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This report covers our activities for five months ending December 2002. The Charities Directorate in Ottawa has asked that the Academy file its first return at the end of year 2002. Therefore, we have decided to change our year end to December 31st instead of July 31st.

Our first Annual Report issued on July 31, 2002 was well received by Mu'minîn from various parts of the globe. Those interested can read it at the URL:

www.academyofislam.org/reader.asp?cn=mis-1

1. Who are we?

The Academy for Learning Islam (A.L.I.) is a non-profit registered charitable organization based in Vancouver, Canada. It aims at advancing religious and educational values of Islam according to the doctrines and tenets of the Shi'â Ithnâ `Asharî school of thought. *Alhamdu lillah* most Shi'â communities have established Madrasahs and weekend religious schools for children and teenagers from 4 to 15 years of age. However, Muslims, particularly youths in high schools, colleges and universities, have shown an increased interest to learn and understand Islamic teachings. We have observed that youths prefer following Islam and performing its rituals with an understanding of its basic concepts based on the wisdom behind these actions. Moreover, the youths are also facing challenges from their peers at colleges and universities about Islam and its teachings. The Academy for Learning Islam, amongst other pursuits, conducts short courses for youths between the ages 16 to 40 on the Holy Qur'an and its language, Islamic history, ethics and social relations. We would like to think of ourselves as, a **post Madrasah Islamic educational institution**.

2. Alhamdu lillah, we are now a registered charity.

On the 15th of Sha`bân, 1423 we received a telephone call from the offices of the Charities Directorate at Canada Customs and Revenue Agency in Ottawa to the effect that they had approved our application and granted us official charity status; all Praise belongs to the Almighty. We thank all those who assisted us in the application procedure. May the Almighty reward them amply for their selfless services.

The Academy for Learning Islam is now permitted to issue tax receipts for the donations it receives from Canadian residents to promote its aims and objectives. Please visit our site at www.academyofislam.org to read our aims and objectives. A summary of this appears at the back cover of this booklet.

3. Thanking the generous donors and volunteers.

Imam Amîrul Mu'minîn Ali (عليه السلام) has said: *A Magnanimous person is praiseworthy in this world and happy in the Hereafter.* Indeed, the generous donors deserve our praise here and we pray for their good reward in the Hereafter.

In the last five months the Academy received cash or donations in kind of \$100.00 and above from the following: Akber (Dr) Mithani, Amin Devjee (Edmonton), Amirali M Rashid, Asif (Dr) Tejani, Azeemali Moledina, Band-e Khuda (Edmonton), Hadi (Sayyid) al-Hindi, Hassanali Dewji, Islamic Education Board of the World Federation (UK), Islamic Humanitarian Services (Kitchener), Jamil Hyder Trust (Seattle), Jawad & Kaniz Khaki (Seattle), Mahmood Sultan Jaffer, Masuma H Fazal, Mohamed A Dewji, Mohamed K Merali, Navshina Savory, Rizwan Hemraj, Salim Yusufali (California), Shawki Nouredin, Shawkat Sabur (Edmonton), Syed Zahir, Zuhair A Ebrahim (Orlando) and Zulfikar Ladak (Orlando).

We thank the following volunteers for their selfless services to the Academy at different timings: Abu Zahra M Ibrahim, Asif (Dr) Tejani, Azeemali Moledina, Jalil (Sayyid) Nasrallah, Karrar Abbas, Mahmood A Jaffer, Mohamed

Hassan Keshvani, Muhammad Mahdi Kassamali, Murtaza Bachoo, Murtaza Bhimani, Salim Yusufali, Shafiq (Shaykh) Hudda, Shaukat Moloo (Edmonton), Sumayya Kassamali, and Zuher Dhalla (Edmonton).

Special thanks go to Mahmood S Jaffer for approaching mu'minîn locally to donate funds for the purchase of an LCD projector. Our thanks also go to Muhammad Iqbal Meghjee for lending us an LCD projector on various occasions and finally assisting us in purchasing the projector at a discounted price.

4. Short Courses at the Academy

At the Academy for Learning Islam a complete course is composed of a two hour session per week that runs for eight consecutive weeks. Some courses are shorter, based on the topic or occasion. A subject that requires extended study (e.g. Qur'ânic Arabic) is divided into more than one level.

