

EDITORIAL

Why Ijtihad Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies?¹

Dr. Tijani BOULAOUALI 
Editor-in-Chief of Ijtihad Journal
Faculty of theology and Religious Studies
KU Leuven Belgium
tijani.boulaouali@kuleuven.be



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Praise be to God who has helped and inspired us to present our research project: “Ijtihad Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies.”

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التجاني بولعوالي، لماذا مجلة اجتهاد للدراسات الإسلامية والعربية؟ مجلة اجتهاد للدراسات الإسلامية والعربية، مركز اجتهاد للدراسات والتكوين، بلجيكا، مج. 1، ع. 1، يونيو 2024، 27-42.

I

It is a historic moment of profound importance, a rarity amidst the monotony of our daily lives. Simultaneously, it is an epistemological moment of utmost value, not only in the lives of individuals but also in the journey of groups and societies. It is among the few moments that persist in the self, history, and being, while other moments fade into the shadows of the past or lose the sparkle of their former prominence. This occasion relates to the launch of our peer-reviewed scientific journal in this exceptional issue, which can be likened to the moment a newborn arrives after a long, difficult labour filled with fear, hesitation, and uncertainty.

The idea of establishing an independent journal in Europe that specializes in Islamic and Arabic studies is not new. Rather, it has been a longstanding dream of ours since we migrated to the West a quarter of a century ago, realizing such an idea was challenging due to a lack of knowledge, academic resources, and both moral and material support. Despite our initial reluctance to pursue what seemed an “unattainable” project, the dream continued to grow in our minds and spirits, fuelled by the expanding circle of our academic interests and the growth of our intellectual network, which now includes researchers, experts, and institutions, including research centres.

In the past, we embarked on several media and intellectual experiments; however, these efforts were short-lived, either due to immature visions and goals, lack of financial support, or the absence of a receptive context. Nonetheless, these attempts positively impacted our accumulation of experience, achievements, and vision. Our current endeavour is simply a continuation of those early efforts, which, though once considered failures, were actually successes given the challenging circumstances of their inception. It felt as though we were then driven by youthful enthusiasm, attempting to create something from nothing and to make the impossible possible.

Despite the enduring challenges and the unfulfilled aspects of our original vision, we now possess the crucial elements necessary for embarking on such a scholarly and research endeavour. We have not only a steadfast determination but also other essential components

for exceptional work: a clear vision, intellectual maturity, a capable and cohesive team, and an environment conducive to scholarly pursuits.

II

We decided to name our journal “Ijtihad Journal for Arabic and Islamic Studies” after extensive deliberation on the most fitting title. This decision followed repeated consultations with friends and colleagues and careful consideration of various options that emerged during the months we spent refining our concept. Ultimately, we chose *ijtihad*, a term with deep jurisprudential, philosophical, historical, and political connotations within our Islamic heritage. Its relevance extends into our present era, impacting not only the Arabic and Islamic world but also the European and Western contexts in which we reside. We recognize that the need for *ijtihad* is particularly acute here, more so than in other contexts, especially given the emerging jurisprudential challenges that require nuanced responses adapted to the new circumstances faced by Muslims in Europe and the West.

We do not refer solely to jurisprudential *ijtihad*, which is a specialized endeavour undertaken by Sharia scholars, jurists, and imams well-versed in the jurisprudential field. Rather, we also mean *ijtihad* in a broader sense, where researchers from various disciplines and backgrounds address diverse issues, incidents, and developments within the framework of correct and clear Islamic jurisprudential references, while incorporating contemporary methodologies. It appears that everyone is “making an effort,” aligning with the terminological definition of *ijtihad*.

