī*<sup>2</sup> Award, which was first launched in 2019. The award recognized persons who achieve excellence in *al-iftā'*. Through this award, the General Secretariat seeks to advance scholarly research across the range of juristic and *al-iftā'* disciplines, kindle the spirit of scholarly

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<sup>2</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī or Imām al-Qarāfī (1228–1285) was a Mālikī *faqīh*, jurist and legal theoretician of Sanhaja Berber origin who lived in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt. He is considered by many to be the greatest Mālikī legal theoretician of the 13<sup>th</sup> century; his writings and influence on Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) spread throughout the Muslim world. His insistence on the limits of law underscores the importance of non-legal (not to be confused with illegal) considerations in determining the proper course of action, with significant implications for legal reform in the modern Islamic world. His views on the common good (*maṣlaḥah*) and custom provide means to accommodate the space-time differential between modern and premodern realities.

competition for the benefit of the *fatwā* process around the world as well as to follow the General Secretariat's strategy for continuous scholarly and administrative improvement of *fatwā* authorities. This award is given in one of the following five branches: contemporary juristic issues, *fatwā* renewal, specialized juristic issues (medicine, economics, etc.), means of benefitting from religious new media and institutional distinction of *fatwā* authorities.

**The fifth initiative** was a proclamation of *The International Day of Al-iftā'*. This idea came in the view of the fact that the regulation of the procedure of *al-iftā'* constitutes one of the main elements of stability for the individual and society as well as for the universal Muslim community. Indeed, it was important to designate an international day for *al-iftā'* as an opportunity for all Muslim nations to organize events with the aim of acquainting their public with the rules of *al-iftā'*. Thus, the 15th of December has been proclaimed as the *International Day of al-iftā'*, which is the reminiscence of the date when the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* was inaugurated as an institution dedicated to bringing together *fatwā* authorities from all around the world.

**The sixth initiative** was *The Charter of Tolerance for Juristic and Fatwā Differences*, which is designed as a benchmark that takes into account the affirmation of the principles of tolerance and renunciation of juristic and *fatwā* blind dogmatism.

The ebb and flow of contrasts as well as of order and chaos, of renewal and stagnancy, of progress and regression that have become a constant feature of the juristic and *fatwā* scenes over the years, have no doubt had a significant impact, especially in the Islamic world, on matters of juristic and *fatwā* concern, leading to a fierce oppression, hatred, and odious intolerance. This has inevitably resulted in the obstruction of efforts to accommodate Islamic jurisprudence and *fatwā* to present-day needs, undermining the validity of Islamic law for all times and all places. It was consequently mandatory for juristic and *fatwā*-concerned parties to come together to promote exerted efforts, to reform corrupt practices, and to prevent any tampering with the principles of Islamic legislation, jurisprudence and *al-iftā'* that are intended to foster coexistence and tolerance.

*The Charter of Tolerance* delineates the contours of such concepts, values, principles, and executive articles enshrined in it. It comes pursuant to the Cairo Declaration and The Global *Fatwā* Charter, both of which were adopted to promote the role of *fatwā* in solving contemporary human problems.

**The seventh and final initiative** in this segment was a setting up representative offices of the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* as branches of the General Secretariat's headquarters in Cairo in order to disseminate its message and mission. The General Secretariat intends to establish representative offices in Europe, the USA, South Asia and Africa.



ILLUSTRATION ~ Egypt's Grand Mufti in Conference on dialogue and peace 2018. The World Is in Dire Need of Dialogue Platforms That Respect the Other.  
ILUSTRACIJA ~ Egipatski vrhovni muftija na konferenciji o dijalogu i miru 2018. Svijetu su prijeko potrebne platforme za dijalog koje poštuju druge.

### III Education and Training

The program of *al-iftā'* for Education and Training represents a crucial step in the formation of competent muftīs. The primary objective of this program is to equip muftīs with the knowledge and skills they need to practice *al-iftā'* by making the *fatwā* both applicable and convenient for the modern times, the *fatwā* which is rooted in the authentic sources of Islam. This program also aims to help introduce the disciplines of *al-iftā'* into the educational system by making accessible the relevant resources and conducting the necessary studies on the pedagogical and training methods and curricula. This program includes the following initiatives: *Fatwā* qualification for e-program for muftīs; *Hidāya* e-platform; Training program to improve *fatwā* skills and knowledge; and *Fatwā* research support center.

