



Shari'ah Index Project

Imagine: *a Perfectly Islamic State*

Goal: *To define, interpret and implement the concept of the Islamic State in modern times.*

History:

The Shariah Index Project (SIP) had its first meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in August 2006. Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf convened and chaired this meeting, which included four scholars from India, Malaysia, and Pakistan. This session consisted largely of brainstorming and exploring the idea of creating an index of Islamic governance. At its conclusion, the group presented a vision for the project as well as a roadmap.

At the second SIP meeting, in February 2007, the initial group expanded to include additional members from Indonesia, Iran (to represent the Shi'a perspective), and Turkey, as well as two additional participants from Pakistan and Malaysia, respectively. At this meeting, the group refined the roadmap and created a Basis for Evaluation document, which set out an initial list of Islamic legal principles relating to governance. The group also committed to research assignments, which would support the project and which they would present at the next meeting.

During the third meeting, in May 2007, which included the participants from the second meeting (with no additions) the group reviewed and discussed the research assignments. They further refined the Basis for Evaluation document, an exercise that resulted in the creation of two documents: Essential Features of Shariah-Compliant Governance and the first iteration of the Shariah Index, inclusive of seventy-four principles of Islamic governance derived from Islamic law.

Additionally, the group developed a strategic plan for the project, which highlighted key dates and tasks. They also identified a short and long-list of scholars to approach for support.

At the fourth in October 2007, the "core working group" was again expanded to include representatives from Bahrain, England, Morocco, and Lebanon (to include the Arab Shi'a perspective). It also included three ratings experts, who At this meeting, the group further refined the Index, which they organized into four major sections—1) *Normative Declarations*, 2) *Qualifications of Leaders*, 3) *Governance*, and 4) *Maqasid al Shariah*—with each of these sections broken down into a number of measurable principles derived from Shariah. The group also revisited and refined their strategic plan and committed to three detailed research and writing tasks: 1) *long articles*, 2) *sourcing and citing principles*, 3) *proxy questions for each principle*.



In the months since October 2007, Cordoba Initiative staff has been working individually with a number of the scholars to craft a preamble to the project and to further refine the philosophy, overall structure, and organization of the Index as well as each of the principles. Additionally, Cordoba staff has been working with ratings experts, including Dr. Rotberg of Harvard University, the Pew Research Center, and the Gallup Organization—to research and draft proxy questions for each principle.

At the most recent meeting in August 2008, the scholars agreed that the index would be a Maqasid al Shariah Index, measuring a state's Islamicity through both its governance and society. Representatives from the Gallup Organization governance index pioneer, Dr. Robert Rotberg, joined the discussion by phone on the second day. Following these conversations with rating and indexing specialists, the scholars worked to finalize the index, including its methodology and measurable indicators. The scholars also finalized preparations for the book to be published concurrently with the Index and findings. After the formal meetings concluded, Cordoba staff worked one-on-one with a number of the scholars, soliciting additional information requested by the ratings experts prior to their formal work on the Index as well about the Indexing methodology and the book, with significant work with Gallup and Dr. Rotberg as well as production of the book scheduled for the upcoming 6 months. The target date for the Index results and book is March 2009, with the public launch to follow.

CI FEATURES

Interview with Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf



The fundamental idea which defines a human being as a Muslim is the declaration of faith: that there is a creator, whom we call God -- or Allah, in Arabic -- and that the creator is one and single. And we declare this faith by the declaration of faith, where we ... bear witness that there is no God but God. And that we are accountable to God for our actions [More »](#)

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