When the companion Mu‘ad ibn Jabal responded to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, saying: “I strive to make my own opinion, and I shall spare no effort,” he did not propose this solution as an alternative to the supreme sources of Islamic law, the Qur’an and the Sunnah, but as an essential and necessary extension of them. His individual effort was not purely his own, contrary to the view held by some interpreters. Instead, it was the outcome of the Qur’anic and divine instruction he received from the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, the Prophet’s response was extremely positive, reassuring, and confident: “Praise be to Allah Who

has helped the messenger of the Messenger of Allah to find something which pleases the Messenger of Allah.”¹

This approach defines our research and academic efforts. We prioritize the diligence of researchers, primarily those specializing in jurisprudence. Their research is crucial, particularly today, as it enriches the understanding of both Muslims and non-Muslims, especially in Europe and the West. And also, we value contributions from researchers in other fields of knowledge, but they intersect with what is jurisprudential, such as economics, medicine, education, law, ethics, and others. Insights from these fields can significantly enhance contemporary Islamic jurisprudence, inspiring jurists and Islamic councils to develop appropriate fatwas for Muslims in Europe and the West.

Returning to the inception, this journal is published by the Ijtihad Center for Studies and Training in Belgium. It is registered with the Royal Belgian Library (KBR) and the National Scientific Library, under ISSN: 2983-9939. The journal, which is semi-annual and peer-reviewed according to international academic standards, Focuses on Islamic and Arabic studies in Europe and the West. It addresses various relevant topics, including Theological and Religious Studies, Orientalism, Occidentalism, Interfaith Dialogue, Pluralism, Comparative Religion, Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities, and the concept of Otherness.

III

The Arabic and Muslim communities have become significant components of contemporary pluralistic societies in Western Europe, influencing demographic, institutional, and cultural levels. Despite the growing demand for intellectual, educational, linguistic, and economic resources among Muslims, the opportunities available often fail to meet their needs. This mismatch also extends to the field of knowledge, which requires further evaluation, qualification, and diligence to align with the evolving civilizational conditions in Europe and the West. Islam’s presence in the West has catalysed critical transformations: from

¹ Ahmed Ibn Hanbal, Al-Musnad, Muasasat Al Riasala, (Shuaib al-Arnauti Eds.), Beirut, 2001, Hadith No. 22007, Vol. 36, p. 333. A group of scholars have weakened this hadith in terms of its chain of transmission (sanad), but it is well-known among the scholars of hadith and jurisprudence, and there are even other hadiths that strengthen its meaning.

immigration to citizenship, from a problematic phase to a contributory one, and from passive existence to active participation.

Reflecting on the situation of Muslims in Europe, nearly half a century after the onset of labor migration in the 1960s, it is evident that significant educational, institutional, legal, and political achievements have been made. Consequently, Muslims, particularly recent generations, have increasingly engaged in and contributed positively to education, scientific research, civil society, politics, media, and other sectors. Throughout these transformations, driven by the new secular and pluralistic contexts, the essence of Islamic identity has remained intact, consistently manifesting in the media, political discussions, and educational and research institutions.

For centuries, the study of Islam has largely been framed by Orientalist theories, which examine its theological, jurisprudential, ethical, and linguistic aspects from an external perspective, outside the Islamic cognitive and methodological frameworks. This focus has led to the development of academic fields such as Arabic Studies, Islamology, Islamic Theology, and Qur'anic Studies, now integral to many faculties of arts, languages, and theology across European and Western universities. These disciplines have enriched the academic landscape through specialized programs, conferences, research publications, and peer-reviewed journals. Consequently, colleges and departments that offer religious or linguistic studies have become renowned for their unique training programs in Arabic and Islamic studies. Furthermore, some universities have gained recognition for hosting international scientific seminars that focus on specific aspects of Islam and the Arabic language, while various academic centres have made contributions by publishing peer-reviewed monographs and journals dedicated to these fields.

Regarding peer-reviewed scientific journals specializing in Islamic and Arabic studies in Europe and the West, we have identified five critical observations:

1. Most of these journals are published by European and Western non-Islamic universities and research centres, with Islam and the Arabic language as their primary research subjects.
2. These journals typically adopt an external, "Orientalist" approach to Islam, enforcing stringent objective and methodological standards that all researchers, Muslim and non-Muslim, must adhere to.