*The eighth initiative* is the first one of this program for the one-year credit-based course made available on the website, which is maintained by the General Secretariat. The *Fatwā* Qualification e-program for muftīs is a foundation course providing scholarly and practical learning experience by means of e-curricula teaching juristic and other necessary sciences that enable muftīs to relate Islamic legal issues to the context of human real life as well as to apply legal rulings to the real-life situations. The program aims to provide the necessary basics, to address any scholarly and methodological deficiencies muftīs or those wishing to become muftīs may have. It thrives to increase the competence of muftīs, to develop their capabilities and to pass on them the skills and knowledge of specialists through practical training. Indeed, it aims to expand the target audience base through distance learning technology, prevent non-specialists from issuing *fatwās*, and promote communication between muftīs worldwide.

The program modules cover jurisprudence, the principles of jurisprudence, the objectives of Islamic law, contemporary juristic issues, inheritance and estate division, the craft of *fatwā*, juristic maxims, understanding primary texts, *fatwā* training, and the ruling systems and human rights. The program graduates receive a certificate of success in the *Fatwā* Qualification Program for muftīs.

*Hidāya* e-platform is *the ninth initiative* launched by the General Secretariat for *Fatwā*, which is the second in this direction. It is an e-platform designed to disseminate knowledge, and promote the noble values of Islam and its refined morals and scholarly disciplines. The platform is supervised by a scholarly committee comprising a group of scholars including the Grand Mufti of Egypt dr. Shawqī 'Allām.

*Hidāya* e-platform is a multi-mission and specialty platform that offers a sort of educational, cultural, and behavioral programs as well as training courses. It provides a safe intellectual environment where people feel safe for themselves and their children. They feel secure of the knowledge that they receive as a genuine learning experience based on the sound scholarly methodology of al-Azhar that promotes the moderation. It aims to promote the values, morals, and understanding of Islam through the best technological means; it offers a number of courses and lectures that contribute to educating the Muslims culturally, ethically, and morally; it clears away the intellectual debris left by extremists allegedly affiliated to Islam; and it counteracts the spread of extremist and terrorist ideas by offering right alternatives.



ILLUSTRATION ~ *Fatwā* in the Digital Age. *Hidāya* e-platform is a multi-mission and specialty platform that offers a sort of educational, cultural, and behavioral programs as well as training courses.

ILUSTRACIJA ~ *Fetva* u digitalnom dobu. *Hidāya* e-platforma je platforma sa više misija i specijalizacija koja nudi neku vrstu obrazovnih, kulturnih i bihevioralnih programa, kao i kurseve obuke.

Besides, this program includes the building of partnerships and agreements with scholarly authorities to achieve common objectives and to convey the General Secretariat's message as far as possible with a view to expanding the target audience by promoting a culture of communication, dialogue, and coexistence with others for the benefit of humanity. However, its most important goals are to provide a safe scholarly environment for the Muslims worldwide, where they receive a genuine learning experience in understanding of the true Islam regarding the authentic Islamic jurisprudence, ethics and morality.

**The tenth initiative** of this second direction is a training program for the development of *fatwā* education and skills. There is no doubt that the presence of highly educated and competent *fatwā* specialists is central to resolving the problem of *fatwā* chaos. No doubt, the fight against extremist groups whose actions are based on the *fatwā* of unqualified and pseudo-scholars largely depends on those muftīs who proudly and sincerely carry on their shoulders the responsibility of being the bridge that connects the rulings of religion to the public.

On the basis of the foregoing platforms, the General Secretariat has introduced an initiative to develop a training program designed to equip the program trainees with the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for their professional activity and consequently enhance the efficiency of *fatwā* authorities. In addition, the General Secretariat aims to disseminate through this initiative the adherence to a methodology that supports unequivocal moderation and the objectives of Islamic law in the practice of *al-iftā'* in a way that protects societal stability and security.



