



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



**Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW)**

**at Shenandoah University**

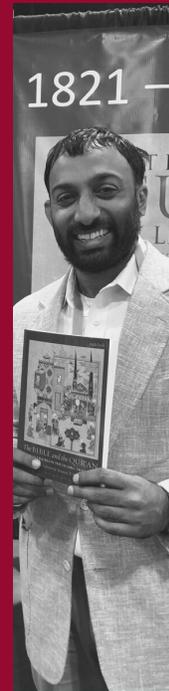
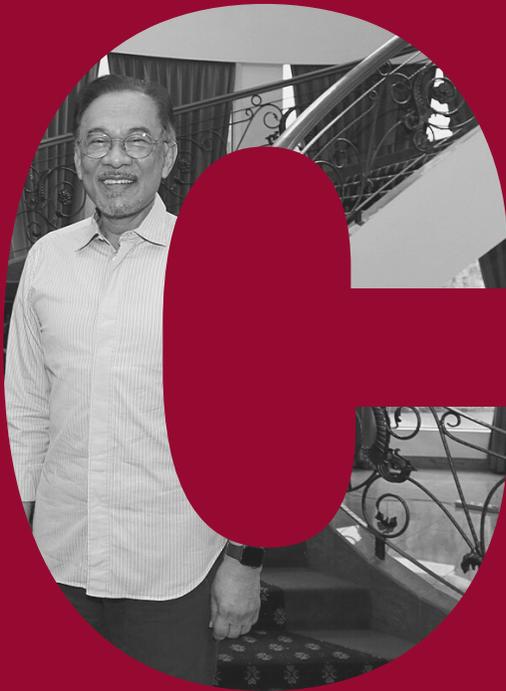
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[www.contemporaryislam.org](http://www.contemporaryislam.org)

Twitter: [@CICWatSU](https://twitter.com/CICWatSU)

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***A year like no other...***



# ABOUT CICW

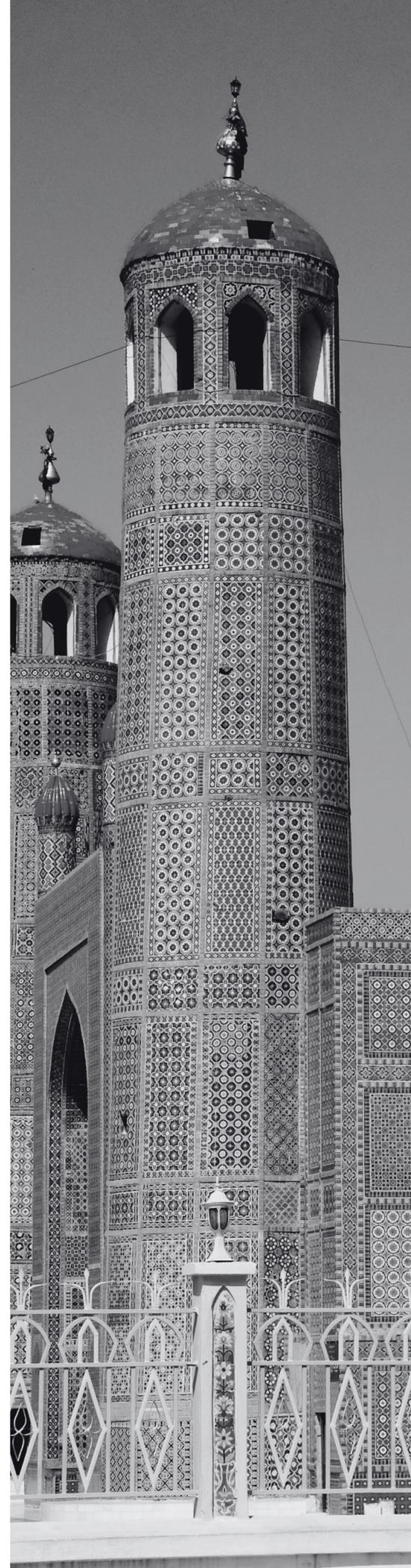
The Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) was incorporated with the Commonwealth of Virginia in November of 2018. CICW is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), tax-exempt private operating foundation. In January of 2019, CICW signed an affiliation agreement with Shenandoah University, which outlined the relationship between the Center and the University. The University provides office space, access to library, and use of classrooms. The Center lends its expertise on contemporary Islam, organizes public lectures, facilitates curriculum development, and provides networking and outreach with global Muslim communities.

