**GLOSSARY**

**Allah**: God

**Arab:** A person whose ethnic or national background is from an Arab country. Approximately 15 percent of Muslims in the world are Arabs.

**Arab Countries:** Those countries whose primary language is Arabic. There are 22 Arab nations: Algeria, Bahrain, The Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen

**Ayatollah**: “Sign of God” or “Mirror of God.” A high title for the most learned Shi’ite clerics, particularly prevalent in Iran.

**Bedouin**: Nomads who usually live in the desert.

**Caliph**: The Prophets successor on earth, most often used to describe the Islamic leaders after Mohammed’s death through the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century.

**Dar al Islam**: House, Haven or Realm of Islam.

**Dar al Harb**: Realm of the non-Muslims.

**Fatwa**: Religious ruling by a Muslim cleric, considered as important or binding as a legal decision.

**Hadith**: one of the four sources of Islam, which also include the Koran, the Ijima (consensus) and Qiyas (analogy). The hadith include the reported sayings or actions of the Prophet Mohammed compiled two centuries after his death.

**Hajj**: annual pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and one of the five pillars of Islam, which also include profession of the Faith (through repetition of the statement “There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet”), prayer five times a day, payment of alms or charity tax, and fasting during the holy month of Ramadan.

**Hijab:** Literally, the word translates at “curtain or “veil”. It refers to the headscarf and non-revealing clothing worn by many Muslim women to maintain modesty. The style of headscarf and dress varies from country to country. Modest behavior is mandated for both women and men.

**Hojatoleslam**: “Authority on Islam.” High title given Muslim religious scholars, most common in Iran.

**Ikhwan**: the Brethren or Brothers, which usually refers to specific groups in different places, not necessarily connected. Among the various Ikhwan groups of the twentieth century were the original society of fundamentalist warriors who fought for Abdel Aziz ibn Saud as he consolidated the Arabian Peninsula into what was to become Saudi Arabia, and the society founded by Hassan al Banna in Egypt.

**Imam**: A religious leader. It can be used to refer to the leader of prayers on Friday, the Muslim Sabbath, or as a title indicating high esteem. Ayatollah Khomeini is often referred to as The Imam. In recent times, it is more commonly used by the Shi’ite sect, which believes that an imam can intercede with God and continue to interpret religious laws and traditions. Sunnis believe man communes directly with God.

**Islam**: “Submission” or “surrender” to God’s will, as revealed to Mohammed.

**Jihad**: An “exertion”- usually meaning holy war or crusade- in the name of Islam against unbelievers or rivals.

**Koran**: The Muslim holy book, containing the revelations conveyed to Mohammed from God via the archangel Gabriel in the seventh century.

**Lunar Calendar:** A calendar that is based on the moon rather than the sun, so that each month begins with the sighting of the new moon. Muslims follow a lunar calendar. This means that each Muslim month beings 11 gays earlier than the year before.

**Mahdi**: The “rightly guided one” awaited by Muslims to restore the original order and purity of the Islamic faith. Particularly important to the Shia who await the return of the Twelfth Imam, who went into occultation or hiding. Various figures in history have claimed to be Mahdis, then faded into history.

**Mosque:** Place of worship for Muslims. Many mosques are recognized by their tall minarets or towers; however, minarets are not a physical requirement of mosques. Typically, mosques have a prayer hall covered with carpets, and people take their shoes off at the door to maintain the cleanliness of the prayer area. In the U.S., mosques usually have additional areas including classrooms, a lecture hall, dining room and kitchen.

Muhammad: Muslims believe Muhammad was the last in the chain of divinely appointed prophets through whom God sent his message to humankind. Muhammad was born in the year 570 C.E., in the town of Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula. Muslims believe that he was the recipient of God’s last divine revelation, the Quran.

**Mullah**: A general name for Islamic clerics, particularly among the Shia.

**Muslim**: a believer in Islam, one who has submitted to God.

**Quran:** The holy scripture of Islam, believe to have been revealed to the prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years. It contains many of the same teachings, admonitions, and stories of earlier prophets found in Jewish and Christian scriptures.

**Ramadan**: The Islamic holy month, or the ninth month in the Islamic calendar during which Muslims fast from dawn to dusk to honor the period when Mohammed received his first revelations from God

**Sayyid**: Religious title for the particularly learned clerics, sometimes used in reference to descendants of Mohammed.

**Sharia**: The sacred law of Islam which governs all aspects of a Muslim’s life. Literally, “the path to a water hole,” or “the path to God.”

**Sheikh**: a title of respect, generally for elders of the community and Muslim clerics, both Sunni and Shia.

**Shia**: Followers or partisans of Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet Mohammed. A sect which split form the mainstream Sunni sect within thirty years of Mohammed’s death in the greatest schism ever within Islam.

**Shahada**: the declaration of faith in Islam that “There is no deity except God and Muhammad is the messenger of God.” Anyone who believes and declares this is considered to be a Muslim.

**Sharia**: Islamic law, based on the Quran and the sayings and actions of the prophet Muhammed.

**Shi’ite**: A follower of the Shia faith.

**Sufism**: The inner, spiritual dimension of Islam that relates to purification of the heart and involves devotional practices to bring one closer to God.

**Sunnis**: Followers of the Sunna, the tradition of Muslims based on the life and actions of Mohammed. Sunnis are the largest sect of Islam.

**Taqiya**: concealment of belief due to fear or repression or danger, particularly among the Shia.

**Ulama**: the body of learned advisors empowered to pronounce religious rulings.

**Valayat-e Faqih**: Religious Guide, the most revered title of any Shi’ite leader in Iran.

**Wahhabism**: A fundamentalist doctrine in Saudi Arabia, named after Mohammed ibn Abdul Wahhad, a prominent eighteenth century cleric. The doctrine used by Abdel Aziz ibn Saud to consolidate the tribes of the Arabian peninsula in the early 20th century.