

Egypt's Grand Mufti Urges Global Conscience to End Bloodshed

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Egypt's Grand Mufti Urges Global Conscience to End Bloodshed in Gaza in Opening Remarks at 10th International Fatwa Conference

The Making of the Competent Mufti in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

10th International Annual Conference

The General Secretariat for Fatwa Authorities World

Opening Session

Speech by

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In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and may peace and blessings be upon our master Muhammad—the bearer of glad tidings and the warner—and upon his family and Companions.

Esteemed scholars,

Respected muftis, ministers, and distinguished guests,

Peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be upon you.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the Land of Egypt as we inaugurate the 10th International Conference of the General Secretariat for Fatwa Authorities Worldwide, being held under the theme: “The Making of the Competent Mufti in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.”

At the outset of this distinguished gathering, it is a great honor to extend my deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to His Excellency President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for his gracious patronage of this prestigious scholarly forum. His continued support reflects his unwavering commitment to advancing the mission of sound and enlightened fatwa-issuance, and to fostering a strong academic environment that equips competent muftis with the ability to harness the opportunities of the digital revolution and artificial intelligence technologies in the service of Islamic legal guidance.

I also extend a warm welcome to Egypt’s distinguished guests who have arrived from across the globe, and I pray to Almighty Allah to grant them safety, care, and a most pleasant stay.

Esteemed scholars,

The journey of humanity has, through the ages, witnessed profound transformations—many driven by industrial revolutions that reshaped the very fabric of life through discoveries that changed the course of history. Today, with clear vision and thoughtful reflection, we find

ourselves living through an unprecedented revolution in the realm of artificial intelligence—one of the most significant shifts of the modern era.

This revolution has brought remarkable progress in the fields of medicine, education, industry, and administration; enhanced the tools of scientific research; and opened vast horizons for exploring the repositories of human knowledge. It has also played a vital role in streamlining institutional work. These are indeed tremendous blessings—deserving of gratitude and praise—when harnessed wisely to serve humanity and advance civilization.

Despite its many benefits, this advancement raises urgent questions that strike at the very core of human identity and responsibility—questions that demand clear and decisive answers from scholars: Can a machine be entrusted to issue fatwas independently? Is Islamic jurisprudence merely a set of inferential mechanisms that can be reduced to code?

Throughout history, jurists have shouldered the noble duty of issuing fatwas, serving as witnesses over creation through the revealed texts and as interpreters of divine revelation in light of public interest and the consideration of consequences. However, if this sacred mission were to be “programmed” without precise safeguards and firmly rooted principles, it risks veering into a perilous path, stripping Islamic legal discourse of its spiritual essence and reducing religion from a message of guidance and enlightenment to a rigid, mechanical, and purely technical framework devoid of the soul and spirit of the Shari’ah.

At this critical juncture, there is a pressing need to establish a “philosophical critique” of artificial intelligence within the domain of Islamic law—one that moves beyond fascination with machines and technologies to confront fundamental questions such as:

Can a machine discern apparent contradictions between texts and

balance their meanings in light of the principles of “removing hardship” and “facilitating ease for those morally responsible”?

How can algorithms address rulings that hinge on human intentions—intentions that can only be understood through personal purposes and unique human circumstances?

Can artificial intelligence account for the social, psychological, and economic contexts that shape the application of Shari’ah rulings in real life?

How can a machine reconcile the generality of scriptural texts with the authority of custom or necessity in changing contexts of fatwa?

Can artificial intelligence appreciate the effect of time and place in shaping and evolving legal opinions?

These questions expose the fundamental limitations of artificial models in engaging with the Shari’ah as a living, holistic system—one that integrates spiritual, rational, and unseen dimensions. It is not enough for intelligent systems to excel in organizing information; they must be grounded in a Shari’ah-based philosophy that preserves the centrality of the human being as a moral agent, and upholds the role of the jurist as a diligent “mujtahid”, accountable before Allah and history—not merely a transmitter of impersonal, machine-generated results of unknown origin.

To this effect, the aim of utilizing artificial intelligence in the field of fatwa is not to replace the position of mufti, but to harness this technology in his service, broadening his horizons, deepening his awareness, and equipping him with the tools of the age without ever relinquishing the “secret of his trust” that no algorithm can fathom: the fear of Allah, the insight of the heart, and the wisdom of purpose.