3. They predominantly study Islam and Arabic culture from an “outsider” perspective, neglecting the “insider” viewpoints, both traditional and contemporary, favoured by researchers with Islamic doctrinal backgrounds.
4. Some journals not only impose rigorous methodological standards but also subject research to their evaluation systems, which are influenced by ideological and Orientalist interpretations that reject Islamic theological, jurisprudential, and moral postulates.
5. A recent trend among many international peer-reviewed journals involves demanding high publication fees from researchers, prioritizing profit over the academic, educational, and methodological integrity of the research.

Despite significant developments in Arabic and Islamic studies within Western and European universities and research centres, the academic exploration of Islamic topics often includes subjective and ideological interpretations, contradicting claims of neutrality and objectivity. In response to this challenging environment, the idea of establishing a new peer-reviewed journal arose. This journal aims to engage with Islamic and Arabic topics rooted in their original contexts while also leveraging the achievements of Western scientific research, especially methodologically, technically, and communicatively. Furthermore, it will address Islam and Muslim-related issues from within the Western, including European, context, remaining open to objective external perspectives. This dual approach facilitates an insider view of Islam, which is currently lacking in Western academic circles, while also examining the Islamic cultural, religious, literary, and academic presence from a Western academic perspective. Notably, some European institutions, such as the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Louvain in Belgium, have begun to adopt Islamic insider perspectives in their research and teaching methods. Here, Muslim students and researchers can immerse themselves in Islamic sciences as they are taught in Islamic universities, complemented by both traditional and contemporary Western academic approaches.

IV

Ijtihad Journal is primarily specialised in Islamic and Arabic studies within Europe and the West, addressing a wide range of religious, jurisprudential, cultural, educational, social, political, and historical issues concerning Islam and Muslims. Additionally, it engages with both traditional and contemporary Orientalist studies and research on Islam through detailed reviews, critiques, and evaluations. Our work operates on two principal levels. Firstly, we present Islam from an internal perspective, contrasting with the external Orientalist and Islamological approaches that tend to strip Islamic investigations of their original spirit. These approaches often present Islam in a dry, objective manner, devoid of its metaphysical dimensions, stripping prophecy of its divine essence, and detaching the Qur'an from its devotional and miraculous aspects.

Secondly, our focus is on understanding Islam from within the Western context where Muslims reside and are an integral part. This contrasts with approaches that originate from outside the Western Muslim experience, primarily Arabic perspectives that address Muslim issues in the West "from a distance." Academic research necessitates firsthand experiences, ongoing awareness of changes, and active field monitoring. Consequently, many of these studies tend to merely reiterate what has already been published in the West about Islam, which is either accessed in its original language or translated into Arabic at a later time. Moreover, there exists a body of literature that deviates from rigorous methodological standards, often marked by emotional bias, subjective projections, and a propensity towards conspiracy theories and scepticism.

In this project, we aim to achieve a series of foundational objectives to ensure our work is purposeful, strategic, and methodologically sound. Key objectives include:

- Analysing a broad spectrum of theological, jurisprudential, ethical, philosophical, social, linguistic, and historical aspects of Islam using an objective, critical methodology that incorporates internal Islamic references alongside external Western advancements in methodology, technology, and linguistics.
- Conducting comprehensive reviews of traditional and contemporary Orientalist studies on Islam to identify and rectify deviations, while leveraging their scientific and qualitative insights.