# MISSION AND VISION

At the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World, we:

- Engage in rigorous and innovative research, education, and outreach to advance a better understanding of Islam and Muslims in diverse, global, and contemporary contexts
- Facilitate collaborations between Shenandoah University and international universities
- Develop training programs for teachers and religious leaders in multi-faith contexts
- Host seminars and lectures on theological and cultural challenges facing Muslims today

CICW aspires to be known as a globally-recognized center for research and education leading to an enriched understanding of Islamic values and perspectives in a multi-faith world.





## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Salam 'alaykum and greetings!

During yet another year marked by the COVID pandemic, the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) at Shenandoah University continued to grow while offering world-class programs. We have sustained our most successful initiatives and introduced several new ones. Shenandoah University has given us an academic home, and for that, we are very grateful. One of our earliest supporters, Dr. Adrienne Bloss, decided to retire as the Provost. We are thankful for her support and wish her the best in her future endeavors. We hope to maintain the same productive relationship with her successor, Dr. Cameron McCoy.

This annual report contains our most significant achievements during 2021. Our research continues to bear fruit. We have published or co-published two books. With al-Hadara Center in Cairo, we prepared a selection of essays by Dr. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman (1936-2021), one of the great contemporary Muslim thinkers. With the Institute for the Study of Bosniaks in Sarajevo, we co-edited a volume on the Muslim Resolutions from World War 2. The book studies the Bosniak response to the Nazi occupation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1941. Likewise, several of our grantees have produced peer-reviewed publications. In another exciting development, the CICW has entered into a multi-year agreement with Dr. Jasser Auda to write a *maqasid*-based *tafsir* (interpretation of the Qur'an).

The CICW committed \$20,000 and raised an additional \$45,000 toward the Imam Generational Scholarship Fund, a program we are pleased to co-sponsor with Amana Mutual Funds Trust, Sterling Charitable, and University Islamic Finance. We have also sponsored the Imam Training Program with the International Interfaith Peace Corps (IIPC). The program's objective is to expand the Imams' core skills in interfaith and peacebuilding.

Our book talk series continued full-steam in 2021. We hosted several vigorous book

talks with the authors, resulting in thousands of views on our YouTube channel. The topics covered the commodification of religion, interfaith approaches to religious ideas and activism, and Islam and liberalism.

The CICW flagship program, Prophetic Pedagogy, bore many fruits. Thanks to the tireless work of our Executive Board members, Dr. Rehenuma Asmi and Dr. Amaarah DeCuir, together with Shaykh Abdalla Idris Ali and several guest speakers, the program trained more than 270 teachers of Islamic schools in several countries around the world. The team continues to work with the Division of Education & Leadership at Shenandoah University to produce peer-reviewed publications in the field.

A new program began in 2021, the Graduate Student Institute. The program's theme, "Islam in the Contemporary World," admitted nine graduate students from the US, Canada, and abroad. We are grateful to Dr. Nisa Muhammad for serving as an assistant director of the program and providing an enriching, collaborative educational environment to our students. The topics covered in the program included the Qur'an, the Hadith, *maqasid al-shari'ah*, contemporary issues, among others. Both faculty and students rated the program highly, poised for a repeat in 2022.

Of course, none of this would be possible without strong support from our Board of Trustees, the tireless work of our Executive Board and staff, and many others who have contributed to our programs in various ways. I am very grateful to be surrounded by such a distinguished group.

Wishing you a productive year,



Ermin Sinanović, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

## CICW FINANCES FOR 2021

Revenues:  
\$483,700

Expenses:  
\$370,537

# 2021 IN NUMBERS

**2 PUBLICATIONS**

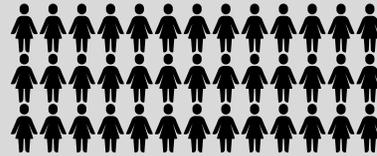


**1 RESEARCH GRANT**



**270+ TEACHERS TRAINED**

Teachers from across the globe participated in our Prophetic Pedagogy Professional Development Workshops.



