

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

# Rising to the Challenge of AI

*Tech Sovereignty, the Ummah, and the Individual*

Dr M Waleed Kadous

CIK Talks · Al Falah Islamic Centre · 2 May 2026

*Key question for tonight:*

**How do we — as an Ummah and as individuals — rise to the challenge of AI?**

# Tonight's Path

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1. **Characterizing the AI technology** — what it actually is
2. **The likely impacts** — across economics, employment, education, society
3. **Guidance from our tradition** — the Prophet's response to writing, the printing press, recent technological shifts
4. **How we respond as an Ummah**
5. **How we respond as individuals**

About an hour, then Maghrib, then a discussion with **Dr. Nazir** and your questions.

# Surah Al-Alaq — The First Revelation

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اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾  
عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

*"Read in the name of your Lord who created. Created man from a clinging substance. Read, and your Lord is the most Generous — who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know."*

— **Qur'an 96:1–5**

Note the focus on **writing**. That it was a divine gift.

# A Test, With Both Sides

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وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً

*"We test you with evil and with good as a trial."*

*— Qur'an 21:35*

*AI is both at the same time*

# Hārūt and Mārūt — A Warning From the Past

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إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ ... وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ

**"We are only a fitnah, so do not disbelieve." ... And they learned what would harm them and not benefit them.** — **Qur'an 2:102**

Allah named the test **before** they took it.

***The people of that time did not pass.***

***Will we?***

# Part 1

## Characterizing AI

# An Important Fiqh Maxim

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الْحُكْمُ عَلَى الشَّيْءِ فَرْعٌ عَنْ تَصَوُّرِهِ

*"Judgment on a thing is a branch of conceptualizing it."*

***First understand the thing. Then judge it.***

# A Short History — Where AI Came From

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**1950s**

**The Age of Arrogance**

40 years of bold promises.  
Minimal delivery.

**2010s**

**Deep Learning**

Better-than-human image,  
speech, face, Go.

**Late 1990s**

**Classical AI**

Beats the best human at chess  
(1997).

**2020s**

**Generative AI**

ChatGPT, multimodal, agentic.

**Each "age" used to last decades. This one is moving in months.**

# 10× Speed — AI Is Not Slowing Down

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**Nov 2022**

**ChatGPT**

100M users in 2 months.

**Feb 2026**

**Human-level SWE**

Claude Code approaches human-level software development.

**Feb 2025**

**Claude Code**

First serious agentic coder.

**Apr 2026**

**Mythos**

Superhuman cybersecurity.

*We are 3 years into a 30-year revolution — and it is only going to get faster.*

# Large Language Models

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The current revolution is focused on LLMs.

An LLM is:

- **Hundreds of billions of parameters** – numbers tuned during training
- Running on **a few dozen very powerful computers**
- Trained on essentially **all the writing humanity has produced**

*Big numbers. Big iron. Big text.*

# The Frontier Models

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The handful of labs at the cutting edge:

- **Claude** (Anthropic) — arguably the best. The most **value-aligned** of the three US labs.
- **ChatGPT** (OpenAI) — the one that **kicked it all off**.
- **Gemini** (Google) — backed by the world's largest tech company.
- **The Chinese models** — *DeepSeek, Kimi*, and others — closing the gap fast.

*These are the "Frontier" models.*

# How You Might Think It Works

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- Build a vocabulary of words and meanings
- Understand relationships between objects
- Learn rules of grammar
- Encode rules of logic

**Classical AI.**

# How It Actually Works — Pre-Training

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*"Claude is made of writing." — Anthropic founder*

- Take **all the text** you can find
- Extract rules to **predict the next word** *solely* from previous words
- When prompted, predict the next word. **Repeat.**

*"Every time I fire a linguist, accuracy goes up." — Fred Jelinek*

# Next-Word Prediction Isn't Simple

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Think about yourself. To say *yes* or *no* — **how much thinking happens** before that one word?

- Modern models *think* before they emit the next word
- Sometimes for **minutes** — chains of reasoning, dead ends, retries
- The "next word" hides everything that produced it

**Predicting the next word, done well, is general intelligence.**

# Alignment — How It's Shaped

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*"Claude is not built. It is grown."*

A trellis for a vine. They build the structure; the vine grows as it chooses.

- **Pre-training** — read nearly every preserved document humanity has written
- **RLHF** — humans rate responses; align with human values
- **RLAIF + a Constitution** — *moral formation*, scaled

*Alignment is the pruning shears.*

# How RLHF Works

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## Reinforcement Learning with Human Feedback.

