

To:
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
EXECUTIVE BOARD
CENTER FOR ISLAM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD (CICW)

Dear esteemed colleagues,

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

In a prophetic tradition narrated by Aishah RA, the Messenger SAW said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ إِذَا عَمَلَ أَحَدُكُمْ عَمَلًا أَنْ يَتَمَنَّهُ

“Allah loves that whenever any of you does something, he excels in it.”

My most heartfelt congratulations to you for all the excellent work you have done to the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) at Shenandoah University in 2020.

For many of us, 2020 will be remembered as an *annus horribilis*. Education surely is one of the most tragic things that could be interrupted as a result of worldly happenings, for it poses a serious threat to our future, particularly the future of the ummah, and the continued work of progress we dedicate our lives toward.

But it gives me great resolve that while the rest of the world was brought to a grinding halt, ours still upheld great commitments to society and persevered through steeped adversity. Not only did CICW stay the course, but we adapted well to the situation presented. The mark of a truly outstanding educational institution is its ability to not only endure setbacks, but find ways to make them opportunities for learning and the advancement of knowledge.

This is seen in the impressive study conducted through the Muslim Students and Covid-19 survey. Likewise, your work with other academic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Malaysia, despite the pandemic's restrictions through augmented in-class and virtual lectures and events is commendable. I was particularly fond of the idea of the Book Talk Series, which can allow for us to continue to engage our world critically, even when we had to keep our distance. The Barzinji Project's dialogues offer not only an engaging format for students and faculty but can become an exemplary style for international education, despite the state of the world.

Research, being the core of the CICW, not only requires tremendous work, but the ability to give us data and observations of the world we find ourselves in, even as it appears to be turned upside down. The precedents set this year and the work done will certainly serve knowledge production for many years to come.

And most commendable is the ability to continue the scholarship and grant awarding programmes through CICW, providing key financial stability to a class of students inundated with uncertainty and the anxieties that accompany it. I applaud the collaboration with such organisations as the Amana Mutual Fund, University Islamic Finance, Sterling Charitable and the Islamic Scholarship Fund to support \$70,000 in scholarships. The Imam generational scholarships in particular are a true service to our future.

My being impressed with CICW's last year is overwhelmingly compounded by two particular products from 2020. First are the captivating book projects which feature the ideas and works of two great luminaries, Almarhum Ismail al Faruqi and dear brother Abdul Hamid AbuSulayman, as well as the other books which dwell into the often-unappreciated mosques of America and Bosniak struggle against fascism, very topical in our increasingly polarised and hate filled world. Second the new national and international programs which not only set a new standard for education, but seek to break

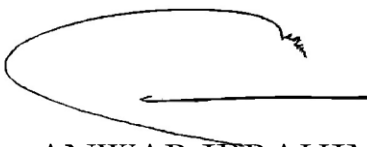
down divisions that exist within our nations and the ummah in particular. The Imam Training Program shows that our faith leaders need not be intellectually and socially active while also being true to the word. The impressive multinational Prophetic Pedagogy Professional Development Workshop looks to be a keen take on the project of integration of knowledge by incorporating the teachings of the Prophet and Islam's great scholars with the challenges faced by all who are in our contemporary educational milieu.

It is with great pride that I look upon the CICW's achievements in 2020 and I look forward, with full confidence, to 2021 and many more years to come in their progress and advancements despite the high standards you have set this year. In a world overran by crises and unresolved dilemmas, knowing that the CICW is maintaining the ancient flame of education gives us hope for a better, brighter future beyond what contemporary events may have us believe is possible.

Let us pray in this blessed month of Ramadan for the well-being of humankind in facing these difficult times. I implore the CICW community to stay safe so that we can continue to implement our vision and work to make the world more just and humane for all. I look forward to the continued development and work of the CICW and all its partners.

Ramadan Mubarak.

Wasalaamualaykum warahmatullahi wabarakatuhu



ANWAR IBRAHIM
Chairman