**9 GRADUATE STUDENTS**



Nine students successfully completed our first ever Graduate Student Institute.

**\$65K IN SCHOLARSHIPS**

Scholarships were awarded to the children of Imams and Religious Leaders in recognition of their contributions to the community.



**3,200+ YouTube VIEWS**



Views



**5 BOOK TALKS**

**AND WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED!**

# RESEARCH

The CICW announced a collaboration with a world-renown scholar of *maqasid*, Jasser Auda, Ph.D. Auda is working on a multi-year project to produce a multi-volume commentary on the Quran titled *Maqasid-based Exegesis (Al-Tafsir Al-Maqasidi)*. The project introduces a novel approach to the Quran based on Auda's several decades of research in *Maqasid*, i.e., the higher objectives of Islam. He recently published a treatise on the same approach to the exegesis under the title: *Re-envisioning Islamic Scholarship: Maqasid Methodology as a New Approach* (Maqasid Institute, USA, and Claritas, UK, 2021). The highlight of this



Jasser Auda, Ph.D.

methodology is to centralize the Quran as a formative source of knowledge and analyze it via a logic of purposeful connectivity to build 'composite frameworks'.

The higher objectives of centralizing purposes, correcting concepts, classifying groups, aligning with universal laws, establishing proofs, and applying commands are the basis of understanding the Quranic text, and applying its formative theories and principles.

Thus, the commentary aims at establishing a basis for the expansion and restructuring of Islamic scholarship in all fields of knowledge without differentiating 'Islamic' from secular fields.

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**"We are most pleased that Dr. Auda has made a 10 year-long**

**commitment to this unique project which will benefit humanity for many generations to come,"**

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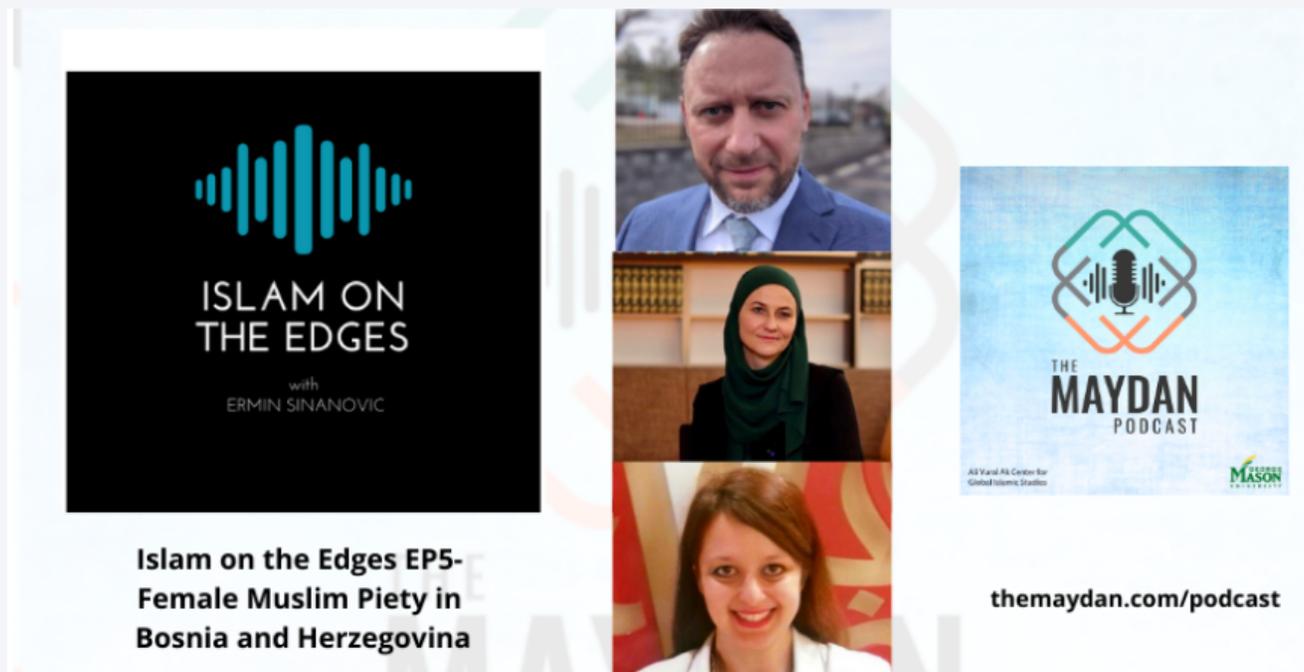
said CICW  
President, M.

