



Former Prime Minister of Lebanon speaks on Islam and the Challenges of Modernization

Former Lebanese Prime Minister HE Najib Mikati delivered a lecture on Thursday 19 February at the Examination Schools entitled 'Islam and the Challenges of Modernization'. The lecture was also attended by the Ambassador of Lebanon, HE Inaam Osseiran.

Mr Mikati first addressed some common misconceptions about Islamic teachings, citing examples from the time of the Prophet to demonstrate the true nature of Islam. He argued that today's regional and sectarian conflicts are fuelled primarily by political and cultural, rather than religious, differences. Mr Mikati called for tolerance and mutual respect, stressing the need for moderates of all religions and experts in different fields to join together and create a non-political forum, based on dialogue and mutual respect. The question and answer session following his lecture provided the opportunity for a wider discussion about issues of politics and religion and also recent developments in the Lebanon.



HE Mr Najib Mikati

Lord Williams of Baglan, former UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon, offered the closing remarks. Conversations continued at a dinner for invited guests, including Mrs May Mikati and an accompanying delegation at which Mr Mikati stressed his support for the Centre's work.

Promoting Tolerance and Understanding ISESCO-OCIS Prize Awarded



The ISESCO-OCIS Prize ceremony in Rabat

In a new joint initiative, the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO) awarded their inaugural annual Prize for Educators on 13 April at a ceremony at ISESCO Headquarters in Rabat.

The Award was instituted in 2014 as part of a wider programme of cooperation between the two institutions. It aims to promote dialogue and understanding between peoples, cultures and civilisations by shedding light on and paying tribute to major institutions, leading figures and sponsors active in the promotion of the values of peace and coexistence. For this year's award the jury considered achievements in this field by individuals and institutions in the United Kingdom.

The institutional award was given to the British Museum for its widely praised exhibition 'Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam.' It was collected by Mr Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum and Mrs Venetia Porter, curator of the exhibition. The individual prize went to the celebrated author and scholar Ms Karen Armstrong for her dedication to writing and academic endeavour in promoting tolerance.

New Visiting Fellows

A number of new Visiting Fellows joined the Centre during Hilary Term: Ms Zekiye Ayca Arkilic, BA (Maastricht), MA (Central European University), *Imam Tirmizi Visiting Research Fellow*; Dr Khaled Al-Suwaidi, BA (Texas), MA (Westminster), PhD (London) *Visiting Research Fellow*; Dr Seyed Shahbedin Mesbahi, MA (Florida), PhD (UC Berkeley), *Visiting Research Fellow*; Dr Kabiru Chafe (Ahmadu Bello University), *Visiting Fellow*.

Book Launch

Dr Asma Mustafa, the Centre's Salahuddin Abdul Jawad Research Fellow in the Study of Muslims in Britain, has published her first book entitled *'Identity and Political Participation among British Muslims: Belief and Belonging'*. The book was released in January by Palgrave Macmillan and explores the lives and political identity of young British Muslims. It builds on detailed research into their diverse voices and experiences.

Journal of Islamic Studies Volume 26 Number 1

The latest issue of the Journal includes articles by Guy Burak on *'Between the Kānūn of Qāyrbāy and Ottoman Yasaq: A Note on Ottoman Dynastic Law'* and by Terje Østebø, on *'Claims for Authority at the Shrine of Shaykh Husayn, Ethiopia'*. The issue also contains 23 book reviews of some of the most recent publications about Islam and the Muslim World.

International Links

Azerbaijan



HE Mr Tahir Taghizadeh, Ambassador of Azerbaijan, led a roundtable discussion on 'Azerbaijan Today' over lunch with senior members of the Centre on 15 January. He discussed Azerbaijan's ambitions in the fields of education and politics. He was introduced to the Centre's work and aims as an institution and its academic links in Azerbaijan.

