



NINTH HARVARD UNIVERSITY FORUM ON ISLAMIC FINANCE

# Building Bridges across Financial Communities

**March 27-28, 2010**  
**Austin Hall, Harvard Law School**  
**Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.**

**The Ninth Harvard University Forum on Islamic Finance**, hosted by Harvard Law School's Islamic Finance Project, will be held at Austin Hall, Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts on March 27th- 28th, 2010. The theme of the conference will be "Building Bridges across Financial Communities" as it relates to the field of Islamic Finance.

The Harvard University Forum on Islamic Finance provides a venue for the critical and objective examination of the purposes, theory, practice, structure, and institutions of the rapidly developing field of Islamic finance. Continuing in this direction, the Ninth Forum will situate Islamic finance in the current economic context and compare it with other efforts dedicated to fulfill ethical commitments in the domain of finance. Particularly, the Forum will focus on a variety of challenges facing the field; namely the quest for Islamic finance to build bridges across the various faith-based, socially responsible, and corporate financial communities. Dialogue among these communities will no doubt go far in determining the shape of the fields' future expansions, and the degree to which they become part of the financial mainstream.

Amidst the global financial crisis, questions have arisen as to whether faith-based or socially-

responsible financial principles would have prevented or dampened the crisis. Basic assumptions regarding the role of banks, the responsibilities of regulators, the treatment of customers, and the bounds of financial innovation are being examined and revisited. Furthermore, increased attention has been given to the role that ethics and values may play in charting the future of the global economic system.

Part of this global discussion on the need for greater or improved ethics, values and social responsibility in modern finance includes a lively discussion on how religious principles and moral teachings can assist in defining this post crisis world. Throughout history, religious thought has been a significant source of ethics and values in the world of finance among different communities. For some, world religions have inspired observers to abstain from certain financial activities, while others have inspired certain forms of participatory economics. These frameworks have led to alternative sources of regulated investment, while reflecting the values, beliefs and teachings of the various faiths. Additionally, we may wish to consider the following questions: Can we compare and contrast Islamic finance funds with socially-responsible investment funds or faith-consistent investment funds? Are there lessons to be learned on all sides?

The two-day conference will comprise a unique experimental structure: Three plenary sessions will explore the sub-themes of Faith and Finance, Social Responsibility, and Islamic Finance after the Global Crisis. Each session will be approximately 120 to 150 minutes in length, and will feature one discussion paper, where three to five discussants from a carefully selected set of senior scholars, faith leaders and practitioners will share their prepared comments in response, having received the paper in advance of the Forum. The speakers will have a chance to reply to the discussants before a wider Q&A with the Forum audience. The purpose of this format is to engage diverse perspectives on a common set of questions or ideas and to generate a thought-provoking discussion.

Additionally, a number of research papers will be presented in various sections from leading academics, legal and *shari'a* experts, and practitioners. A summary of this event will be posted on our website soon after the conclusion of the Ninth Forum.

## TOPICS

The Ninth Forum will include the following topics:

### THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

- Lessons learned regarding the ethos of the current financial system. What is the response by the Islamic finance community?
- Should our thoughts on ethics be reconsidered in mapping the future regulatory landscape?
- Islamic and western economic and business principles: What common elements exist within the ethos of both systems? What steps and challenges arise for the inclusion of these frameworks within the current financial system?

### FAITH AND FINANCE

- What are the distinctive values and attitudes concerning commerce, wealth, debt and interest that inspire and inform a particular faith community? Which values are shared with or can be translated to other communities?
- What are they key lessons, best practices and synergies across faith communities in translating faith-based principles into commercial practice?

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- The success of current Islamic financial products in enabling socially responsible policies, relationships and outcomes.
- Shift from negative controls (e.g., prohibited investment sectors) to positive social aims.
- For-profit, non-profit and philanthropic models for Islamic social entrepreneurship.
- Adding social responsibility to the mandate of *shari'a* advisory boards.
- Key lessons, perspectives, best practices and potential synergies between Islamic finance and CSR, SRI and SE.

## CURRENT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

- Advanced graduate student research in pertinent fields such as Islamic finance, economics, and/or law will be presented.