Yaqub Mirza, Ph.D.

We are honored that Auda had chosen the CICW as a partner in this ground-breaking intellectual project. The CICW is looking forward to working with Auda in creating new research and teaching programs, in collaboration with the Maqasid Institute.

To learn more about this exciting collaboration, please visit:  
<https://www.contemporaryislam.org/al-tafsir-al-maqasidi>

# CICW'S COLLABORATION WITH THE MAYDAN



To further promote our mission of creating a better understanding of Islam in contemporary contexts, the CICW announced a collaboration with George Mason University's Global Islamic Center. *The Maydan* calls for contributions from academics, researchers, artists, and others around the theme "Islam on the Edges."

Devised as a research agenda by Ermin Sinanović, Ph.D., Executive Director at the CICW, "Islam on the Edges" is a deliberate effort to divert attention from assumed centers of the Islamic world to better grasp the global nature of Islam. The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University (CGIS) and CICW are joining forces on launching this innovative project that will highlight the thematic diversity of "Islam on the Edges" via the AVACGIS open access digital scholarship platform, Maydan. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.contemporaryislam.org/maydan-collaboration>



## CICW FELLOWS



*Mohammed Hashas, Ph.D.*



*Imtiyaz Yusuf, Ph.D.*

The CICW appointed two non-resident research fellows in 2021: Dr. Mohammed Hashas and Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf.

Dr. Hashas is a faculty member in the Department of Political Science, LUISS University of Rome, Italy. His expertise includes contemporary Islamic thought, Islam in Europe, and Islam and politics. Dr. Hashas has authored and edited several books in these fields. During his fellowship at the CICW, Dr. Hashas worked on an edited volume on contemporary Moroccan thought, which Brill will publish in 2022.

Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf is a faculty member at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He has published widely in comparative religion and interfaith dialogue. Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf is considered one of the foremost authorities in Islam-Buddhism studies. His CICW fellowship will allow him to work on a tribute volume to Dr. Jamal Barzinji and several other CICW-related projects.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.contemporaryislam.org/fellows>

# Congratulations

## to the 2021 Recipients of the Imam's Generational Scholarship



Ahmad Ahmadzada



Ahmad Altabaa



Saarah Baig



Amani Hagmagid



Oumie Jaiteh



Mawaddah Joban



Mubasheer Joban



Musab Nuh



Mahmoud Qasim



Osamah Qatanani



Mohammad M.M.  
Shahkolahi



Kenny Solis



Nora Zaki

For more information, visit: [www.contemporaryislam.org/2021-igsf-recipients](http://www.contemporaryislam.org/2021-igsf-recipients)

# SCHOLARSHIPS



The CICW committed \$20,000 and raised an additional \$45,000 from sponsors toward the Imam's Generational Scholarship Fund, a program we are pleased to co-sponsor with Amana Mutual Funds Trust, Sterling Charitable, and University Islamic Finance (UIF). We awarded thirteen scholarships amounting to \$5,000 each to thirteen remarkable individuals.

This year, the CICW inherited the scholarship from the Islamic Scholarship Fund and immediately began its administration. The Selection Committee was very impressed with the incredibly talented pool of candidates. The achievements of the recipients are the embodiment of the dedication our religious leaders have in serving their communities.

Muslim communities are growing in the United States because of the leadership of our imams and religious leaders, male and female. The scholarship recognizes the contributions of these individuals and their families to our communities' growth.

By supporting the children of our religious leaders, we are strengthening the core of our community and establishing important relationships between religious and educational institutions in the United States that will create connections for generations to come.