- Trainee generates **two responses** to a prompt
- A **human rater** picks the better one
- Good → reinforced · Bad → suppressed
- Repeat across **millions** of comparisons

*This is how the model learns: be helpful, be honest, refuse the harmful.*

# Why the Moral Character of AI Matters

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Today's frontier models are:

- **Very powerful** — passing professional exams, writing software, reasoning at expert level
- **Very influential** — Claude alone talks with **20M+ people every week**

The **moral character** of these AIs is now a real question.

**Anthropic's answer: a Constitution.** A document of values and principles — *kind of like the Qur'an for the AI* — that shapes how it thinks and responds.

# How RLAIIF Works

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**Reinforcement Learning with AI Feedback.** Same loop — but the judge is no longer a person.

- Trainee generates responses
- An **older model** judges, with a **Constitution** as the rubric
- Good → reinforced · Bad → suppressed
- Millions of times — at machine speed

*The Constitution is the trellis along which the vine is allowed to grow.*

# Why AI is a Special Case

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- AI is a *meta-technology* — it makes everything better
- AI is a *self-improving* technology — it makes itself better
- AI is a *capital magnet* — the rewards are so large that capital pours in to accelerate it further
- AI will become the **primary medium for understanding the world**
- Replacing social media — already happening

# Part 2

## The Impacts

# Three Areas of Impact

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- **Economic** — productivity, employment, the surplus
- **Educational** — how our children learn, what they retain
- **Social** — the medium, meaning, distribution, the next generation

*Each one a fitnah. Each one with both sides.*

# \$15.7T

added to global GDP by 2030

*PwC — 14% boost. > 7 Canadas. > India 4× over.*

**+170M / -92M**

new jobs created / displaced by 2030

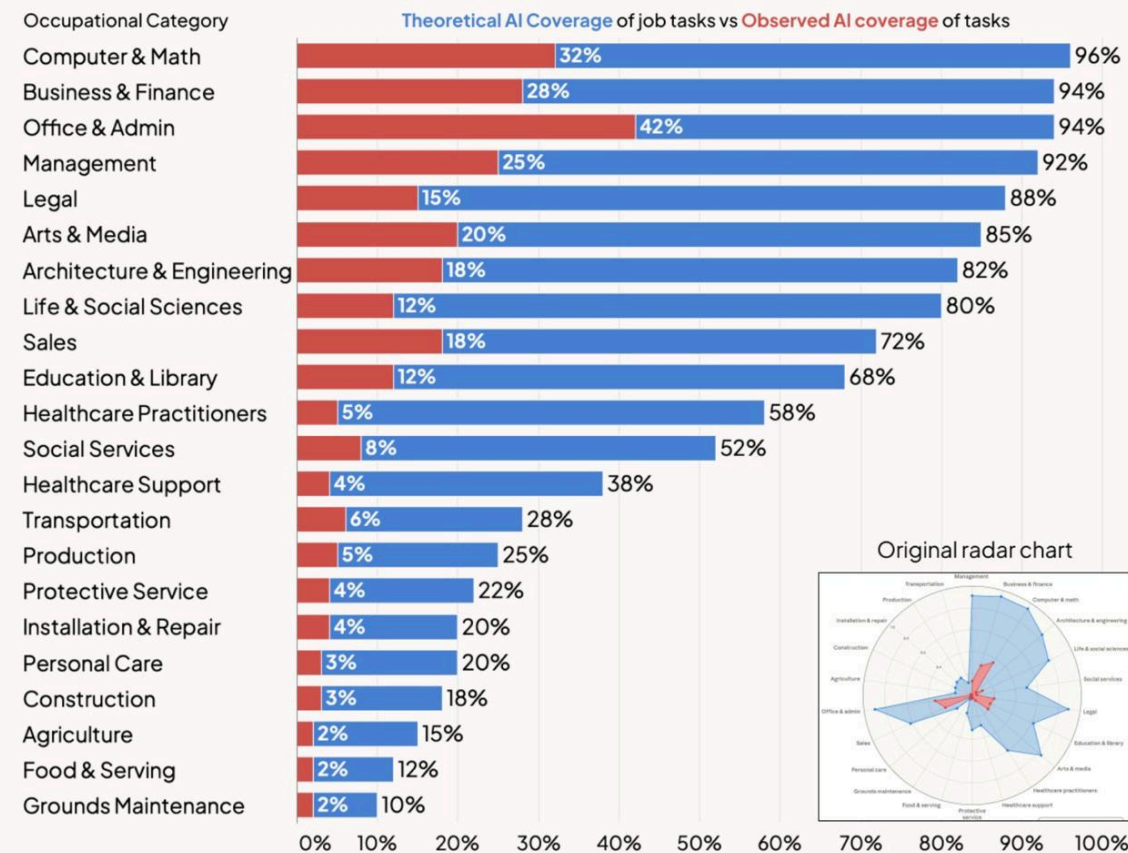
*World Economic Forum · the displaced number ≈ **4 Canadian workforces.***