- Enriching the field of Arabic and Islamic studies in Europe and the West by adopting a different approach that integrates the internal Islamic perspective with Western intellectual and contextual realities.
- Restoring the scholarly contribution of Orientalism through dedicated studies of notable Orientalist scholars, thinkers, figures, and schools that have focused on Islam.
- Documenting the outcomes of Arabic and Islamic studies in Europe and the West, showcasing the work of both Muslim and non-Muslim researchers, research centres, and academic institutions.
- Reviewing literature and studies that address various religious, historical, intellectual, and linguistic themes in Islam, including books, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and seminars.
- Launching an annotated bibliography that highlights significant historical and contemporary works in Arabic and Islamic studies in Europe and the West.
- Translating pivotal Western scholarly articles and studies on Islam into Arabic, and vice versa, translating key contributions about Islam into several European languages.
- Empowering emerging scholars to publish their research and university theses in the form of articles, chapters, and summaries.
- Organizing international scientific seminars, and workshops on methodological and educational practices, either independently by the Ijtihad Center for Studies and Training or in cooperation with other research entities and academic institutions across Europe, the West, and the Arabic and Islamic world.
- Publishing individual and collaborative research within the framework of the “Studies of Islam in the West” project.

V

We have structured the journal into fixed main sections: articles, chapters, critical reviews, introductory reviews, translations, and interviews. Starting with the upcoming second issue,

we will focus on dedicated themes concerning Islamic and Arabic studies, as well as issues pertaining to Islam in Europe and the West. Approximately 70% of the content will focus on the theme's topic, while the remaining portion will cover varied topics that do not necessarily align with the main theme. The majority of the journal will prioritize peer-reviewed scientific articles, as this not only fulfils university publication requirements for researchers but also enhances the journal's quality. Such rigorously reviewed articles are crucial for meeting the standards of international academic rankings, thereby propelling this research initiative forward and achieving our stated objectives.

The inaugural issue of the journal includes an editorial, twelve articles of which three are in English, one in French, and the remaining eight in Arabic, along with three reviews and one translation.

The editorial, authored by Dr. Tijani Boulaouali, the editor-in-chief who is also responsible for the journal's oversight, discusses the subjective and objective conditions that gave rise to this intellectual and research initiative. Boulaouali points out the new context in which Muslims in Europe and the West find themselves, emphasizing the necessity for projects that approach Islam from an internal perspective. He articulates how the journal engages with the reality of Muslims in the West through jurisprudential awareness, realistic interpretation, and rational consciousness. Boulaouali outlines the journal's ambitions to offer a new, objective presentation of various Islamic topics, critique traditional and contemporary Orientalist theories on Islam, document the presence of Islam in Europe and the West, and support scientific translations and joint publications. Furthermore, the editorial provides an overview of the articles in this issue, giving readers insight into the significant contributions of the researchers.

The first article, titled "Islam and Freedom of Religion and Belief in Spain," is written by Dr. Mohammed Dahiri, a professor and researcher at the Complutense University of Madrid, Spain. Dahiri explores the various manifestations of Islamic presence in Spain, beginning with an overview of immigration, before delving into the longstanding relationship between Islam and Spain from the Islamic conquest of Andalusia to the present. He also discusses the issue of religious freedom within the Spanish legal system, highlighting the landmark 1967 law that recognized and regulated freedom of belief and worship and the state's relationship with all

religious representations. Furthermore, he examines the situation of Muslims and Islam in Spain today, including the role of Islamic associations and federations in defending their rights and preserving their achievements. The article concludes with a focus on the challenges of integration and coexistence, as well as the role of civil institutions in fostering religious tolerance and cultural dialogue, essential for the progress of a multicultural society.

The second article, titled “Marriage with Women of the People of the Book in Western Countries: A Realistic Jurisprudential View,” is authored by Dr. Mohamed Ghoulbane, a professor and researcher at the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences at Hassan II University in Casablanca, Morocco. Ghoulbane addresses an important jurisprudential topic: marriage to women of the People of the Book in Western contexts. The relevance of this topic has grown with the increasing settlement of large Muslims populations in various European and other Western countries. This demographic shift has led to numerous societal changes and challenges, necessitating a realistic jurisprudential response, particularly concerning mixed marriages between Muslim men and Christian women. Ghoulbane presents various juristic perspectives on the legality of such marriages, discusses the factors necessitating a revised fatwa, and explores how changes in time, place, and circumstances influence these decrees. The article concludes by critically assessing the shifts in ruling on such marriages, ranging from permissibility to abhorrence, or from permissibility to prohibition.