To listen to some of the recipients stories, please visit: <https://youtu.be/2z0Jmefu0qE>  
To read the biographies of the 2021 recipients, please visit: <https://www.contemporaryislam.org/2021-igsf-recipients>

**\$65,000**  
awarded in  
scholarships



The CICW hosted a reception to honor the recipients of the scholarship. To view the reception, please visit: <https://youtu.be/dCBr8R0oxSU>

# GRADUATE STUDENT INSTITUTE



The Center inaugurated its first graduate student program, “Islam in the Contemporary World,” in August whose objective was twofold:

1) to provide graduate students with foundational instructions in Islamic studies with a focus on contemporary issues, and 2) to have discussions about the lived experiences of Muslim graduate

students, especially as they pertain to issues of wellness, equity, and belonging.

We assembled a stellar team of instructors, and recruited an outstanding, diverse group of students from a variety of academic disciplines and demographics including Egypt, Kosovo, and Nigeria.

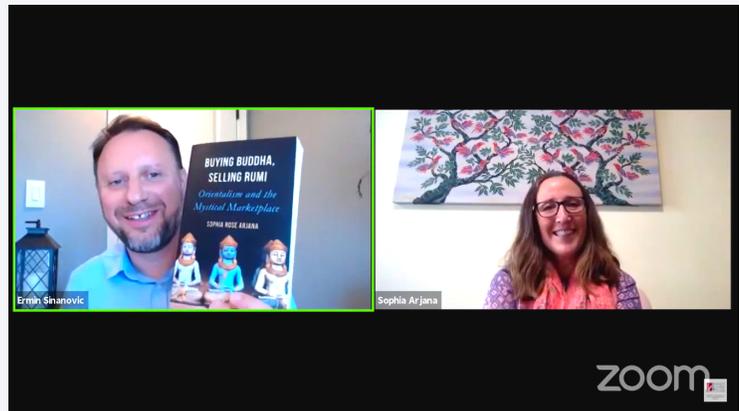
Our pedagogy combined traditional Islamic learning with contemporary approaches and methods in Islamic studies. We questioned the West-centric assumptions and epistemologies and brought into the conversation Islamic epistemologies and approaches to pedagogy, learning, and thought.

Our learning community discussions, led and facilitated by Dr. Nisa Muhammad, enhanced the morning academic sessions. These discussions allowed students to take academic material and make it relevant in their lives. This safe and sacred space allowed students to share feelings in a non-judgmental manner to promote their growth.

## BOOK TALKS

The Center continued hosting its much-anticipated book talks. This year, five book talks were streamed live from our YouTube Channel, [CICW Media](#). Our Executive Director, Ermin Sinanović, Ph.D. sat down with many authors including, but not limited to Sophia Arjana, Ph.D., Joseph Kaminski, Ph.D., and David Henig, Ph.D. The topics included Orientalism and the Mystical Marketplace, Liberalism and Ontology, Everyday Islam in Postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina, among others.

Access the book talk series at: <https://www.contemporaryislam.org/book-talks>



Sinanović sits down with Sophia Arjana, Ph.D. to discuss her book, *Buying Buddha, Selling Rumi*. The book talk was streamed live on our YouTube channel, [CICW Media](#), in July 2021.



Sinanović promotes the book *Muslim Resolutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. He and Co-Editors, Fikret Dautović, Ph.D. and Hikmet Karčić, Ph.D., participate on a panel at the Gazi Husrev Beg Library. Pictured above, Sinanović accepts a gift in recognition for his research and contributions on December 20, 2021.