ILLUSTRATION ~ The Egyptian *Dār al-Iftā'* - the ninth class of the three-year *fatwā* issuance program. Among the graduates are fourteen students of eight different nationalities.

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Egipatski *Dār al-Iftā'* - deveti razred trogodišnjeg programa izdavanja *fetvi*. Među maturantima je četrnaest studenata, osam različitih nacionalnosti.

The General Secretariat aims to run two training courses every year. The implementation of this initiative started in 2016 with a collaboration between the General Secretariat and the *Dār al-iftā'* of Egypt on a weeklong, 20-hour training program for students in Thailand. During the course, the students were exposed to a number of contemporary *fatwās* ranging from unprecedented issues, social and business transactions, Muslim minority issues, family issues, misconceptions about Islam and devotional matters.

The instructors trained the students on the manner of pursuing a scholarly methodological approach in their *fatwā* as well as on the manner of developing a source-based juristic and doctrinal reference while maintaining a keen perception of the real-life conditions of health and economic realities of today.

This training course was the fruits of the cooperation between General Secretariat for *Fatwā* and the Royal Thai Embassy in Cairo. The General Secretariat has likewise run the course for Muslims in Britain and two other courses for students in Africa.

The Center for the Promotion of *Fatwā* Research is the eleventh initiative, which aims to promote *fatwā* research as well as to help and guide graduate students and others to conduct researches in the various disciplines of *al-iftā'*. It is the objective of the center to make research on *fatwā* sciences an independent academic discipline.



ILLUSTRATION – The General Secretariat, under the leadership of Egypt's Grand Mufti, is working full force to make the science of *fatwā* an independent academic discipline.

ILUSTRACIJA – Generalni sekretarijat, pod rukovodstvom egipatskog Velikog muftije, radi punom snagom da nauk o *fevi* učini nezavisnom akademskom disciplinom.

## IV The **Fatwā** Observatory

**t**he third program of the *Fatwā* Observation, covers **the twelfth and thirteenth initiatives**: the *Global Fatwā Index* and the *Futurology Observatory for Fatwā*.

The *Global Fatwā* Index is an important springboard for evaluating, analyzing, correcting, and refuting the *al-iftā'* landscape by employing the latest methodologies of strategic analysis with a view of regulating religious discourse and offering an informative view to policy makers. It is set to launch an e-search engine, the first of its kind, for the global monitoring of *fatwā* in real-time and space.

The final **thirteenth initiative** of the *Futurology Observatory for fatwā*, which was launched during the General Secretariat's fourth conference is aimed to provide a vision of the future *fatwā*. It is clear that the futurology has become an indispensable area of interest across all societies and disciplines. The fast pace of change in today's world means that it is vital for all societies and institutions to move quickly and decisively to prepare for the future and make collective scientific efforts to confront the uncertainties and relentless challenges it may bring about.

In addition to the social, scientific, political, and economic changes, the climate change as well as the technological revolution, human migration, demographic transitions and their political and economic implications, the energy, food and water shortages, the space conquests and one world government etc. – all these mandate that we explore and evaluate their effects and the challenges they present in terms of *al-iftā'* and *fatwā*.

Sure, the *fatwā* future studies should help us to moderate the outcomes generated by events, discoveries, etc. by predicting which of the many possible or probable outcomes will come to pass and which will come to stay. Therefore, we should be prepared to address the ensuing problems of whatever nature. In addition, *fatwā* future studies is indispensable for the development of strategic planning across *fatwā* authorities since they provide a conceptualization of technological frame of *fatwā*, the process of *fatwā* production and the means of tackling the accompanying changes.



ILLUSTRATION ~ Logo/Symbol *Dār al-Iftā'*

ILUSTRACIJA ~ Logo/simbol *Dār al-Iftā'*

## V

### A Department for the Institutionalization of *Fatwā*

The fourth program of *A Department for the Institutionalization of Fatwā*, aims to improve the management of *fatwā* institutions by restructuring them according to their respective goals and responsibilities, creating new departments to suit the nature of their work, and employing all modern management tools and criteria.