In our annual report we mentioned about 18 courses that were conducted in the first year. Here is the list of courses conducted since August 2002. Course numbers followed by letter 'a' or 'b' indicate that it is half a course conducted over four or less weeks. Here is the list of course numbers and subjects covered.

019 Qur'ânic Arabic for youths and adults

020 Motherhood in Islam for women in London, UK

021 Qur'ânic Arabic Level II for women

022 Qur'ânic Arabic Level II for men

023 Resolving conflict in the family for young women.

024 Importance of family life in Islam for youths and young married couples conducted on Sunday mornings.

025b Special presentation on Holy Ramadhan. Open to all interested, the session was conducted two days before the start of the holy month. It was meant to inform students and others on how to present the Holy month to non-Muslims.

026a History of the collection and compilation of the Holy Qur'an. Given in the first two weekends during the holy month, the course was open to all those who were interested. The course was so popular that all seats were occupied.

027 Qur'anic Arabic Level III for women.

028a Themes in *Sûratul Baqarah* – conducted once a week in the day time during the holy month for adult women.

029b Portable Course 1 – This is our first course outside Vancouver that is planned to be held in Edmonton, Alberta from December 27 to December 29, 2002. At the time of preparing this report, about 25 students had registered for the course, many of whom are teachers at Al-Mahdi Madrasah in Edmonton.

Many students have taken a number of courses. However, many more new students have started taking interest. For the first time we had registration from two Dawudi Bohra and two Sunni attendants. Presently courses are taught by Hasnain and Sr Tahera Kassamali. In the next year we intend to invite more lectures/scholars to get involved in teaching course on Islam.

Sr Tahera Kassamali gave a two day course on Motherhood in Islam to our women in London, UK. We are grateful to the Dar at-Tableegh of the Islamic Education Board of the

World Federation for arranging the course and allowing us to use their facilities for the course. About 20 young mothers participated in the course.

5. Comments from student survey form - Students and/or participants are encouraged to fill a Student Survey form at the end of a course or a presentation. Here are some of the comments that we have received from them:

On the session Presenting Ramadhan to non-Muslims the students wrote:

-I'll definitely keep ALI in mind if I need back up
- [The timing should] have been one or two [weeks] before Ramadhan so we have enough time to contact schools and teachers

- I really liked [his] approach to the presentation, the personal stories made it very interesting.

On the History of the Qur'an the students commented:

-This was a very informative lecture and I learnt a lot

-It met my requirement and was beyond my expectations.

-It answered lots of unanswered questions and clarified many issues.

On the Importance of Family Life comments received:

-I learnt understanding the complexities of marriage and appreciating that certain issues appear almost insurmountable. Some questions were not answered to our satisfaction . . . [because] of the complexities of the issues.

- It was very good and informative

- It was a very good class; I highly recommend more of these for fathers.

6. Holy Month of Ramadhan specials

The Academy ventured for the first time into Outreach Programs offering literature, posters and lectures to public libraries and schools. Below is a short report on the Ramadhan 1423 Outreach Program prepared by Sr Tahera Kassamali.

The outreach program was designed to inform and educate the public about the month of Ramadhan and its importance to Muslims. The aim was to target Schools and Public Libraries in order to get a good exposure to the younger sector of society. Since many young people have misconceptions about fasting, we believed that through the outreach program, we could answer some of them.

What was done? A session was held at the Academy to help parents and young students make a presentation on Ramadhan in their children's school. Apart from tips on making an effective presentation, parents were shown resources they could use. These included books, a video cassette on Ramadhan, as well as art and craft ideas. Parents could borrow these resources from the Academy. Many parents had successful experiences with their presentations (See course listing 026b above).

Letters were sent to 12 Superintendents of school districts in the Lower Mainland. The letter indicated that we were available to hold informative presentations on Ramadhan and fasting for elementary schools. Letters were also sent to about 20 Public Libraries in the Lower Mainland. The letter requested the library to:

- i) Put up a display on the month of Ramadhan. We would supply posters, information, books etc.
- ii) Purchase recently published books for children on the month of Ramadhan. The Academy compiled a list of such books, including a picture of the cover page and brief information about each book. The books could also be ordered through the academy.
- iii) Hold a children's program to celebrate Eidul Fitr.