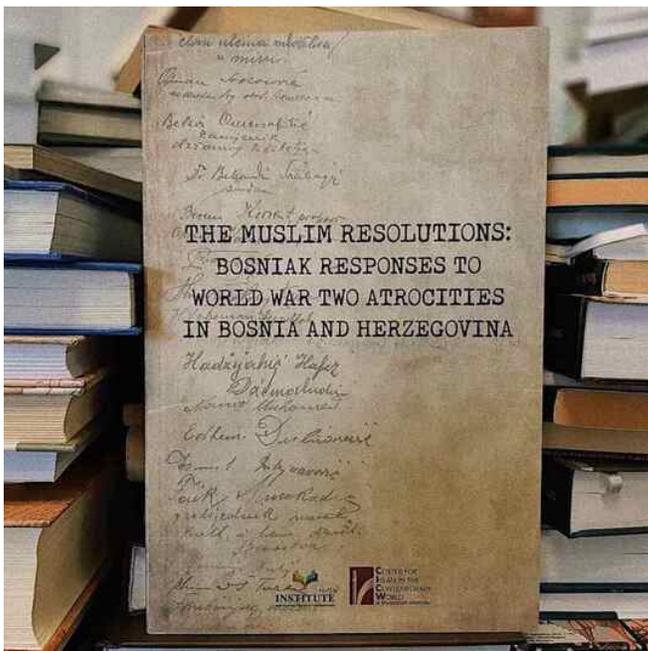
## PUBLICATIONS

On June 23, 2021, the CICW announced a new publication, co-published with the Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, co-edited by Fikret Dautović, Ph.D., Hikmet Karčić, Ph.D., and Ermin Sinanović, Ph.D.

The book covers "the Muslims resolutions" in 1941, i.e., the Bosniak elites' condemnation of the Nazi-puppet regime's policies: using it as an opportunity for seeking Bosnia's autonomy, hoping in this way to improve the country's position and the security of their people.

Visit:

<https://www.contemporaryislam.org/muslim-resolutions> to learn more.

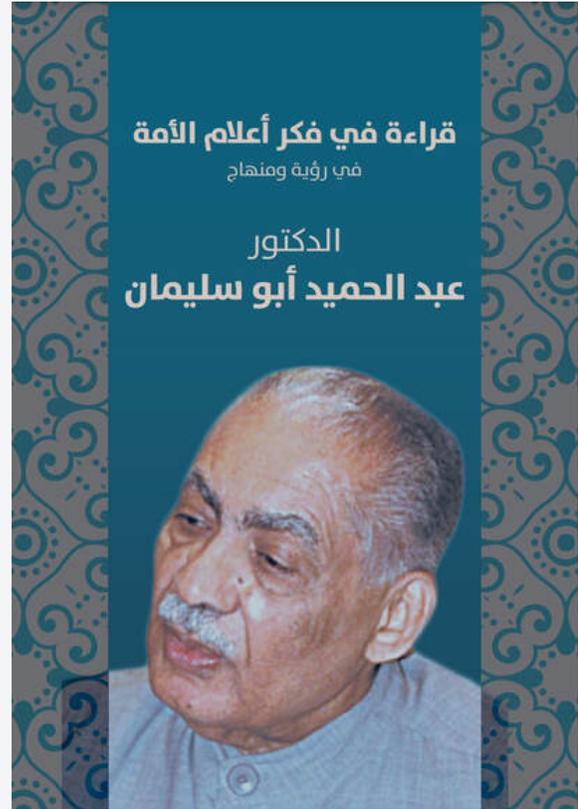


## PUBLICATIONS

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Ph.D. (1936-2021) was a supporter of the CICW from its very inception. His ideas have left a permanent mark on our Center's mission.

For the past year, the CICW has worked with Al-Hadarah Center in Cairo to produce a representative selection of AbuSulayman's thought and ideas. Brilliantly edited and introduced by Dr. Nadia Moustafa, the book is a cross-section of major writings and ideas AbuSulayman's produced and published.

M. Yaqub Mirza, Ph.D., President at the CICW and AbuSulayman's friend and associate during the last several decades, wrote the book's foreword. The book is in Arabic and it is available for free at: <https://www.contemporaryislam.org/ahs-book>



## IMAM TRAINING PROGRAM

Institute for Islamic Social Science, Wisdom and Action (ISSAW) organized an online workshop about the "Principles of Relationships, Multifaith, and Civic Engagement " in early November. The workshop was in collaboration with Powersim Solutions Inc., International Interfaith Peace Corps (IIPC), North America Imams Federation (NAIF), and the CICW.

The following learning outcomes were associated with this workshop: 1) Understand the theological, theoretical, and practical foundations for interfaith, multifaith, and civic engagements. 2) Understand the need for cooperation, collaboration and forming alliances to address local, national, and global issues. 3) Develop the ability to participate consciously and effectively in interfaith, multifaith, and civic engagement activities. 4) Develop the capacity to communicate effectively in interfaith, multifaith, and civic engagements activities. 5) Build and maintain sustainable relationships that foster coexistence.