# What AI Is Doing — By Occupation

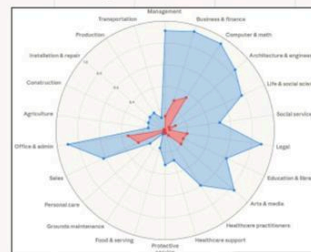
## Theoretical capability and observed exposure by occupational category

Share of job tasks that LLMs could theoretically perform = **blue bars**

Anthropic's own job coverage measure derived from usage data = **red bars**



Original radar chart



# Education — The Promise

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**Syracuse University** — Anthropic case study, April 2026.

- **+12 points** on first-exam scores — *"highest in 15+ years of teaching"*
- **80–90%** of students using Claude weekly
- **KhanMigo** (Sal Khan): patient tutor for every child
- An **Islamic version is buildable**

*Guided learning works.*

# Education — The Peril

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**MIT Media Lab** — "*Your Brain on ChatGPT*" (Kosmyna et al., 2025).

- EEG study — LLM users showed **55% reduced brain connectivity**
- **83%** could not quote sentences from their *own* essays
- Anthropic Education Report: **half** of student chats are *direct* — seeking the answer

*If AI does the math, the writing, the reasoning — what do our children develop?*

**Society**

# Four Axes

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- **The medium** — how we understand the world
- **The meaning** — what work and identity become
- **The surplus** — who captures the wealth
- **The next generation** — how our children form

# The Primary Medium

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- Already replacing search: **37%** of consumers start with AI, not Google (*Bain, 2026*)
- "*Israeli Project Clock Tower*" — content already engineered to shape how AI frames topics

***Whoever shapes the model, shapes how a generation sees reality.***

# When the Job Goes — What's Left?

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- WEF: **92 million jobs destroyed by 2030** — *roughly 4 Canadian workforces.*
- Derek Thompson (*Atlantic*): work has become America's religion of *identity, transcendence, community*

*"If your sense of meaning was tied to being a good employee, **what is left when that is gone?**"*

*— The Coming Flood*

# Whose Surplus?

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- PwC: AI adds **\$15.7T** to global GDP by 2030
- Divided equally among 8B people: **\$1,962 / person / year**  
*(family of 5: ~\$9,800)*
- Reality check: **Elon Musk ≈ \$800B** today (*May 2026*). Projected first trillionaire by **2027**.
- Oxfam: **five trillionaires within a decade**.

***Universal Basic Income — or trillionaires? Inaction picks the second.***

# Our Children's Companion — The First AI-Native Generation

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- **72%** of US teens have used AI companions (*Common Sense Media, 2025*)
- **30%** use AI chatbots **daily** (*Pew, 2025*); 16% "almost constantly"
- **31%** say AI is "as satisfying or more" than real-life friends
- **1 in 3** has chosen AI over a human for a serious conversation
- **5.4M** US youth consult AI for mental-health advice (*RAND/JAMA, 2025*)

# Part 3

Guidance From Our Tradition

# Three Places to Look

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- **The Prophet ﷺ and Writing** — the AI of his age
- **The Printing Press** — the last comparable shift
- **Modern Times** — the cycle we keep repeating

# The Prophet ﷺ and Writing

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- We don't think of writing as a technology. **But it was.**
- ~40–60 scribes over the Prophet's ﷺ life
- After **Badr** — literacy as ransom payment
- *"He who taught by the pen"* (96:4) · written contracts (2:282)

**Zaid ibn Thabit** — learned Syriac and Hebrew in weeks. Compiled the Qur'an twice (Abu Bakr, Uthman).

***Who is the Zaid ibn Thabit of our age?***

# The Printing Press — the last comparable shift

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**600 years ago.** Catalyzed the **Reformation** and the **Scientific Revolution.**

- Muslim world delayed adoption by **~280 years**
- The wars that followed killed **~10% of Europe**
- The bill came due

*The flood of AI is faster.*

# Sad Recent History — Islam and Technology

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*Condemn → Debate → Miss out → Adopt.*

## Radio

~20 yrs

1920s resistance →  
1940s acceptance.