The third article, written in French and entitled “To be an Imam in the Secular Republic,” is by Dr. Youssef Nouiouar, a researcher affiliated with the Laboratory of Studies and Research in Sociology and Ethnology at the University of Montpellier in France. Nouiouar argues that the discussion of imams in France, which has become a prominent topic in public debates, extends beyond religious dimensions to encompass political, media, and security concerns. His study seeks to describe the complex reality of “Muslim Religious Advisors” in France by examining the diversity of their backgrounds, their funding methods, and the recruitment challenges they face. Additionally, he explores the obstacles related to their training in France and in countries with significant Muslim immigration populations, highlighting the difficulties posed by the secular context.

The fourth article, titled “Jurisprudence of Contemporary Reality: A Reading in the Perspective of the Unity of Knowledge and Contemporary Issues,” is written by Dr. Mustafa Attia Jumaa, a professor and researcher at both the Islamic University of Minnesota in the United States of America and the American Open University in Kuwait. He provides a comprehensive explanation of the jurisprudence of contemporary reality, covering its fundamental, jurisprudential, and epistemological dimensions. He discusses how this jurisprudence can benefit scholars, jurists, preachers, and researchers, offering a global vision that clarifies its foundations. The article is structured into four sections: the linguistic and terminological basis of the concept of the jurisprudence of reality, the challenge of contemporaneity and jurisprudential discourse, the need for this jurisprudence, and several issues related to the jurisprudence of contemporary reality.

The fifth article, “Upholding Identity Amidst Adversity: The Religious and Traditional Practices of Muslim Soldiers in WWI and WWII in Europe,” is written in English by Dr. Mimoune Daoudi, a professor and researcher, and Salah CHIG, a PhD Candidate, at Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University in Fes Sais, Morocco. The article concludes that, despite their significant contributions during World Wars I and II, the efforts of Muslim soldiers are largely ignored in Western historical records. These soldiers grappled with managing their faith, fulfilling their military duties, and coping with the harsh European climates. The tension between military policy and religious responsibilities necessitated major revisions, adaptations, and a willingness to explore unknown territory. The researchers drew on personal and historical narratives, academic studies, and film footage to explore how Muslim soldiers managed their interactions with others and adapted to unfamiliar environments.

The sixth article, titled “The Conversion of One Spouse to Islam Rather than the Other: An Objective Jurisprudential Study,” is authored by Dr. Youssef Degoug, a professor at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakesh, Morocco. He addresses a significant social issue within pluralistic societies where belief systems are diverse: specifically, the scenario where one spouse converts to Islam while the other remains of their original religion. This situation raises complex questions regarding the ruling on the marital contract between these two spouses. The importance of discussing this issue lies in presenting the Sharia ruling, which draws from both comprehensive and partial Sharia

evidence. By examining these, Muslims can better comprehend the legalities of their domestic situations, ensuring that the marital relationship adheres to Islamic legal principles. The article is divided into two parts: one addresses a woman's conversion to Islam while her husband remains non-Muslim, and the other discusses a man's conversion to Islam while his wife maintains her original religion.

The seventh article, titled "The Objectives of Islamic Law and Their Relationship with Legal Evidence," is written by Dr. Nourdine Karrat, a professor and researcher at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Mohammed I University in Oujda, Morocco. Karrat explores the intricate connection between the science of the principles of jurisprudence (*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*) and the objectives of Islamic law (Maqāṣid al-Sharia). The article is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses the close relationship between the jurisprudential principles and the objectives of Sharia, drawing on the opinions of various jurists and scholars. The second section focuses on the objectives of Sharia and the method of induction, an essential component of this science, since if the objectives of Sharia require evidential support, such support mostly comes from the method of induction. This method not only strengthens these objectives but also ensures their dominance throughout the entire process of diligence, without, however, granting them independence in proving legal rulings.