The total registrants were 21, and the topics were presented by the following scholars: Imam Mohamed Magid, Dalia Mujahid, Imrana Umar, Zainab Alwani, Arsalan Sulman, and Imam Dawud Walid. For more information, visit:

<https://www.contemporaryislam.org/imamtraining>

# PROPHETIC PEDAGOGY

The Prophetic Pedagogy Project, produced by Rehenuma Asmi, Ph.D. and Amaarah DeCuir, Ed.D., was designed with Islamic school educators in mind. We partnered with the Council of Islamic Schools in North America (CISNA) to offer the Professional Development Workshops. Today's Islamic school educators teach students through technology, identity struggles, and challenging social norms and practice. We want educators to be fully engaged in the realities of today's context, just as the Prophet (sws) was fully engaged in his contextual reality. We feel that with a systematic examination of the Prophet's pedagogy, we will be able to advance teaching practices that can transform today's Islamic schools to be the schools that Muslims need in today's day and age. The Center hosted three Prophetic Pedagogy series this year which included participants from all over the globe as depicted below. Visit:

<https://www.contemporaryislam.org/prophetic-pedagogy> to learn more.



Top: Shaykh Abdalla Idris Ali, Ph.D.  
Middle: Amaarah DeCuir, Ed.D.  
Bottom: Rehenuma Asmi, Ph.D.

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS



# EXECUTIVE BOARD CONTRIBUTIONS

## **Ermin Sinanović, Ph.D.**

### *Executive Director*

In 2021, Sinanović co-edited a book on the Muslim Resolutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He also contributed a chapter on “Montenegro” in the Yearbook of Muslims in Europe, published by Brill. He had an active teaching portfolio, teaching two courses at Boston Islamic Seminary, on Contemporary Islamic Thought and Introduction to Islamic Systems. At the CICW, he helped develop the Graduate Student Institute. Sinanović hosted the CICW book talks, discussing current ideas with a wide range of authors. He continues curating the “Islam on the Edges” channel of the Maydan Podcast, producing several episodes in 2021.

## **Rehenuma Asmi, Ph.D.**

### *Member, Executive Board*

This past year, Dr. Asmi worked on increasing engagement and enrollment in Prophetic Pedagogy programs by offering short courses outside of our seasonal two-week professional development series. The first short course was offered by Shaykh Abdalla Idris Ali and continued to focus on the work of Shaykh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah. Dr. Asmi is also continuing to work on the connections between faith-based pedagogy and other faiths through collaboration with a multi-faith team of researchers looking at faith inclusivity in higher education.

Outside of CICW, Dr. Asmi launched a podcast called Muslim Enneagram with Chaplain Najiba Akber at Northeastern University in Boston. The podcast delves into the rich history of the enneagram that links it to Islamic spiritual practices and offers practical advice for those looking to understand the roots of spiritual struggles tied to old habits and beliefs.

## **Amaarah DeCuir, Ed.D.**

### *Member, Executive Board*

Early in the year, DeCuir published a popular piece in Inside Higher Education, 10 Habits to Humanize your Classroom, which received national attention and invitations to provide faculty development workshops at both Washburn University and Milwaukee Area Technical College.

In the spring, she began meeting with state and district leaders about early findings of her research study on Muslim student experiences in public schools.

DeCuir produced a teacher training video on Culturally Responsive teaching about September 11 and provided examples of culturally responsive lesson plan resources for K-12 teachers through the CICW website.

She facilitated a statewide workshop for the Virginia Department of Education on August 18 and published an article in The Conversation to both communicate how Muslim students experience 9/11 lessons, and to reimagine new ways to teach 9/11 in our schools.

DeCuir helped develop the Fall 2021 Prophetic Pedagogy series, contributing the first two-day workshop for School Leaders. She co-authored a research article on school leadership in Ethiopia, published in the Journal of Research on Leadership Education.

At American University, she developed an innovative new class centering wellness in the doctoral research and writing processes, and received a research grant for a new study examining discourses of equity in a local district.