## Satellite TV

~20 yrs

1980s debates → 2000s  
Islamic networks.

## Social Media

~10 yrs

2004 *"destructive"* →  
2015 millions of  
followers.

## Television

~20 yrs

1950s skepticism →  
1970s Islamic channels.

## Internet

~15 yrs

1999 split opinions →  
2015 full integration.

*On average, 10–20 years lost. We cannot repeat this for AI.*

# Part 4

As an Ummah

# Three Principles

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- **Embrace with Hikmah** — adopt AI in our professional and Islamic lives, *with wisdom*
- **Tech Sovereignty** — control our own technical destiny
- **Steer the train** — enjoining good, forbidding wrong

# Principle 1 — Embrace with Hikmah

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**The train is coming.** It is due to forces beyond our control.

- We can't **stop** the train. We can't even **slow** it.
- We have to learn to **live on the train** — and steer where we can.

But embracing isn't enough. We need ***hikmah***.

- **Scholars** — to discern what's permissible, beneficial, harmful
- **Practitioners** — to know what the technology actually does
- **Together** — so we adopt **without losing our Islamic values**

***Embrace and master — the prophetic way.***

# Glimmers of Hope

# Scholarly Attention

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The scholars are paying attention.

- **AMJA** — the next conference will be largely about AI
- **IASER + Yaqeen Institute** — joint **Guidebook for Muslims in Tech**

*The scholars and the technologists are starting to meet.*

# Embracing AI for Enhancing Islamic Practice

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A year ago, there was essentially **one** Islamic AI tool: **Ansari**.

Today:

- **askansari.ai**
- **usul.ai**
- **theogrid.ai**
- **aifiqh.com**
- And more arriving every month.

*The Muslim community is moving*

# AI-Powered Islamic Research

Explore, search, and analyze over 15,000 texts

▶ How Usul Works - 2:00

Send a message...

AI Chat

Search

🔗 Filters



Explain Verse

Find Hadith

Meaning Elaboration

Explore Books

# Measuring Where We Stand – The Benchmarks

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You can't improve what you can't measure. Two new benchmarks built by Muslims, for Muslims:

- **IslamicMMLU** – broad Islamic knowledge across many subjects
- **IslamicLegalBench** – fiqh and Islamic legal reasoning

*This is how we'll hold the frontier labs accountable.*

# IslamicMMLU Leaderboard

RANK ▲	MODEL ▲	TIER ▲	OVERALL ▲	FIQH ▲	QURAN ▲	HADITH ▲	% UNANSWERED ▲	MADHAB BIAS ▲
1	<b>ansari-3.5</b> Custom · Standard	Baseline	<b>94.2</b>	87.2	99.5	95.8	0	Shafi'i
2	<b>google/gemini-3-flash-preview</b> OpenRouter · Reasoning	Frontier	<b>93.8</b>	89.1	99.2	93	0	Maliki
3	<b>google/gemini-3-pro-preview</b> OpenRouter · Standard	Frontier	<b>92.3</b>	87.9	97.3	91.7	0	Hanafi
4	<b>google/gemini-2.5-pro</b> OpenRouter · Standard	Frontier	<b>90.3</b>	85.5	95.8	89.7	0	Shafi'i
5	<b>gpt-5</b> OpenAI · Standard	Frontier	<b>89.9</b>	83.5	98	88.2	0	Shafi'i
6	<b>gpt-5.2</b> OpenAI · Standard	Frontier	<b>89.5</b>	85.9	94.8	87.8	0	Shafi'i
7	<b>gpt-5.1</b> OpenAI · Standard	Frontier	<b>88.4</b>	81.5	95.3	88.3	0	Hanbali
8	<b>anthropic/claude-sonnet-4.5</b> OpenRouter · Standard	Frontier	<b>86.2</b>	84.9	88.2	85.4	0	Maliki
9	<b>anthropic/claude-opus-4.5</b> OpenRouter · Standard	Frontier	<b>86</b>	72.7	94.6	90.8	0	Hanafi

# Areas for Improvement

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**Where we are still lagging – Muslim organizations and non-profits.**

The opportunity:

- **Improving efficiency** – operations, admin, comms
- **Tailoring content** – the right message for the right community
- **Automating fundraising** – donor cultivation, follow-up, reporting

***These are huge wins, sitting on the table.***

# Principle 2 — Tech Sovereignty

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*The Ummah's capacity to control its own digital infrastructure — its **data**, its **AI systems**, its **rules**, its **values** — so that **no external power** can dictate how its **communities use, build, or benefit** from the technologies they depend on.*

***Things are known by their opposites.***

# What Tech Subjugation Looks Like — Palestine

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- Meta complied with **94% of Israel's 9,500** takedown requests
- Meta's Israel policy director: **former senior advisor to Netanyahu personally flagged content**
- Never even built a Hebrew hate-speech classifier
- HRW documented **1,050 censorship cases**
- The Ummah's voice on Gaza only survived on TikTok  
— *that was luck, not sovereignty*

# TikTok Subjugation in Real Time

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- Sold to a US consortium led by **Larry Ellison**
- Extremely pro-Israel — **\$26M+** in donations to Friends of IDF
- Already installed **Bari Weiss**
- Netanyahu, secretly recorded:  
*"TikTok is the most important purchase going on right now"*
- **Erica Mindel** — hired July 2025 as TikTok's Public Policy Manager for Hate Speech. A **former IDF instructor**.

*The last sovereign space the Ummah had online — being closed in real time.*

# The Ummatic AI Tech Stack - How it fits together

## Applications

**AI accelerated Civic Influence**

*AI to optimize engagement in*

*civics + politics*

**AI-supercharged non-profits**

*AI to make Muslim NFPs more effective*

**Islamic AI Hub**

*AI to help Muslims practice more effectively*

**Personal Life Assistant**

*Next Gen Chat / Browser app with an Ummatic Lens*



## Sovereign Model Serving

*Ummatic AI models served using our sovereign cloud in our countries*

## Ummatic AI Models

*Models customized with ummatic data that embody our needs and our values*

## Data for Ummatic AI

*Foundation for Ummatic AI Models*

# Glimmers

Built by our communities, right now



Welcome to Fanar

# Arabic Generative AI Platform

Fanar is more than a technology—it's a movement to bring the Arabic language and culture into the heart of the AI revolution.

[Download the App](#)[Chat with Fanar](#)

Integrate powerful AI features into your applications and start now by [requesting API access](#).



Selected models from Fanar family are available on [Hugging Face](#) for research and direct integration.



# Two brothers from Syria.


Building ethical AI born from lived experience and a sense of responsibility.

[Our Story](#)



# Why it's different

Thousands have discovered what happens when social media serves people instead of profit. Creators, activists, families, artists, and everyday people building authentic communities.

Features	 UpScrolled	Others
Who sees your posts	✓ Everyone who follows you, and browse content discovery	✗ Maybe — if the algorithm allows it
Algorithms	✓ Simple ranking	✗ Complex and manipulative
Shadowbanning	✓ Not a thing	✗ Silently used against critical voices
Feed Control	✓ Chronological and user-driven	✗ Algorithm decides what you see
Data Privacy	✓ No data sales. Ever.	✗ Your data is the product
Addiction Design	✓ Built to let you log off	✗ Designed to keep you scrolling
Content Moderation	✓ Human-led & transparent	✗ Opaque, inconsistent, often political
Target User	✓ Everyday users, creators, activists	✗ Advertisers

# Principle 3 — Steer the Train

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*Amr bil-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar.* Enjoining good, forbidding wrong.

*"Let there be a group among you who call to goodness, encourage what is good, and forbid what is evil; it is they who will be successful."*

*— Qur'an 3:104*

We **advocate for** AI that serves humanity, and **stand against** AI that harms it.

# iaser.ai – The Alliance

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## Islamic Alliance for Safe, Ethical, and Responsible AI.