## THE HARVARD FORUM AT A GLANCE

In May 1997, the First Forum, "Islamic Finance in the Global Market," gathered some 100 participants. Though a small, single-day event, the First Forum drew luminaries in the field of Islamic finance. Since then, Harvard University has hosted several forums including:

- 1998- Islamic Finance into the 21st Century
- 1999- Islamic Finance: Local Challenges, Global Opportunities
- 2000- Islamic Finance: The Task Ahead
- 2002- Islamic Finance: Dynamics and Development
- 2004- Islamic Finance: Current Legal and Regulatory Issues
- 2006- Integrating Islamic Finance in the Mainstream: Regulation, Standardization and Transparency
- 2008- Innovation and Authenticity

As befits the Islamic Legal Studies Program's focus, emphasis was placed on academic and research aspects with the goal of making a contribution to scholarship and fostering understanding among the academic community, industry practitioners, and economists.

# ABOUT THE ISLAMIC FINANCE PROJECT

The Islamic Finance Project (IFP) is the continuation of the Harvard Islamic Finance Information Program (HIFIP), which was established by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies in 1995. IFP is now part of the Islamic Legal Studies Program (ILSP) at Harvard Law School. It aims to study the field of Islamic finance from legal and *shari'a* points of view by analyzing contemporary scholarship, inducing collaboration among scholars within and outside of the Muslim world, and increasing the interaction between theory and practice in Islamic finance.

Since inception of the IFP, and particularly over the last ten years, the subject of Islamic finance has attracted growing interest among academics, students and professionals around the globe. In addition to the above-listed Forums, the IFP also hosted specialized workshops including topics such as “*Tawarruq*,” “*Sukuk*,” “Risk Management in Islamic Finance”, and “Micro-Finance: Toward a Sustainable Financial Model.” The Project also assists students and other researchers with advice and direction to the academic resources; as well as through sponsoring events such as “Could Islamic Finance have Prevented the Crisis?” held at Harvard Business School. Lastly, IFP attracts luminaries to deliver lectures and seminars, including Robert Merton who delivered the keynote speech on “Innovation in Islamic Finance” at the Eighth Harvard University Forum.

## PROCEEDINGS

The publication of the proceedings from the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Forums – the first reference works of their kind in the industry – has endowed the Harvard Forum with additional significance. From the Sixth Forum onwards, the Project began publishing a book of selected papers for every Forum:

- Sixth Forum: Islamic Finance: Current Legal and Regulatory Issues (ISBN 0-9702835-5-5)
- Seventh Forum: Integrating Islamic Finance into

the Mainstream: Regulation, Standardization and Transparency (ISBN 0-9702835-6-3)  
-Eighth Forum: Islamic Finance: Innovation and Authenticity. (currently at press).

All publications can be purchased by contacting [ifp@law.harvard.edu](mailto:ifp@law.harvard.edu).

Accordingly, we intend to publish a thematic collection of selected papers from the Ninth Harvard University Forum on Islamic Finance in the form of a book.

For further information on the previous forums' publications, please visit <http://ifp.law.harvard.edu/ifphtml/index.php>.

## REGISTRATION

The Islamic Finance Project invites you to attend the Ninth Harvard University Forum on Islamic Finance. We hope that on March 27 and 28, 2010 you and your organization will join us for this event on the Harvard University campus.

You may register by e-mailing the information requested in the registration form below to [ifp@law.harvard.edu](mailto:ifp@law.harvard.edu) or fax the form to IFP at (617) 496-2373.

Registration fee: US\$400/person  
Registration fee for academics: US\$100/person  
Harvard affiliates may attend without charge but still need to register for the conference.  
Please make checks payable to “Harvard University” and mail them to:

Islamic Finance Project (IFP)  
Islamic Legal Studies Program - HLS  
347 Holyoke Center  
1350 Massachusetts Ave.  
Cambridge, MA 02138 USA

Checks must be in US dollars and drawn from banks in the United States only.

## REGISTRATION FORM

Please register the following for the Ninth Harvard University Forum on Islamic Finance (fill out separate forms for each registrant):

Name: Mr. / Ms. / Mrs. / Miss / Dr.

\_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

City, State/Province, Postal Code, Country:

\_\_\_\_\_

Tel.: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## HOTEL INFORMATION

Conference attendees are requested to book their rooms early, as late spring is a busy time in Boston. The Charles Hotel, Harvard Square Hotel, Harvard Inn, and Sheraton Commander are within walking distance from Harvard Square, while the other hotels are in the vicinity of Cambridge.

Please note that IFP does not endorse any of these hotels or websites.

The Cambridge Office of Tourism maintains a list of places to stay, as well as other useful information for visitors new to the area.

### **PROJECT SPONSORS**

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