Towards this end, the “Managerial Consultations for *Fatwā* Institutions” unit was established. The science of modern management is in essence an object-oriented human activity with a specific target which it is able to achieve through a synergy of relations, connections, and mutual complementarity among different groups and professions having varying goals and aspirations.

Hence, it is necessary for modern institutions, including *fatwā* authorities, to have the necessary managerial elements that enable them to carry out their mission in the optimal manner.

Consequently, one of the goals of the General Secretariat was to provide *fatwā* authorities with the necessary managerial support, thereby allowing them to carry out their mission through reliable surefire means of maximizing their impact and efficiency. These revolve around providing *fatwā* authorities with counsel and advice about the manner of upgrading their administrative capacity and making them amenable to new administrative systems with the aim of improving the *fatwā* process.

Within the context of promoting “Managerial Consultations for *Fatwā* Institutions” unit, the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* has prepared theoretical references linking the sciences of management with *al-iftā'*. These include “A manual for establishing a *fatwā* authority”, “Quality management in *fatwā* authorities”, and “Human resource management in *fatwā* authorities”.

## VI Muslim minorities

The fifth program has as its focus the *fatwā* services designed for Muslim minority populations and the means of launching them. It likewise provides every possible *fatwā* counsel and advice needed by these minorities. This program includes *the fifteenth and sixteenth initiatives*.

*The fifteenth initiative* of the Muslim Community Observatory came about in response to the unstable condition experiences by Muslim minority populations abroad, especially those living in countries that have seen major terrorist attacks, not to mention the growing persecution and discrimination against Muslims in some countries as is the case with the Rohingya Muslims in Burma.

The initiative aim is to establish a research mechanism to service the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* to help it conduct careful observation of the conditions of Muslim communities abroad. In addition, the initiative aims to help decision makers in religious and *fatwā* authorities adopt a stance and develop policies and programs that benefit these communities and help them overcome the problems and obstacles they face.

The General Secretariat will start this initiative by making a demographic map of Muslim communities abroad, their network of relationship, conditions, and the range of issues affecting each community. This will ultimately allow for a positive and effective approach to their situation and conditions and push for conditions that will allow the preservation of their basic rights and guarantee their religious freedom.

The Muslim Minority Research and Study Forum as *the sixteenth initiative* was launched by the General Secretariat to bring together researchers and scholars of the different disciplines that relate to the affairs of Muslim minorities. It is also intended to hold seminars on the same subject as well as to come up with a solid working paper on regulating the manner of addressing minority issues.

The forum will hold periodic seminars which will engage researchers and members of minority groups in constructive participation to address the real-life issues of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries, which are becoming increasingly complex due to the West's backlash against terrorism and extremism, which they mistakenly attribute to Islam and the general Muslim public. Muslim legal scholars, especially muftīs, are, therefore, required to give scrupulous attention to this particular group of Muslims.



## VII Moderation and Fight against Extremism

**t**he sixth program focuses primarily on moderation and combating extremism. It thereby aims to deconstruct extremist terrorist ideology and respond to its demagogic claims with wisdom and good exhortation, while simultaneously raising the awareness of Muslim societies about its dangers and ramifications.

The goal of *the seventeenth initiative* of the Salam Center for Extremist Studies, launched by the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* was established as a research center for strategic future studies addressing Islamic extremism and terrorism that is predicated on an Islamic moderate approach.

This *Center* undertakes to combat all forms of extremism on two main levels. The first regards the manner of handling extremist ideology, is borne out of extremists' sophisticated recruitment strategies that rely on legal and juridical inferences that they use to articulate and promote their vision. The second level aims to protect societies from extremist ideologies and consequently prevent the proliferation of extremist and radical ideas across generations.

Furthermore, the *Center* aims to develop an awareness of the true teachings of Islam, disseminating moderation, combating zealotry and intolerance, and countering extremism in all of its forms is crucial in our battle against extremism and religiously inspired terrorism. It is for this particular purpose that *the eighteenth initiative* of Global *Fatwā* Convoys was conceived.

The General Secretariat for *Fatwā* intends to send *fatwā* scholarly convoys to enlighten the people everywhere on Islam and its convenience and tolerance. These convoys have the mission to explain the errors found in the *fatwā* issued by non-specialists and unqualified individuals.

