

## Muslim Citizens in the West: Promoting Social Inclusion

The Centre for Muslim States and Societies, in collaboration with the Australian Institute of International Affairs (Western Australia Branch), held the Fulbright International Symposium at the University of Western Australia, Perth, on 1-3 August 2007. Associate Professor Samina Yasmeeen (symposium convenor) welcomed the participants, and Professor Allan Robson (vice chancellor, University of Western Australia) formally opened the event.

The symposium's objective was to explore complex socioeconomic, religio-cultural, and political factors involved in contributing to a sense of inclusion or exclusion on the part of minority Muslim communities living in the West. The twenty-seven presenters, fifteen from abroad and twelve from Australia, analyzed the theme of "Muslim Citizens in the West: Promoting Social Inclusion" during the event's eight themed panels from a variety of perspectives.

The first panel was opened by Tahir Abbas (University of Birmingham, UK), who discussed the phenomenon of Islamic political radicalism in Western Europe. Fethi Mansouri (Deakin University, Australia) spoke on recent terrorist events and their policy implications in multicultural societies. Tayyibah Taylor (*Azizah Magazine*, USA) analyzed various educational issues and the social marginalization affecting Muslim youths in America. Asghar Ali Engineer (Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, India) argued that there is no Islamic or Muslim extremism in India and that the politics of exclusion is the only reality. François Burgat (French National Centre for Scientific Research, France) explored some of the barriers facing European and French Muslims in terms of their social and political inclusion. Mohammad Chaib (Member Parliament of Catalan, Spain) focused on the impact of social policies regarding the establishment and provision of social networks for Spanish Muslims.

Geoffrey Levey (University of New South Wales, Australia) inaugurated the second panel by describing the rise of religiosity and ethnic identification, despite secularization, in recent decades. Mumtaz Ahmed (Hampton University, USA) concentrated on the participation of American Muslims in politics, while Michael Humphrey (University of Sydney, Australia) explored how Australian Muslims have experienced integration on the basis of their Australian citizenship.

William Maley (Australian National University, Australia) led off the third panel with an analysis of the various approaches used by Australia to deal with Muslim militancy and combat strategies. He was followed by Mohammad Ayoob (Michigan State University, USA) who argued that the American-led “war on terror” is preventing the process of Muslim integration in western societies. Dick Van Der Meij (State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah, Indonesia), who started the fourth panel, focused on the complex issue of Muslim integration into Dutch society. Ghazala Anwar (University of Canterbury, New Zealand) looked at assimilation, integration, and criminal profiling in relation to Muslims in post-9/11 New Zealand. Zijad Delic (Canadian Islamic Congress, Canada) examined different possibilities for Muslim settlement and integration in mainstream Canadian society.

Rahil Ismail (National Technological University of Singapore) opened the fifth panel with a paper on how Singapore’s Muslim population has been seen as the significant “other” in the nation’s transformation since independence. Tasneem Meenai (Jamia Millia Islamia, India) examined the pluralist model of cultural, social, and religious accommodation adopted in India, and Hanifa Deen (Monash University, Australia) expounded upon the moral

validity of the Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act (2001) in Australia. Asghar Ali Engineer and Ghazala Hayat were the featured guest speakers at the Noorul Islam Society's tenth anniversary dinner. Both of them urged Muslims to integrate into the societies of the West as a demonstration of their tolerance.

Abdullah Saeed (University of Melbourne, Australia) started the sixth panel off with an analysis of Salafism's heterogeneity. Anne Aly (Edith Cowan University, Australia) expounded upon the question of what it means to be Australian and Muslim, particularly after 9/11. Jan Ali (Macquarie University, Australia) detailed the role of the Tablighi Jama'at and the new Muslim identity in Australia.

Katherine Bullock (University of Toronto) started the seventh panel. She argued that contrary to the popular perception of Muslim women in North America as submissive and passive, they are, in fact, just as engaged in public activities as are Muslim men and also have made their presence felt in formal politics. Ghazala Hayat (Saint Louis University, USA) delved into Muslim women's approach to interfaith dialogue in the West, Suzy Casimiro (Edith Cowan University, Australia) focused upon Muslim refugee women as citizens in Australia, and Jamila Hussein (University of Technology - Sydney, Australia) explained the relationship between the Shari'ah and Australian family law. The luncheon's keynote speaker, Ahmed Fahour (National Australia Bank, Australia) talked about the challenges Muslims are facing in the post-9/11 world. He urged them to integrate into Australian society as a positive way forward.

The eighth panel began with Louis Cristillo's (Columbia University, USA) presentation on how the day school becomes a main driver in a network of institutions (e.g., the mosque, the family, and the state) to produce mutually interacting social networks in American civic life. He was followed by Danielle Celermajer (University of Sydney, Australia), who discussed promoting interfaith dialogue through schools as a way of promoting the inclusion of Muslim citizens in the West.

Amin Saikal (Australian National University, Australia) made the concluding remarks and highlighted the usefulness of international symposiums like the Fulbright both to academics as well as to the general community. He also urged policymakers and the government to provide structures that are conducive to integrating Muslims into mainstream Australian society.

Jan Ali  
Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Centre for Research on Social Inclusion  
Macquarie University, New South Wales, Australia