The eighth article is in English, titled "The Current Debate on the Moroccan Family Code *Mudawwanat Al-'Ussra*," is written by Dr. Karima Nour Issaoui, a professor and researcher at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Abdelmalek Saadi University in Tetouan, Morocco. Issaoui discusses how the Moroccan Family Code, the *Moudawana*, implemented in February 2004, has drawn increasing criticism from civil society, including feminist movements and human rights associations, twenty years after its enactment. The urgency to reform the *Moudawana* and correct its shortcomings is beginning to be felt. However, the sensitive nature of this contentious subject entails a need for consensus among various components of society. This article will consider the current discussions surrounding the *Moudawana*, detailing the most significant issues associated with this personal status code, in particular in terms of its understanding and interpretation of laws, and will also highlight the main demands of feminist movements.

The ninth article, titled “Rules for Objective Consideration of New Fatwas on Financial Transactions,” is authored by Dr. Redouan Ghanimi, a professor and researcher at Ibn Zohr University in Agadir, Morocco. Ghanimi emphasizes the profound impact that fatwas can have on both individuals and society, given their potential to preserve or compromise religious integrity, especially since it involves interpreting legal rulings originally issued by God. Thus, the mufti acts on behalf of God, and some scholars, including Al-Shatibi in his book *Al-Muwafaqat*, consider the mufti’s position to carry a responsibility comparable to that of the Prophet. Due to the profound responsibility and the potential risks involved, Ghanimi points out that some Muslim scholars refrain from issuing fatwas, with one even wishing the query had been directed to another. Their reluctance stems from a deep sense of piety and caution towards religion.

The tenth article, written in English and entitled “Rethinking *Jihād* and Martyrdom in Islam: Insights from the Battle of Mu’tah beyond the Western Paradigm,” is by Dutch researcher Dennis van Dijk, who holds degrees from University of Amsterdam, Leiden University, and University of Louvain. Van Dijk re-evaluates the concept of *jihād* within Islamic tradition, aiming to reveal its complex nature and separate it from the prevalent Western misconceptions that link *jihād* exclusively to extremism and violence. By recounting the Battle of Mu’tah and its legacy, the article highlights the strategic, spiritual, and ethical considerations, alongside the steadfast faith in Allah, amid adversity and persecution that have guided Islamic military efforts. This examination calls for a more enlightened and respectful conversation about Islamic tradition, urging Western readers to question their biases and preconceptions rooted in political rhetoric.

The eleventh article, titled “The Phenomenon of Atheism in Islamic Societies: Factors and Solutions,” is authored by Dr. Khalid Touzani, the head of the Moroccan Center for Cultural Investment. This study aims to understand the phenomenon of atheism in Islamic societies by identifying the key factors contributing to its spread and proposing solutions to mitigate its impact on the cohesion of Islamic society and the preservation of its doctrinal and religious identity. The study emphasizes the inherent connection between man and his Creator, characterizing atheism as a temporary deviation rather than a permanent condition, and advocates for engaging atheists to help realign their understanding of religion and religiosity.

The twelfth article, titled “Religious Orders in the Tribes of Northern Morocco: A Sociological Study (Anjra Tribe as a Model),” is written by Dr. Mohammed Karrouk Kerkich and Dr. Ibrahim Hamdaoui from the Faculty of Letters and Humanities at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra, Morocco. This article discusses one of the most prominent types of religiosity among Moroccan tribes, focusing specifically on the Anjra tribe in northwestern Morocco. It delves into the structure, origins, varieties, associated rituals, and evolving beliefs of these orders, identifying the changes they have undergone over time. The article is divided into three sections. The first section offers a documentary and introductory study of the various types of religious practices of the Anjra tribe. The second section traces the history of such religious orders, from their inception to their historical development. Finally, the third section addresses the structure of the tribe’s religious orders and the transformations it has witnessed.