## VIII

### Translation on World Languages

The seventh program of *Translation on world languages* is designed to convey the message of moderate Islam to every Muslim in any country around the world. To fulfill this goal, the General Secretariat for *Fatwā* has established a translation department tasked with translating researchers, *fatwās*, juridical studies, scholarly articles, and book abridges to and from Arabic and other world languages. This department has another task as well to provide the General Secretariat with the researchers and reports published in world languages to benefit from it, respond to it, and facilitate communication with non-Arabic speaking audiences. In view of its goal to disseminate the message of moderate Islam to the entire world and to all Muslims whatever their country or tongue, the General Secretariat developed **the following nineteenth and twentieth initiatives**, The production of encyclopedias and references in the English language and an e-magazine in English.

As for **the nineteenth initiative**, the General Secretariat has published a number of publications that include the “Encyclopedia of *Fatwā* Sciences” in English. This encyclopedia is the first integrated encyclopedia of *fatwā* sciences in English aimed at spreading worldwide awareness of sound *al-iftā’*. The second is the “Encyclopedia of Islamic Sciences” also in English comprising twenty-five volumes on twenty-two subject areas scanning the whole range of Islamic sciences such as the Quran and its sciences, jurisprudence, the principles of jurisprudence, the Arabic language, the Sunnah, etc. The encyclopedia follows al-Azhar’s sound methodology of moderation to allow non-Arabic Muslims in general and their youth in particular to learn the sciences of their religion. The General Secretariat also published in English the book of “Refuting Extremist Ideology.”

The idea for **the twentieth initiative** was borne out of the need to serve as a reliable source for the news of the global community of Muslims at a time when news integrity is questionable at best. Thus, *The E-magazine and The Muslim Bond* came into being as an adoption of moderation by utilizing the technologies and sciences of modern age, which caters to the needs of the public who put their trust in the General Secretariat for *Fatwā*. *The Muslim Bond* aims to disseminate news communication in an effort to keep audiences in touch with Islamic and global events associated with Muslim communities around the world. It focuses on consultation by connecting its readers with experts in all fields, jurisprudence and preaching as well as with the society and family of intellect and knowledge. It was decided to produce the magazine in English in view of the fact that English is the most widely spoken language in the world and the de facto lingua franca in the majority of fields, English is the chosen language of academic communication in higher educational institutions, it is language that is the most widely used on the Internet.

## IX Publications

### I – Publications

1. *General Reference for Fatwā Authorities*
2. *Encyclopedia of Jamharah i'lām al-muftīn*
3. *The Book of Islam and Contemporary Issues*
4. *Manual for establishing Fatwā Authorities*
5. *Quality Management in Fatwā Authorities*
6. *Human Resource Management in Fatwā Authorities*
7. *A Muslim's Guide to Refuting Extremist Ideologies*
8. *The English Encyclopedia of "Fatwā Sciences"*
9. *The English Encyclopedia of "Islamic Sciences"*

### II - Applications

10. *Fatwā e-Library*
11. *e-Program for the qualification of muftīs*

### III - Platforms and e-Publications

12. *Jusoor (Bridges) e-Magazine*
13. *The Journal of the General Secretariat for Fatwā Authorities*
14. *The website of the General Secretariat for Fatwā Authorities*
15. *The Muslim Bond e-Magazine*
16. *Social Media Sites*

## Editorial Postscriptum

This essay may look to some like a sort of an intentional advertising but it is, indeed, an attempt to highlight the issue of *fatwā*, which has become, rightly or wrongly, a matter of concern in terms of peace and security in the world. Here we are introduced by the author of this article to the genuine efforts by the *Dār al-iftā'* („the House of *fatwā*“) of Egypt in facing difficult challenges posted by some irresponsible extreme Muslim groups who have been using the instrument of *fatwā* to promote and impose by force their ideological agenda, which is not compatible with authentic and reliable Islamic legal and moral teachings. The Magazine *Illuminatio/Svjetionik/Almanar* publishes this report of the state of the Muslim *Ummah* in 21<sup>th</sup> century as a historical fact for the future generations.