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests,

Intellectual and juristic integrity compels us to acknowledge the immense potential of artificial intelligence in serving the higher objectives of Shari'ah. The role AI can play for the jurist and the mufti lies chiefly in the stage of “framing the issue and verifying its relevant circumstances”—the vital step that precedes the issuing of a legal ruling and is regarded in the science of uṣūl al-fiqh (Principles of Jurisprudence) as an indispensable pillar of sound ijtihād.

Artificial intelligence can help develop a precise and comprehensive understanding of the case under consideration by analyzing its various economic, social, and legal dimensions, in addition to sifting, organizing, and presenting relevant texts in ways that facilitate comparison and evaluation. Yet it must be stressed that this role does not override the jurist's ijtihād; rather, it supports and organizes it—leaving the final judgment to the mujtahid in light of his own reasoning, assessment, and discernment.

Thus, artificial intelligence is neither a competitor to the jurist nor an adversary to the fatwa—it is a pliant and powerful tool, provided it is guided with wisdom and governed by sound principles.

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests,

One of the most pressing challenges facing fatwa in the age of artificial intelligence is the risk that its authority could be wrested from the hands of qualified scholars and placed into the control of rigid algorithms. Such systems, lacking true juristic understanding, may unwittingly promote anomalous opinions, sideline established positions, and reshape religious consciousness according to “clicks and view counts” rather than the standards of evidence, sound reasoning, and truth.

Another significant challenge for the mufti in the digital and AI era is the phenomenon of “hallucination” in intelligent systems—wherein they may

produce fabricated fatwas or rulings, articulated in convincing language, that mislead recipients into believing them authentic. This reality compels religious institutions to act as vigilant guardians of the legitimacy of religious understanding, and as leaders in shaping the relationship between the sacred text and the machine—either by developing intelligent models themselves or by risking becoming captive to them.

Given that AI systems in the realm of jurisprudence and fatwa have become an unavoidable reality, we are committed to building a smart model trained to fully grasp the foundational uṣūlī principles that govern legal derivation. These include the rules of resolving conflicts and weighing evidence (tarjīḥ), general and specific texts, absolute and restricted expressions, conditional clauses, istiṣḥāb (presumption of continuity), custom (ʿurf), unrestricted public interests (maṣāliḥ mursala), and others.

If such a model is not trained to distinguish between a general text intended for a specific application and one that remains unrestricted, or between a report conveying a binding legal ruling and one that is merely informative, it will inevitably fall into grave errors of reasoning. Likewise, it must be trained in the linguistic principles essential for understanding Sharia texts—such as the implications of commands and prohibitions, literal and figurative usage, polysemy, contextual indicators, and other interpretive tools—capabilities that a computer can only acquire through careful, deliberate, and expert-guided input.

Honorable scholars, jurists, and muftis,

In today's age of artificial intelligence, it has become essential for the competent mufti to possess a profound awareness of the deep transformations that have taken place in the intellectual and behavioral patterns of fatwa-seekers in the digital realm—distinguishing between

those who seek a ruling in pursuit of truth and those who seek to justify personal whims. This underscores the urgent need for a jurisprudence of “distinguishing intentions,” alongside the development of religious discourse and the formulation of fatwas in a style that unites Shari’ah precision with sound reasoning, ensuring rulings are delivered with absolute clarity.

This reality magnifies the responsibility of religious and fatwa institutions to establish clear frameworks for building, operating, and evaluating AI systems that produce fatwas. Such a mission cannot be left to technology companies or individual initiatives; it must be placed under the supervision of specialized scholarly bodies that include Shari’ah scholars, AI experts, and specialists in the philosophy and higher objectives (maqāṣid) of Shari’ah. It also calls for the creation of reliable digital fatwa platforms, furnished with verified scholarly resources and subject to ongoing review by qualified Shari’ah committees, governed by a dedicated ethical charter similar to those observed in the fields of medicine and law.

These institutions also shoulder the responsibility of preparing and qualifying the contemporary mufti to engage with digital systems, training them to assess their outputs with a critical, conscious mindset—rather than with passive or uncritical acceptance. Modern curricula should be integrated into mufti training programs, focusing on “jurisprudential methodology for analyzing AI-generated outputs,” in recognition of a new reality in which the mufti faces not only people’s questions but also machine-generated religious discourse lacking awareness and conscience.