- **Multi-faith coalition** with FFTN (Faith Family Technology Network) – Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and others
- Opposing AI for **mass surveillance** and **lethal decision-making**
- Amicus brief **filed** – oral argument **May 19, 2026**
- **Practical Ethical Guidebook for Muslims in Tech** – joint project with **Yaqeen Institute**

Contact: [info@iaser.ai](mailto:info@iaser.ai)

ORAL ARGUMENT SCHEDULED FOR MAY 19, 2026

**No. 26-1049**

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IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT

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ANTHROPIC PBC,

*Petitioner,*

v.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF WAR,

PETER B. HEGSETH, IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY AS SECRETARY OF WAR,

*Respondents.*

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On Petition for Judicial Review of Department of War 41 U.S.C. § 4713 Notice

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**BRIEF FOR FAITH FAMILY TECHNOLOGY NETWORK AS *AMICUS*  
*CURIAE* IN SUPPORT OF PETITIONER**

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<sup>8</sup> In the Christian tradition, the Apostle Paul cautioned that “all things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial.” *1 Corinthians* 10:23. Jewish law (halakha) recognizes a duty to act *lifnim mishurat hadin*—beyond the strict letter of the law—precisely because legal permission does not confer moral license. *See, e.g., Bavli Bava Metzia* 30b; *Ramban on Deuteronomy* 6:18 (mandating conduct “right and good” beyond strict legal entitlement); *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat* 12:2 & *Rema* (encouraging compromise and *lifnim mishurat hadin*). The hadith of Nu’man Ibn Basheer in Islamic jurisprudence notes that “[t]he lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between them are equivocal matters . . . whoever guards against them protects his faith and his dignity.” *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* 52, *Sahīh Muslim* 1599; *see generally* WAHBAH AL-ZUHAYLI, *USŪL AL-FIQH AL-ISLĀMĪ* (1986)

# Steering on Economic Justice

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Earlier: **\$15.7T** added to global GDP by 2030.

*"...so that wealth does not circulate only among the rich among you."*

*— Qur'an 59:7*

**Zakat · qard hasan · waqf · takaful** — the Islamic toolkit for distribution is **1,400 years old**.

***More relevant now, not less.***

# Part 5

As Individuals

# Face the Fitnah

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*"Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock."*

*كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ* – Bukhari & Muslim

Three things each of us must do — for ourselves, and for our **ra'iyah**.

# 1 • A'qilha wa Tawakkal — Learn About It

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*"Tie your camel, and trust in Allah." — Tirmidhi*

- Every one of us has to think about how AI will affect **our lives and the lives of our ra'iyyah**
- AI is **self-teaching** — *ask it: "how can you help me do X?"*
- X = do my job better? Strengthen my connection with the **Qur'an**? Help my kids learn?

# Tomorrow's Full-Day Seminar — *AI for Imams*

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**cikedu.org**

- Designed for imams to learn — but **of general use** for any Muslim professional
- **4 areas** AI can help with
- **5 dangers** to watch for

Available online **now** at **[cluesmith.com/ai-for-imams](https://cluesmith.com/ai-for-imams)**.

I recently attended Dr. Waleed Kadous's AI training, and I cannot recommend it enough. It was an eye-opening experience that showed how AI can significantly enhance our creativity, productivity, and overall effectiveness. More importantly, it highlighted why Muslim scholars must engage this space firsthand to guide it with sound ethical and Islamic principles.



Shaykh Mohammad Elshinawy

Religious Director at Islamic Society of Allentown and Research Director at Yaqeen Institute

## 2 · Prepare for the Negative Fitnahs

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Some of you will lose your jobs to AI. **At that point, you will have to adapt.**

And you will ask the question many are already asking:

**What is my significance if a machine can do my job?**

- Your worth is not your output
- Your worth is your **niyyah**, your **'ibadah**, your **ra'iyah**
- Prepare the answer **before** the test arrives

# 3 · The Positive Fitnah — Whose Windfall?

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That **\$15.7T** of GDP is going to go somewhere.

The hours AI gives you back are going to go somewhere.

**How will you use them?**

- Work harder? Buy a bigger house?
- Or is there a **fraction of the windfall that belongs to Allah?**

*"Know that whatever spoils you take, **one-fifth is for Allah and the Messenger**, his close relatives, orphans, the poor, and needy travellers." — Al-Anfal 8:41*

**Conclusion**

# 1 • The Train Is Coming

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**AI is a generational shift at high pace.**

- A technology comparable to writing, the printing press, electricity
- Moving in **months**, not decades
- Driven by forces beyond our control

***We can't stop the train.***

## 2 · As an Ummah — Rise to the Challenge

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**We have to rise by:**

- **Embracing the technology with hikmah**
- **Ensuring we have sovereignty**
- **Enjoining good and prohibiting evil using it**

# 3 · As Individuals — Each of Us Will Face the Test

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We have to:

- **Learn how to use the technology**
- **Protect our ra'iyah** from the adverse effects — job loss, dependence
- **Ensure that at least some (20%?) of the surplus is used to serve Allah**