Brunei

On 7 April HE Major General Dato Haji Aminuddin Ihsan Bin Pehin Dato Haji Abidin, High Commissioner for Brunei Darussalam, visited the Centre. He toured the new building where he viewed an exhibition of the Centre's work and discussed the Centre's links and cooperation with scholars and academic institutions in Brunei.



HE Major General Dato Haji Aminuddin Ihsan

China

Academic links with China were further developed in March when the Director delivered a series of lectures at Lanzhou University at the invitation of Professor Ding Shiren, Director of the Institution of Islamic Culture Studies. In the lectures, the Director spoke about different approaches to the study of Islam and understanding Muslim societies.

Hong Kong

The Director of the Centre gave the inaugural lecture at the launch of the Islamic Studies Initiative at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in March. He spoke on 'Fresh Perspectives on the Study of the Islamic World' and looked at the challenges faced by Muslims in contemporary societies worldwide.

Kazakhstan

A roundtable meeting was held at the Centre on 16 April with HE Mr Erzhan Kazykhanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The discussion was attended by academics and Centre members, who had the opportunity to listen to a wide ranging survey by the Ambassador which covered the history, current role and future objectives of Kazakhstan.

Themes in subsequent discussion included the social traditions of Kazakhstan, its role in Muslim history and civilisation as well as more contemporary issues relating to economics, trade and education, including the potential for enhanced academic links with the Centre.



HE Mr Erzhan Kazykhanov

United Nations

On 29 – 30 January the Centre hosted a roundtable on Islamic Social Finance in collaboration with the United Nations World Humanitarian Summit. The aims of the roundtable were to create initiatives that would diversify the humanitarian sector and encourage direct Islamic giving to humanitarian work. These would be implemented and presented at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016. The roundtable was attended by more than 30 academics, practitioners and experts in Islamic finance and discussion focused on Islamic social finance bodies, public engagement and policy reform.



Roundtable participants at the Centre's new building

Strengthening links with Nigeria The Sultan of Sokoto

The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies was happy to welcome His Eminence Sultan Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakr III, Sultan of Sokoto, on his visit to the Centre on 4 March. He was accompanied by HE Dr Usman Bugaje and the High Commissioner for Nigeria, HE Dr Dalhatu Tafida. The Sultan's visit was a valuable opportunity to introduce him to the Centre's work, to recall the Centre's existing academic links with Nigeria and to discuss how they might be further developed in the future. At the lunch held in his honour, the Sultan was formally welcomed to Oxfordshire by The Lord Lieutenant, Mr Tim Stevenson.



His Eminence Sultan Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakr III signing the distinguished visitors' book at the Centre's new building

Lord Mayor of London hosts Reception

The Lord Mayor of London, the Rt Hon Alan Yarrow, hosted a reception on 26 February at Mansion House to mark the culmination of the successful seminar series on Islamic Finance held at the Centre in Michaelmas Term. The keynote address was given by Tan Sri Dato' Azman bin Haj Mokhtar, Managing Director of Khazanah Nasional Berhad. Mr Alan Yarrow and representatives of the Centre and Fajr Capital also spoke.

Seminar Series on Muslim Thinkers

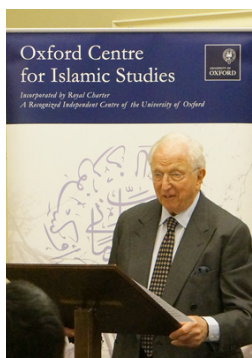
In Hilary Term the Centre ran a seminar series looking at the lives and legacies of prominent 'Muslim Thinkers'. The seminars were convened by Dr Afifi Al-Akiti, KFAS Fellow in Islamic Studies, and featured contributions from several prominent academics. The following seminars were delivered:

Dr Harith Ramli, Cambridge Muslim College, 'Rabia Basri'; Dr Mustapha Sheikh, Leeds University, 'Ibn Taymiyya'; Professor Eric Ormsby, Institute of Ismaili Studies, 'al-Ghazali'; Dr Catarina Belo, American University of Cairo, 'Ibn Rushd'; Dr Ahmed El Shamsy, Chicago University, 'Imam al-Shafi'i'; Professor Marcia Hermansen, Loyola University, 'Shah Wali Allah'; and Dr George Malagaris, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, 'al-Biruni'.