In addition to the articles rich in content and methodology, the journal features three book reviews. The first review is analytical and critical, authored by Dr. Samir Saidi, a sociological researcher at the Namaa Center for Research and Studies. He reviews “The Japanese Experience: A Study in the Foundations of the Renaissance Model” by Dr. Salmane Bounaamane, a Moroccan political science researcher

The subsequent reviews are more introductory in nature: Dennis van Dijk reviews “The Politics of the Veil” by Joan Wallach Scott, published in 2007; and Ahmed Amir Mohamed Fares, a PhD researcher at the Faculty of Arts, KU Leuven in Belgium, discusses “Islam and Muslims in Spain: Reality and Challenges” by Dr. Mohammed Dahiri from the Complutense University in Madrid, published in 2023.

This issue also includes the German translation of the article “Begriffliche Entwicklung des Sufismus,” originally authored by Turkish Professor Merdan Günes from the University of Osnabrück in Germany. The translation was carried out by Dr. Redouane Daoui, a professor and researcher at the International University of Rabat in Morocco.

VI

In this editorial, it is crucial to acknowledge that the Ijtihad Center for Studies and Training operates independently and is self-financed, without reliance on support from any European

or Islamic organisation. This independence also extends to the Ijtihad Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies. Sustaining this academic initiative presents a significant challenge, yet it is deemed essential for addressing the contemporary needs of the Islamic community in Europe and the West. This community requires an insider approach that resonates with the aspirations of recent Muslim generations, new Muslims, and those newly interested in Islam.

We have considered various strategies to generate the necessary financial resources, including introducing a nominal subscription fee for centre and journal, charging fees for article review, improvement, and publication, and selling printed copies of the journal, among other ideas. However, these have not yet been mandatorily implemented as we seek broader consultation and consensus. While there are potential funding opportunities from various institutions both within and outside Europe, some of which have already offered support, we are cautious, as our aim is to avoid any funding that prioritizes ideological over scientific objectives. Furthermore, we plan to propose future research projects to cultural and academic institutions, research centres, and support funds that are well-regarded for their integrity and scientific credibility.

Despite the challenges, the cornerstone of our initiative lies in the expertise from Arabic, Islamic, and non-Islamic scholars and professionals. This project has evolved into a vibrant platform for knowledge exchange, research collaboration, and coordination of efforts across various disciplines. The encouragement and moral support we have received since proposing this idea have been particularly motivating. Esteemed researchers, thinkers, and experts from various generations, specialties, and backgrounds were quick to join us, driven not by material benefits but by the value and potential impact of the initiative. As a result, the scope of our journal's committees, including editorial, scientific, advisory, and technical, has expanded significantly. We have now over fifty researchers and experts from twenty countries, contributing across multiple fields such as Islamic studies, philosophy, Christian theology, political thought, anthropology, sociology, media and journalism, Arabic and literary studies, African studies, self-development, and educational sciences.

VII

Finally, we extend our sincere thanks to all contributors to this inaugural issue of the journal, divided into three categories. The first category comprises participating researchers with their

articles and reviews: Mohammed Dahiri, Mohamed Ghoulbane, Youssef Nouiouar, Mustafa Attia Jumaa, Mimoune Daoudi, Salah CHIG, Youssef Degoug, Nourdine Karrat, Karima Nour Issaoui, Redouan Ghanimi, Dennis van Dijk, Khalid Touzani, Mohammed Karrouk Kerkich, Ibrahim Hamdaoui, Samir Saidi, Ahmed Amir Mohamed Fares, and Redouane Daoui. The second category includes reviewers and linguistic proofreaders: Abdelaziz El Amrani, Mustafa Attia Jumaa, Mimoune Daoudi, Hassan Elghachtoul, Dennis van Dijk, Ahmed Amir Mohamed Fares, Busro Busro, and Tijani Boulaouali. At the end of this editorial, we acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the technical supervision team that includes young researchers who cooperate with us in this project with seriousness, enthusiasm, and ambition.

My success is only from Allah!

Ghent, Belgium, April 10, 2024.