DeCuir was promoted to Senior Professorial Lecturer and earned the distinction of Senior Inclusive Pedagogy Fellow at American University.

### **Ahmed ElHattab**

#### *Member, Executive Board*

Since he joined the CICW, ElHattab has been maintaining strong ties with Imams and Imams Councils, community leaders, and Islamic schools to promote CICW's programs and encourage registration. To achieve this, he attended the monthly zoom meeting of the Michigan Imams Council and introduced the second annual Imam's Generational Scholarship Program.

ElHattab also coordinated the partnership between the CICW and the Institute of Islamic Science, Wisdom, and Action (ISSWA), and the International Interfaith Peace Corp (IIPC) in planning the Imam Professional Development Training Program.

ElHattab also continued to strengthen the relationship with North American Imam Federation (NAIF) and introduced its president, Dr. Abdulhakim Mohamed to Dr. Yaqub Mirza, who discussed the road map of the institution, its needs to grow and flourish, and suggested a Strategic Planning Retreat in 2022.

As an Executive Board member of FAITH, ElHattab attended a weekly meeting with Dr. Tanveer Mirza, President of the organization and Mr. Fakhir Ahmad, Director of Business Development, to strategize its fundraising efforts. In April 2021, ElHattab delivered an appeal video message in FAITH virtual fundraising.

ElHattab also launched the Masjid Assistance Project (MAP) to support the struggling masjid serving their communities with limited resources.

Finally, ElHattab initiated building bridges efforts with Imam Talib Shareef, president of Masjid Muhammad and the IWDM communities. The communication with IWDM leadership will continue towards more future cooperation.

## **Younus Mirza, Ph.D.**

*Member, Executive Board*

This past year, Dr. Mirza has published several articles related to the Qur'an, Qur'anic commentary (tafsir) and Interreligious Studies. For instance, he published an essay in the *Routledge Companion to the Qur'an* entitled "Tafsir Ibn Kathir: A Window onto Medieval Islam and a Guide to the Development of Modern Islamic Orthodoxy". The article speaks about the importance of the Qur'an commentary in classical times and how it is essential to how we define Islam today. Moreover, he published the article "The Islamic Mary: Between Prophecy and Orthodoxy" in the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, one of the top journals in the field. He currently has a book contract from Fortress Press to turn the article into a full-length book on the Islamic Mary or Maryam. He further published a review essay on "Interreligious Studies: Dispatches from an Emerging Field" in the *Journal Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology*. Dr. Mirza's work in Interreligious Studies has led him to be elected member of the American Academy of Religion's Steering Committee on Interreligious and Interfaith Studies. In terms of public outreach, he published the blog "Was Abraham Crazy?" in the online platform Maydan. The blog discusses how medieval scholars understood the attempted sacrifice and miraculous events within the context of prophecy, revelation, and science.

At Shenandoah University, he has been promoted to Director of the Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning. The Institute encompasses Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) virtual exchange and a new virtual service learning project on zero hunger. As part of his work, he has helped develop a new "Hajj Virtual Reality Project" which will simulate the Pilgrimage and be a joint collaboration between CICW and Shenandoah University.



## **Board of Trustees**

*The Board of Trustees is responsible for governing and overseeing the Center's strategic direction, as well as oversight of its financial resources. Trustees raise and contribute funds to the Center.*

*Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Chairman - Member of Parliament, Port Dickson, Malaysia; President, People's Justice Party, Malaysia*

*M. Yaqub Mirza, Ph.D., President - CEO, Sterling Management Group, Inc.; Trustee and Chairman, Amana Mutual Funds Trust*

*Firas Barzinji, Esq, Secretary - General Counsel, Sterling Management Group, Inc.*

*Ayman AbuSulayman - Treasurer, Sterling Management Group, Inc.*

## **Executive Board**

*M. Yaqub Mirza, Ph.D., President*

*Ermin Sinanović, Ph.D., Executive Director*

*Rehenuma Asmi, Ph.D., Member*

*Amaarah DeCuir, Ed.D., Member*

*Ahmed ElHattab, Member*

*Younus Mirza, Ph.D., Member*