Sultan Azlan Shah Law Lectures

The Rule of Law and Inter-Faith Relations

On 10 February the Centre inaugurated a new series of lectures under the auspices of the Sultan Azlan Shah Fellowship. The distinguished lecturer was the Rt Hon Lord Woolf, former Chief Justice



The Rt Hon Lord Woolf

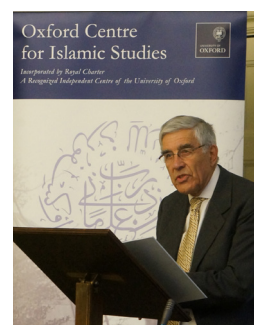
of England and Wales, who addressed the issue of 'The Rule of Law as the Foundation of Good Inter-Faith Relations'. He was introduced by the Centre's Director, Dr Farhan Nizami, and Lord Phillips, the Sultan Azlan Shah Fellow in Law, presided over the session.

Lord Woolf explored the concept of the Rule of Law in its various aspects before identifying its importance in providing a constructive framework for people of all faiths to follow their traditions in an atmosphere of freedom and tolerance. An important theme was the balance between freedom of expression and respect for the beliefs of others. Lord Woolf argued that both were valid and important human rights principles.

International Conventions Against Corruption

Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers, former Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales and Azlan Shah Fellow at the Centre, delivered a lecture on 'International Laws Against Corruption - Do They Make a Difference?'. The Warden of Wadham, Lord Macdonald QC, chaired the occasion.

Lord Phillips examined how nations deal with bribery of public officials, focusing on the development of legislation to combat corruption. He addressed the crucial issue of the implementation of these laws and argued that while the situation was improving, a change in business culture was required.



Lord Phillips

The Sultan Azlan Shah Fellowship is named after the former Sultan of Perak who established a lecture series by distinguished English lawyers in Malaysia. The series is to be brought to Oxford at the welcome suggestion of the present Sultan of Perak, HRH Sultan Nazrin Shah.

Graduate Colloquium

Education and identity were the main topics of the Hilary Term graduate colloquium. The following Centre Scholars and graduate students made presentations: June Rubis (Oriental); Halima Ahmad (Oriental); Anam Riaz (Lady Margaret Hall); Mirat Al Fatima Ahsan (Kellogg); Anam Iqbal (St Cross); Zainab Kabba (St Antony's); and Walaa Quisay (Lady Margaret Hall).

Oxford Literary Festival 2015

The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies was a proud sponsor of the Oxford Literary Festival. This year the Centre once again opened up its new building to visitors who were able to view the very significant progress in construction work.

6th SC-OCIS Roundtable

Seeking Global Financial Sustainability

The latest Roundtable in this highly successful partnership with the Securities Commission of Malaysia was held at Ditchley Park on 14 –15 March and was preceded by a dinner in London attended by Islamic finance and conventional banking sector leaders. HRH Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, Sultan of the State of Perak, gave the keynote speeches at the dinner and at the opening session of the Roundtable. The Roundtable delegates comprised a select group of key industry practitioners, senior academics, Shariah scholars, and regulators from around the world.

This year's meeting entitled 'Seeking Sustainability: the Role of Islamic Finance in Transformational Change' focused on the ethical issues surrounding Islamic finance. It discussed whether Islamic finance can provide a credible, sustainable and more widely adopted financial system, particularly post banking crisis. Several case studies



Roundtable discussion at Ditchley Park

looking at social impact were examined and the meeting considered whether values-based finance needed extensive regulation, whether it could truly compete in terms of financial performance, and whether it could fully achieve Shariah compliance when still largely dependent on the wider conventional banking infrastructure. The Roundtable is an annual event alternating between the UK and Malaysia.