



Institute for Social Policy and Understanding

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www.ispu.us

Internships available!
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An Update from the Board of Directors

Guess who's back: Due to commitments at his new law firm, Mazen Asbahi will curtail his duties at ISPU. Iltefat Hamzavi has agreed to continue to serve as executive director until a full time executive director is selected.

Thank you: It is with some mixed emotions that the ISPU team announces the departure of Afshan Siddiqi as Administrative Director of ISPU. Afshan is moving on to a larger role as administrator of her growing family. We at ISPU wish her success. We sincerely appreciate her contributions and hard work in establishing our administrative base. Huma Alam, the Assistant Administrator, has assumed most of Afshan's responsibilities.

New Additions: ISPU would like to welcome Nauman Imami to the development board. Dr. Imami has taken on an active role in bringing in more funds to our schol-

ars. In addition, ISPU has partnered with Strategic Inspirations led by Farhan Latif to assist with development.

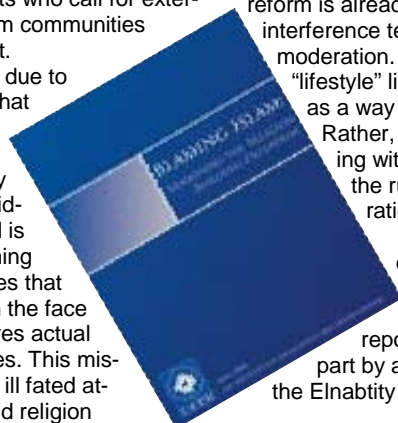
Research Initiatives: There are several initiatives that ISPU scholars are working on. Over the next few months, you will continue to see important reports and projects being published. Some of the reports are summarized in this newsletter.

ISPU remains indebted to the numerous supporters and institutions who fund our work. In particular, we would like to thank hosts Saima Siddiqui and Kamran Khan in Washington DC and Masroor Mustafa and Marina Magrey in Cleveland who opened their homes for an ISPU sponsored dinner and lectures. These gatherings provide greater awareness regarding public policy and the role of research institutes. We look forward to another exciting new year.

ISPU Fellow, Dr. Louay Safi, recently presented this landmark report at the Islamophobia conference in Washington DC, criticizing the current trend amongst many western scholars and pundits who call for external reform of Muslim communities and Islamic thought.

This push comes due to flawed perception that Islam is at fault for much of the violence and instability that exists in the Middle East today, and is incapable of reforming itself. Dr. Safi argues that this premise flies in the face of history and ignores actual sociopolitical realities. This misguided view invites ill fated attempts at nation and religion

Blaming Islam: a New ISPU Report



building which will ultimately compromise the security of America and our allies.

Instead, Dr. Safi argues that internal reform must be allowed to proceed without interference. He believes such reform is already underway. External interference tends to hurt voices of moderation. Dr. Safi is critical of "lifestyle" litmus tests proposed as a way to identify moderates. Rather, he suggests identifying with those who respect the rule of law and democratic principles.

The full report and an executive summary are available on the ISPU website. This report was sponsored in part by a generous grant from the Elnabity family.

Islamophobia Conference

ISPU and the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute jointly sponsored an important conference, "Islamophobia: the threat and policy challenges" on December 4th in Washington DC. Numerous scholars and government officials from Homeland Security, Department of Justice, and the State Department engaged in dialogue about the impact of Islamophobia on civil rights and the security of American Muslims. Leaders from CAIR, MPAC and the Muslim Freedom Institute also presented at the Islamophobia conference, making it an important first step in defining the scope of anti-Muslim sentiment and charting a course for dealing with the problem.

Recent Articles and Reports

Teacher Retention in Religious Schools as Primer for Teacher Retention in Public Schools

ISPU Fellow Omar Ezzeldine completed this report based on his study of factors causing teachers to leave their teaching jobs at a consortium of private religious schools. Based on his analyses, he recommends identifying teachers who enjoy teaching and preserving their commitment through morale boosting incentives. He argues that these incentives rarely have to be financial, but can consist of mentoring, professional development opportunities and more. Secondly, he argues for changing the school climate to one where the teachers are involved with and share the mission of the school administrators. Building of collegial relations is also important in retaining teachers, by offering ample opportunity to interact with their colleagues. Dr. Ezzeldine argues that these cost effective recommendations can help stave

off the costly turnover of teachers seen in both private and public schools.

Islam and the West: Searching for Common Ground

ISPU and Brookings non resident Fellow Muqtedar Khan presented important testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in July which ISPU has printed as a report. Here, Dr. Khan discusses the current political climate in which Islam is found, and presents the dynamic nature of the American Muslim community. He discusses the importance of US and Muslim relations and makes several policy recommendations, including recognizing the importance of positive relations between east and west, maintaining proportionality and evenhandedness with foreign policy decisions in the Middle East, embracing the American Muslim community as an ally rather than a suspect, and respecting human rights and the Geneva conventions, particularly in places like Guantanamo.

The ISPU Mission

The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding is an independent and nonprofit organization committed to studying U.S. domestic and foreign policy and its impact on American society in general and its Muslim communities in particular. ISPU provides analysis, research, policy briefs and commentary which directly involve public policy through publications, conferences, media events, grants, training and research support. ISPU is established on the idea that every community must address, debate and contribute to the pressing issues facing our nation.

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Pew Funds ISPU led focus groups

With funding from the Pew Charitable Trust, ISPU has conducted a series of focus groups across the country in preparation for a national study of American Muslims. This comprehensive study will provide important information about the current religious, demographic and political status of this growing population. This portion of the study is led by Dr. Louis Cristillo of Columbia University and Farid Senzai, the ISPU Director of Research.

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Internships are available to college level and graduate students for 2007. Please contact us at info@ispu.us.



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