Responses received

Schools: A request was received from Fleetwood elementary in Surrey for two presentations. One was for grade two and the other for two classes of grade six/seven. The presentation was carried out by Sr. Tahera Khaku on Nov.6th, and was successful in generating interest. Ladner Elementary put up a display on Ramadhan in their library.

Libraries: The response received from the libraries was overwhelmingly positive.

Richmond Public Library arranged a window of display with posters and information on Ramadhan (provided by the Academy) for two weeks. They received many positive comments about the window and informed the Academy that they were very pleased with the display. They also held a children's program to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr on November 26th. This was conducted by Sr. Shaheen Virjee and was highly successful. Over 42 children between the ages of 6-10 attended the program.

Vancouver Public Library put up a display on the Social Studies level of the central library in downtown Vancouver.

Burnaby Public Library put up displays on each of the four libraries in Burnaby.

Coquitlam Public Library held two programs for children. These programs were conducted by Sr. Salma Jaffer. The library also purchased four children's books on Ramadhan from the Academy. (End of Sr Tahera's report).

Two special courses were conducted to generate interest in the study of the Holy Qur'an during the holy month. See course listing 026a and 028a above.

The Religious Director, Hasnain Kassamali, was invited to give lectures at Hussein Islamic Center in Orlando, FL in the last two weeks of the Holy month. Besides the normal evening lectures for 13 nights, Shaykh Kassamali held three sessions with youths during weekends. The youths were greatly interested in knowing the spiritual benefits of various supplications we read in Ramadhan, especially Du'â Abu Hamza Thumali by Imam Zaynul `Abidin ؑ. In spite of extending the sessions to *sahri* times, the attendance was encouraging. A question and answer session was also held with young girls of Orlando Madrasah. In Vancouver, the Religious Director did a presentation to the youths of the Shia Muslim Community of BC on the first Saturday night after the normal program. This was titled,

7. Other Activities of the Academy

Religious Lectures and Presentations – the Religious Director (RD) of the Academy continued to lead Friday

sermons in August and the first three weeks of September, 2002 at Az-Zahraa Islamic Center in Richmond. He also recited Wafat and Milaad majlises at the Center for the month of August. Beginning September, the Center has been acquiring [the](#) fulltime services of Shaykh Shafiq Hudda who has moved to Vancouver as a temporary Resident Alim for the Shia Muslim Community of BC. This has [allowed](#) the Religious Director [to](#) concentrate more on the [preparation and presentation of](#) courses at the Academy.

The RD was invited on a few occasions to address the audience at Al-Kawthar Islamic Association in Surrey, BC.

The RD was also invited to take on the role of religious guide at the youth camp in Sweden between July 21 and August 2, 2002. The camp was organized by the Council of European Jamaats and attended by 44 boys from Europe, North America and Africa. In the first week of September 2002, the RD gave a presentation on Searching through the Holy Qur'an at the Los Angeles Retreat organized by the Islamic Education Board of NASIMCO. On November 13, 2002 the Religious Director was invited to talk about Death and Dying to third year students at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. A presentation on Introduction to Islam and a tour of Az-Zahraa Islamic Center was give by RD to grade 8 students from South Ridge School. We are thankful to Sr Siddika Jessa for arranging the visit and being present at the time of the presentation.

Family and social counseling – A number of young couples and other youths continue to visit or call the offices of the

Academy to seek Islamic family counseling. Marriage services at the Academy have decreased as two communities (Shia Muslim Community in Richmond and Al-Kawthar Islamic Association in Surrey) have their own Resident Alims. However, the Academy continues to offer counseling to some members of the Afghani, Iranian and Lebanese communities in the Lower Mainland. Divorce cases from various communities are still being handled by the Religious Director of the Academy.

Publications – Two publications were prepared by the Academy during the last five months. These were FAQ on Zakâtul Fitrah and Holy Ramadhan 1423 Timings for Salât and Fasting according to Ja`fari Madhhab for Greater Vancouver. Abstracts from our publication FAQ on Shi`ah Islam prepared for the Museum of Anthropology at UBC has been included at the end of this Report for those interested.

Literature to new converts: New converts or reverts to the *madhhab* of the Ahlul Bayt continue on account of marriages within the community. The Academy presents the new Muslims with a copy of the translation of the Holy Qur'an, three books on Introduction to Islam by different Shi`ah authors and a copy of *Method of Salât*.

