

Speech by Sheikh Abu Bakr Mahmoud Gumi
Laureate of King Faisal International
Prize for the Service of Islam
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In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahad Ibn Abd Al-Aziz
Your Royal Highnesses,
Your Excellences
Dear Brothers,

This reality seems to me like a dream; I am in front of you in a huge festival that gives me great pleasure. What adds encouragement to my pleasure in this event is that I am following in the footsteps of great people who did their best to promote God's Cause. Their pursuit has led Mr. Ahmadu Bin Bello to follow the path and direct his Muslim followers to awaken from their inadvertence caused by colonization. I am one of the followers of Mr. Bello, and I am pleased to come today with a number of colleagues who are here to congratulate you for waving the banners of Islamic Call.

We come from the heart of Africa, from a country pulsating with Islam to meet here seeking the extra knowledge to follow God's Guidance and Instruction.

This Foundation, named after King Faisal, is but a charitable effort seeking the everlasting salvation from ignorance and poverty. I seize this opportunity to invite all Muslims to take the best examples of good people in serving Islam and Muslims. Muslims in poor countries are longing for assistance in terms of hospitals, pharmacies, and religious education to rescue students from inadvertence and fallacies. In this respect, Nigeria, with a population of around 100 million, in which Muslims constitute 70%, has 300,000 traditional Islamic schools. All these schools are in need of financial assistance as they are mainly funded by the trivial amounts advanced by parents. Under these circumstances, learning is taking place without books, and lessons are written on wooden boards due to lack of paper, and there are no built classes, no rules, no regulations, and qualified teachers are a rarity. The end result is a process in which words are learnt by heart without comprehension. For this reason, we are urging Muslims to provide assistance.

Nigeria is indeed the heart of West Africa. It assumes a huge share of the burden to assist the neighboring countries. Teachers in these countries also need assistance on an urgent basis. What should be done in this respect includes the following:

1. Support missions by teachers, aided with accredited books for Islamic learning to substitute superstitions.
2. Provide scholarships for students to equip themselves with comprehensive Islamic culture to return to their homelands and teach their natives.

3. Facilitate establishment of an Islamic academy by the retired Ulama, probably under the auspices of the Muslim World League, with branches throughout the world.

I reiterate my thanks to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and King Faisal Foundation for honoring me by this award. Likewise, I wish to thank Saudi Arabia, both the Government and people, for the warm welcome conferred on the Nigerian delegation.

Thank you all.