Honorable scholars, jurists, and muftis,

The distinction between a “prudent mufti” and an “imprudent mufti” is

crucial. The prudent mufti combines deep mastery of Shari'ah sciences with an understanding of evolving realities, and is equipped with contemporary knowledge—such as data science and AI ethics—that enables him to address complex, emerging issues. The imprudent mufti, by contrast, confines himself to literal texts without context, hastily issues rulings without verification, or follows personal desires and political or social trends without the guidance of Sharia principles.

If this conference aims to prepare the prudent mufti who understands his role in guiding societies with knowledge and wisdom, then true prudence is measured not merely by familiarity with contemporary issues, but by the degree to which the mufti embodies a living conscience and an upright moral stance.

Gaza today is not simply a devastated land suffering hunger, displacement, and the brutality of occupation amid international silence; it is a test for the vitality of jurisprudence—recalibrating the moral compass—and a mirror reflecting the sincerity of the fatwa. Fatwa is not confined to worship; it is a tool for building awareness, instilling dignity and honor, and defending the homeland—ensuring that Gaza's voice remains strong and the cry of its oppressed people remains at the heart of the fatwa's mission as the voice of truth and the living conscience of the Ummah.

We have witnessed how AI has been weaponized in the aggression against Gaza, through image analysis, movement prediction, and the precise targeting of neighborhoods—resulting in thousands of casualties and the destruction of infrastructure.

This stark reality highlights the dangers of technology when divorced from values, and reaffirms the urgent need for a global charter to regulate AI use on the foundations of justice, mercy, and the preservation of

human dignity.

Distinguished Guests,

From this platform, we extend a heartfelt appeal to all people of conscience in both East and West, calling upon compassionate hearts to take a genuine humanitarian stand to end the torrents of blood unjustly and aggressively shed upon the soil of Gaza. We cry out to what remains of human decency in this harsh world—where tyranny prevails and the logic of power has overshadowed the values of justice and mercy.

Have mercy on the vulnerable people of Gaza, for they have a standing before Allah, where retribution will be exacted from the tyrants who shed their blood, destroyed their homes, and displaced their children, women, and elderly.

We also convey our highest salute and deepest respect to our steadfast brothers and sisters—rooted in their land, unwavering in truth, and holding firmly to the embers of dignity. We assure them that Allah's promise is certain beyond doubt, and that victory will come inevitably, no matter how delayed its signs or distant its causes may seem.

It is a painful irony that we speak these words in the twenty-first century—an age in which the world boasts of industrial revolutions, flaunts its artificial intelligence technologies, and adorns its slogans with talk of human rights, freedoms, and human dignity—while in Gaza, the most abhorrent forms of persecution and aggression are perpetrated.

Distinguished Guests,

Egypt has always— and continues to— fulfill its historic duty, its honored standing, and the right of neighborliness toward the Palestinian cause, defending the rights of the Palestinian people in times when true allies are scarce. Despite fierce campaigns targeting its role, Egypt's

leadership has carried out its duty with wisdom and honor, standing firmly against the heinous schemes of forced displacement, blackmail, and coercion—declaring an unequivocal rejection of any attempt to liquidate the Palestinian cause or expel its people. It is a principled and historic stance that will be recorded in the annals of history with the ink of honor.

In conclusion, I renew my warm welcome and sincere gratitude to the esteemed scholars, jurists, muftis, and ministers who have honored us with their presence in their second home—Egypt, the land of al-Kinana, of knowledge, and of al-Azhar. I pray to Allah Almighty to grant us all success in what He loves and is pleased with, and to make this conference a gateway to advancing knowledge, religion, and humanity.

My heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation also go to my colleagues at Egypt's Dar al-Ifta, who played a vital role and made significant contributions to the preparation and success of this conference. I equally extend my sincere gratitude to the executive, security, and media bodies that have worked alongside us to make this blessed gathering a success.

May Allah's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you!

Dr. Nazir Mohammad Ayyad

Grand Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt

President of the General Secretariat for Fatwa Authorities Worldwide