Qur'an Tilawah Program: A detailed report on this was published in our Annual Report. The program continued for the entire month of August 2002. Because of demand from a few committed learners the program was repeated in October 2002. We are grateful to Br Murtaza Bachoo for his dedication in coordinating this program and making it a success. We say: *Jazaaka 'Ilah* to Murtaza.

8. Visitors to the Academy

Many dignitaries who came to the opening ceremony of Az-Zahraa Islamic Center in Richmond on August 25, 2002 also visited the Academy. These included: Dr Hasnain Walji, the President of the World Federation of K. S. I. M. Communities, Haji Zulfikar H Khimjee, the President of the Federation of the K. S. I. A. Jamaats of Africa, Haji Aliraza Rajani, the President of Toronto Jamaat, Haji Jawad Khaki, the President of IMAN, Seattle. We are thankful to these dignitaries who took their valuable time to bless the academy with their visits and for their kind prayers for our progress.

9. The Academy has moved to a new location

In the absence of a lease agreement, the Academy was asked in the third week of August to vacate its premises at Alderbridge Way in Richmond by the end of October. Over 15 different locations were viewed and we thank Br Bashir Manji who kindly guided us through the process.

During the search for new premises, the directors of the Academy felt that an application should also be made to the Shia Muslim Community of BC and the BC Muslim Association to look into the possibility of renting space in their respective premises. An official request has been submitted to both organizations to that effect.

The following youths and adults assisted the Academy during its move to the new location: Abbas Ladak, Abu Ahmad Noori, Akil Khaku, Ali (Dr) Mohamed, Ali Zein,

Ahmad Yusuf, Andy Savory, Asif (Dr) Tejani, Jamil Remtulla, Hud Zaraveh, Mehboob Jetha, Mohamedhussein Ladak, Muhammad Mahdi Kassamali, Murtaza Bachoo, Murtaza Bhimani, Najmul Jaffer, Sadik Rashid.

We are thankful to Dr Ali Mohamed for providing gratis use of his big truck during the move, Haji Amirali Rashid for the use of his pick-up on various occasions, Br Ali Amhaz for his labour of installing carpets in the classroom area and Br Ahmed Munzir for donating the carpet. Special thanks go to Azeemali Moledina, Hud Zaraveh, Murtaza Bhimani and Sadik Rashid for their help before, during and after the move.

The new offices are located at Suite 203, 6191 Westminster Hwy. All Praise belongs to Allah. Even though the location is good, the classroom space is smaller than before and the use of common washrooms for taharah and ablution is a little inconvenient. We are thankful to Ms Richmond Holdings Ltd for allowing us to use their vacant place for over a year at special rates.

10. Change of Directors

On September 5, 2002 Haji Riyaz Devji stepped down from the board of directors. On October 29, 2002 Haji Amirali M Rashid was appointed to the board. The Academy for Learning Islam thanks Br Riyaz for his dedication and help at the academy from the time of its inception. Despite having a busy schedule, Br Riyaz helped the academy to steer it forward. He was particularly helpful in finding the offices and classrooms for the Academy at previous location. He negotiated the best rates possible with the landlords for the

use of the space. We pray to the Almighty to bless Br Riyaz for his selfless services to the Academy and reward him amply.

The other directors of the Academy are Br. Azeemali Moledina and Br. Asif Tejani.

11. Plans for the year 2003 (1423/24 AH)

1. We intend to provide Internet-based online courses on Islam. These courses will cover a variety of Islamic subjects. The Religious Director is in contact with a number of potential youths in Toronto and New York who can assist in this regard.

2. The Internet Resource Center at the Academy is Alhamdu lillah ready for launching. We have eight computers linked to broad band Internet. We are looking for a volunteer who would initiate this section and make it available to all, especially the seniors of the community.

3. We intend to associate with renowned Hawzas, colleges and universities to gain Educational accreditation for courses and programs given at ALI. We have sent a message to an Islamic Institute in UK and are waiting for a meeting to be arranged between the Directors of the two organizations. *Inshâ' Allah* we will have something positive to report in future reports.

4. With the encouraging interest we received during the Holy Ramadhan we intend to put more efforts in promoting Outreach Programs for the general public during major Islamic occasions.

