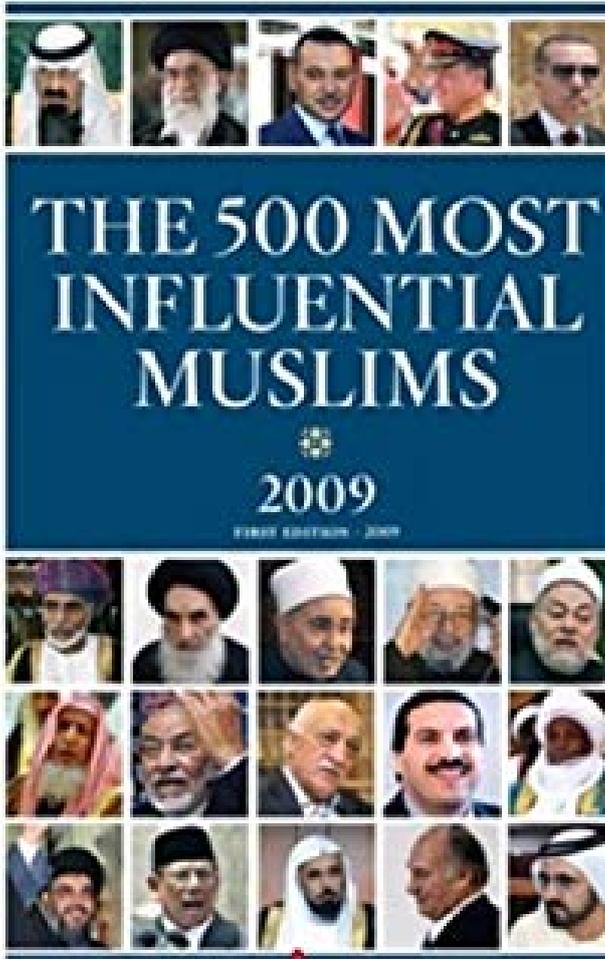


# The 500 Most Influential Muslims 2009



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A fascinating new book has just been issued by The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center (in Jordan) in concert with Georgetown's Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. The book lists the 500 most influential people in the Muslim world, breaking the people into several distinct categories, scholarly, political, administrative, lineage, preachers, women, youth, philanthropy, development, science and technology, arts and culture, media, and radicals. Before this breakdown begins however, the absolute most influential 50 people are listed, starting with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. The top 50 fit into 6 broad categories as follows: 12 are political leaders (kings, generals, presidents), 4 are spiritual leaders (Sufi shaykhs), 14 are national or international religious authorities, 3 are "preachers," 6 are high-level scholars, 11 are leaders of movements or organizations. The 500 appear to have been chosen largely in terms of their overt influence, however the top 50 have been chosen and perhaps listed in a "politically correct" order designed not to cause offense. For example, the first person listed is the Sunni political leader of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah. The second person listed is the head of the largest Shi'a power, Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei. As these are not the two Muslim countries with the largest populations, and do not even represent the two countries with the most spiritual or religious relevance (Saudi Arabia yes, Iran no) therefore clearly the decision of spots one or two appears to have been motivated by a sense of political correctness. In total 72 Americans are

among the 500 most influential Muslims, a disproportionately strong showing, but only one among the top 50. Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson of Zaytuna Institute is listed surprisingly at number 38. The world leader of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi order, however, Sheikh Nazim al Haqqani, with millions of followers worldwide, spiritual adviser to kings, presidents, doctors, lawyers, professors and others across the spectrum of profession, race, and ethnicity on seven continents, is listed at number 49. While Sheikh Hamza Yusuf has successfully built the Zaytuna Institute, his influence is confined mostly to American academia, scholars and students. Surprisingly, Khaled Mashaal, leader of Hamas, (at number 34) is listed before any American Muslim. It seems strange that Yusuf is the only American listed in the top 50. Especially when Rep. Keith Ellison (D-5-MN), Tariq Ramadan and Ingrid Mattson are listed among the “honorable mentions” in the book (“honorable mentions” were almost among the top 50 but not quite—they are still listed among the 500). Ingrid Mattson alone is likely more influential than Hamza Yusuf Hanson, for instance. Not to mention Rep. Keith Ellison. Even the Nobel prize winner Mohammad Yunus is listed only among the honorable mentions.

Sheikh Hisham Kabbani in the USA is listed among the most influential scholars in the Muslim world, and his relative Mohammad Rashid Qabbani, the Grand Mufti of Lebanon and its leading Sunni scholar, is also among the most influential scholars.

The Shi'a marja Ayatullah Sayeed Mohammad Fadlallah is the other listed scholar for Lebanon. The 18 prominent American Muslims in the Scholars section of the book also include Yusuf Estes, Sulayman Nyang, Muzammil Siddiqui, Sherman Jackson, Zaid Shakir, and Nuh Keller. Two Americans are listed as Political figures in North America.

Nine Americans are listed as Administrative leaders, including Siraj Wahhaj—surprising to list him as an administrative leader rather than a preacher. One Canadian is listed under the Lineage section, namely Jamal Badawi, but no Americans. Under the Women heading appear six very recognizable names, perhaps most recognizable among them Ingrid Mattson, the controversial Amina Wadud, and the extremely influential Dalia Mogahed (who wrote the perhaps watershed work *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think.*) Two Americans are listed in the Youth category. Under the Philanthropy category is listed one person, Dr. Tariq Cheema, co-founder of the World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists. 13 Americans are listed under Development, including strangely the boxer Mohammad Ali. Four Americans are listed under Science and Technology, perhaps most recognizably Dr. Mehmed Oz, who frequently appears on morning television to help explain medical situations to people, and who shows an interest in the overlap between traditional medicine and spirituality. Seven Americans are listed under Arts and Culture, including the notable actors Mos Def and Dave Chappelle, also the calligrapher Mohammad Zakaria. Nine Americans are listed in the Media section, including Fareed Zakaria and the filmmaker Michael Wolfe. The book's appendices comprehensively list populations of Muslims in nations worldwide, and its introduction gives a snapshot view of different ideological movements within the Muslim world, breaking down clearly distinctions between traditional Islam and recent radical innovations. People who are themselves prominent scholars contributed to or edited the book, including of course Georgetown University's Professor John Esposito and Professor Ibrahim Kalin. Ed Marques and Usra Ghazi also edited and prepared the book. The book lists as consultants Dr. Hamza Abed al Karim Hammad, and Siti Sarah Muwahidah, with thanks to other contributors. The entire book is available online (here: <http://www.rissc.jo/muslim500v-1L.pdf>) and we hope that it will be available for sale soon inside the United States. Currently it is not available. To encourage the printing and release of the book in the United States you can contact Georgetown's Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at [edu](mailto:edu), or by phone at 202-687-8375 Source : MuslimMediaNetwork.com