

## Headlines:

- **New Association Aspires to Reorganise Islam in France**
- **Saudi Arabia Announces Billions of Dollars in Entertainment Investments**
- **Taliban, US Open Afghan Peace Talks in Qatar**

## Details:

### **New Association Aspires to Reorganise Islam in France**

As President Emmanuel Macron sets himself the challenge of reforming the relationship between the state and the country's Muslims, a grassroots initiative has been launched in response to his vision of a "French Islam". The organisation launched this week by prominent intellectual Hakim El Karoui is part of a set of proposals from the Franco-Tunisian author to Mr Macron that aims to inspire Muslims unite to together in a new direction. According to the banker turned author, the Muslim Association for a French Islam (AMIF) has the objective of fostering a "serene integration of Islam in France" and countering the discourse propagated by "salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood." By acting as a middle man between the government and the worshippers, AMIF intends to cast itself as a trusted interlocutor for both parties and hence promote transparency and accountability. By offering a gateway for services for Muslim citizens, the organisation could bolster confidence within the wider society. "There are different aspects to this, for example the issue of the pilgrimage [to Mecca]," Mr El Karoui, who is senior fellow at the French think-tank Institut Montaigne, told The National. "It has to become compulsory for example that a travel agency offering the pilgrimage to obtain an authorisation by an organisation like AMIF. If this is unavoidable, then you have the chance to regulate the market and put an end to all unsuitable behaviours." By vetting specialist agencies and enterprises that are devoted to aspects of Muslim life – from travel agencies to halal meat suppliers and Imams – Mr El Karoui said he believed an organisation like his would be able to improve transparency and channel the worshippers' donations and investments towards institutions that commit to transparency. [Source: The National]

**Since the Crusades, France has tried tirelessly to reform Islam but has failed repeatedly. Will the present attempts to reform Islam be any different?**

### **Saudi Arabia Announces Billions of Dollars in Entertainment Investments**

Saudi Arabia said on Tuesday it expects billions of dollars to be pumped into a nascent state-backed entertainment sector and is eyeing dozens of Western acts, including an exhibition NBA basketball game and a Spanish-style running of the bulls. The kingdom is trying to shake off its ultra-conservative image in a drive to keep tourist dollars at home, lure foreign visitors, create jobs for young Saudis, and improve the quality of life in a country where cinemas and public concerts were banned until recently. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has loosened social strictures, including ending a ban on women driving, curbing the powers of the religious police and easing gender segregation rules. The government has put on Arab and Western performances, including a Black Eyed Peas concert last month, that were once unimaginable in a country where bearded religious police patrolled the streets with sticks to guard against public immorality like singing and dancing. But the reform push has been accompanied by a crackdown on dissent, including the arrests of women's rights

activists, clerics and intellectuals. The murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi last October has also tarnished the country's image and scared off some potential investors. At the launch of the 2019 entertainment calendar, Turki al-Sheikh, chairman of the General Entertainment Authority (GEA), listed dozens of events the kingdom hopes to host this year, including auto races, magic shows and theatrical performances. [Source: Reuters]

**In efforts to protect the Saudi regime, MBS at the behest of America has opened up Saudi society to all types of Western corruption under the guise of entertainment. The speed of the reforms begs one to think about the unthinkable i.e. how long before MBS subjects Saudi Arabia to alcohol, casino, licensed brothels, homosexuality and other Western perversions?**

## Taliban, US Open Afghan Peace Talks in Qatar

Afghanistan's Taliban opened a new round of peace talks Monday in Qatar with the United States, the insurgent group said. A Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said the two-day meeting in Doha will continue on Tuesday. Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. special representative for Afghanistan political reconciliation, is leading the U.S. delegation. "Following American acceptance of the agenda of ending the invasion of Afghanistan and preventing Afghanistan from being used against other countries in the future, talks with American representatives took place today in Doha, the capital of Qatar," Mujahid said. The session will continue Tuesday. Khalilzad has held several rounds of talks with Taliban representatives in Qatar in recent months, and the last interaction between the two sides had taken place in the United Arab Emirates in December.

Diplomatic sources privy to the previous meetings told VOA that Taliban and U.S. delegations in their current dialogue are expected to finalize proposals they had exchanged in Abu Dhabi regarding a timeline for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. An immediate anticipated outcome could be a temporary cease-fire announced by the Taliban to build mutual confidence to keep the dialogue process moving forward. Monday's meeting was originally set to take place in Pakistan where Khalilzad stayed for several days before traveling to Qatar. Sources said Taliban officials refused to come to Islamabad unless the U.S. side agreed to discuss a withdrawal plan for U.S.-led foreign troops from Afghanistan. The uncertainty following the Taliban's backing away from the proposed meeting in Pakistan led to speculation about a breakdown in the peace dialogue. U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, who undertook a daylong visit to Islamabad on Sunday, dismissed suggestions the dialogue with the Taliban was faltering, and praised Pakistan's effort to help the Afghan peace process. The South Carolina Republican senator, who is considered close to President Donald Trump, spoke after a meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan. "I can tell you, the fact that the effort that was made is good. It is going to take a while. I talked with Prime Minister Khan, and I think he is going to deliver a message that would be very helpful," Graham said. He did not elaborate.

**Once again, Pakistan has deliberately undermined its upperhand over America and forced the Taliban into peace talks. Khan is no different to Sharif who gave up Pakistan's upperhand in Kargil by making concessions to America and India. Is this what Khan calls efforts to turn Pakistan into the state of Madina? Allah (swt) says: ﴿فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَبْرِكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ﴾ "So do not weaken and call for peace while you are superior and Allah is with you and will never deprive of [the reward of] your deeds." [TMQ: 47:35]**