5 The Religious Director whilst serving as the Resident Alim in Edmonton and Vancouver has prepared outlines of hundreds of his lectures. The Academy is pleased to announce that Br Mohamed Hassan Keshvani has kindly agreed to assist in the uploading of these lectures and Friday sermons to our site. The RD will *inshâ* Allah set aside some time to edit the majlises and sermons before they go online.

We pray to the Almighty for the sake of the fourteen Ma`sûmîn ﷺ to grant us success in this vision.

12. What can you do for the A.L.I.?

1. Benefit by attending courses that may interest you. The classroom atmosphere and the academic approach are unique experiences to appreciate the noble teachings of Islam.
2. Volunteer part of your time in assisting in the compilation of course material and/or in maintaining a section of our website and volunteering at the Internet Resource Center.
3. Volunteering your time as an assistant to the Outreach Programs that are carried out by the Academy, if you live in the Greater Vancouver area
4. Donating generously for the running of the Academy. You may donate using your credit card by clicking on the "Donate Now" button at <http://www.academyofislam.org/about.asp> or by sending your contribution to our mailing address.

Donating through the above URL will generate immediate electronic receipts that can be used for tax purposes by Canadian residents. US residents need to make cheques

payable to Shia Ithna Ashari Jamaat to benefit from tax receipts

Kindly distribute this report far and wide to fellow believers. We value your input and look forward to hearing from you.

In His name, the Beneficent, the Merciful

FAQ ON SHĪ`Ī ISLAM

Prepared by
The Academy for Learning Islam
For
Spirit of Islam Exhibition

At
Museum of Anthropology
University of British Columbia, Vancouver

(In this pamphlet the discussion on the Shi`i Muslim refer to the followers of the Shi`ā Ithnā `Asharī sect, sometimes referred to as the Ja`farī)

What is Islam?

Islam is a religion that permeates the complete way of life of its followers. Islam is an Arabic word meaning submission and peace. Islam calls for total submission to God's orders and being at peace with oneself and God's creation. This includes all human beings, animals and the environment. All Muslims are required to enter totally into Islam (Holy Qur'an 2:208).

Who are the followers of Islam?

The followers of Islam are known as Muslims. There are between 1.2 to 1.4 billion Muslims all over the world. Muslims are found in almost all countries of the world including Europe and North America. Muslim population in Canada is estimated to be over half a million.

Which scripture do the Muslims follow?

The scripture of Muslims is the Qur'ân (sometimes spelled as the Koran). The Qur'an consists of words of God revealed to His messenger Muhammad (God's peace be with him and his family) over a period of about 23 years.

Who is the founder of Islam?

Muslims believe that many past Messengers of God, the last of whom was Muhammad, founded Islam, the religion of God. God sent thousands of prophets and messengers, famous amongst these were Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon and David (4:163). The finalization and perfection of Islam (5:3) came during the closing year of Prophet Muhammad in the year 631CE.

What is Shî`î Islam?

Shî`î Islam is one of the two main sects of Islam. After the death of Prophet Muhammad, the Muslims were divided on the question of Muhammad's successor. The majority accepted the Prophet's friend and father-in-law Abu Bakr as the rightful caliph (i.e. the successor of the Prophet). This group came to be known as the Sunnis. A smaller group believed that

Ali bin Abi Tâlib, the prophet's cousin and son-in-law was the rightful successor. This group came to be known as the Shî`î, i.e. the partisans of Ali. Within the Shî`î, a number of sects emerged over time, the majority being the Shî`ah Ithnâ `Asharî, i.e. the believers in the twelve divinely appointed leaders (Imams). The Shî`î make up between 12 to 15% of Muslim population worldwide.

How does it differ from Sunni Islam?

The main difference, as mentioned earlier, is regarding the line of succession after Prophet Muhammad. Over the centuries, differences also arose in the sources and interpretation of Islamic law and theology. The Shî`ah Ithnâ `Asharî follow the theology and creed taught by their Imams. As for the law, they follow the Ja'farî school of Islamic law, attributed to the sixth Imam, Ja'far As-Sâdiq (d. 765 CE). Presently, the authority of interpreting the law is vested with the grand jurists known as the Mujtahids and Ayatollahs.

What are the commonalities between the two sects?

There are more commonalities than differences between the Shî`î and Sunni Muslims. Both believe in the absolute veracity and perfection of the Holy Qur'ân. Both consider Muhammad as the last Messenger of God and struggle to imitate his sayings (Hadiths) and practices (Sunnah). Both perform the same rituals. For instance, all Muslims pray five times a day, facing the Ka`bah in Mecca in the state of spiritual purification. Similarly, the Shî`î and Sunni Muslims have same ethical, dietary and dress code requirements, etc. In short a non-Muslim unaware of

the differences between the Shī'ī & Sunni would rarely notice the differences in the lifestyles of the two.

What are the basic beliefs of the Shī'ī?

The Shī'ī Muslims believe in the five fundamental principles of religion. These are (1) Tawhīd, i.e. there is Only One God (Allah) who has neither a partner nor children. He alone is worthy of worship. (2) Adālah, i.e. God is just and equitable in His creation and legislation. All His actions are meaningful and do not lack wisdom. (3) Nubuwwah, i.e. God sent thousands of prophets to guide human beings to the Right Path. The first prophet was Adam and the last was Muhammad. (4) Imāmah, i.e. God appointed twelve Imams (leaders) to guide Muslims after the death of Prophet Muhammad. The first of these was Ali bin Abi Tālib (d. 661 CE) and the last is Muhammad al-Mahdī al-Qā'im, who went into total occultation in 940 CE. (5) Qiyāmah, i.e. after the end of this world all people will be resurrected, judged, and then rewarded or punished based on their beliefs and actions in this world.

What are the practices & rituals of the Shī'ī Muslims?

The Shī'ī Muslim are required to perform a number of prayers as part of worshipping God, the chief being the daily five prayers. It is also obligatory to fast in the month of *Ramadhān*, go for Hajj (annual pilgrimage to Mecca) once in the lifetime, pay *zakāt* (alms and charity) and *khums* (1/5th from one's annual savings), participate in jihad (struggle to practice and defend Islam), *amr bil ma'rūf* (enjoining good to others) and *nahyi `anil munkar* (forbidding others from evil).

Besides this, all Shī'ī Muslims are required to manifest their love for Prophet Muhammad and his Ahlul Bayt (Prophet's household members), practice strict Islamic ethical and moral code in their personal and social lives, including marrying and leading a decent family life.

How do the Shī'ī relate to other Muslims?

Any person who believes in One God, His Messenger Muhammad and does not deny the basic tenets of Islam is a Muslim. He belongs to one *ummah* (Muslim nation) and is to be treated as a brother or sister in Islam. The Shī'ī adhere to the famous saying of the Prophet; *a Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands other Muslims are safe.* (*Nahjul Balāgha* of Imam Ali)

What is the relation of Shī'ī Muslim with non-Muslims?

The Holy Qur'an states in verse 17:70 that God has honored the children of Adam. Accordingly, a Shī'ī Muslim is required to respect and honor a fellow human being by being gentle and kind to him. Therefore he is expected to fulfill the rights of a neighbor, help the needy and oppressed, respect the elder, be kind to the young, obey the leader as long as he is not asked to disobey God's orders, etc.

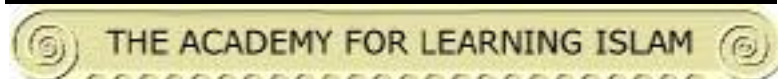
Suggest books and websites dedicated to Shī'ī Islam?

There are hundreds of websites in different languages and thousands of books on Shī'ī Islam. Popular amongst these are www.al-islam.org; www.shia.org and www.shialink.org. For books in English one may refer to *Shia* by Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'ī, *The Holy Qur'an* translation and

commentary by Aqa Mirza Mahdi Puya and S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali, and *A Shi'ite Anthology* edited and translated by William Chittick.

RICHMOND, BC V7C 4V4 Canada

December 2002/Shawwal 1423



The aims and objectives of the Academy are:

*To advance and teach the religious tenets, doctrines, observances and culture associated with the Islamic faith, according to the Shi'â Ithnâ `Asharî school of thought;
To establish and maintain a religious school of instruction for children, youth and adults;
To provide counseling services and maintain outreach programs, according to the Islamic faith, to persons experiencing religious and social problems*

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