

**Remarks by prof. Sifet ef. Omerovic,
Imam of the Bosniak Islamic Center, Brisbane,**

*Delivered at the Official Opening and Inauguration of
The Bosniak Islamic Center in Brisbane*

1. Your Eminence reisu-l-ulema Grand Mufti Husein efendija Kavazovic, respected imams, Honorable ministers, Members of parliament, Ambassadors, distinguished guests, brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

The Almighty God tells us in the Holy Qur'an:

"Mosques of Allah are built by those who believe in Allah and who do good deeds". (Sura At-Tawbah 18)
(Innema ja'muru mesadzidellahi men amene billahi....)

2. It is my privilege and a great honor to welcome you all to the official opening and inauguration of the Bosniak Islamic Center of Brisbane.

3. Bosniak Islamic community in Brisbane have come a long way, from its humble beginnings in the aftermath of 2nd World war, through to 1970s, which saw first Bosnian Muslim economic migrants settling in this great city of Brisbane, until today, when we pride ourselves in being a mature and established community.

4. Terrible tragedy of war, ethnic cleansing and horrendous destruction of our homeland Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, had left hundreds of thousands of our fellow Bosnians homeless and destitute. It was here in Australia where many of us found our new home, and with it a new hope for a better future and a new life of peace, safety and tremendous opportunity.

5. Traditional Australian hospitality, democratic system of governance, fairness, pluralism, a spirit of multiculturalism, and warm hearts of Australian people more than anything else, made us again feel at home, far away from our original home.

6. As the oldest indigenous European Muslim community, we brought with us values of tolerance, ethic of hard work, spirit of togetherness and mutual cooperation, respect for others, as well as our deeply rooted religious values and convictions that inform our culture and our intellectual and spiritual worldview.

We are fortunate enough to be able to pass those values on to our younger generations in freedom and without fear or intimidation. It is here in Australia where these values continued to flourish, whereas they are suppressed or even denied in many other parts of the world, including in many so called Islamic countries.

7. Throughout the years of our community existence in Queensland, we have always relied on our own modest resources, donations from our hard working brothers and sisters, fundraising activities and own labor.

8. We have proven once again that even a small community such as ours, with deep memory of injustice, displacement and persecution, and limited resources can still achieve great things, with the help of God, when it is sincerely dedicated to a common and admirable cause

9. I would like to emphasize that, although we Bosnian Muslims follow the Sunni school of Abu Hanifa in Fiqh (religious practice), and the teachings of Imam Abu Mansur al Maturidi, in our theological creed (aqidah), which is usually regarded as the most rational and liberal of all Islamic schools of thought, later inspired by many centuries of the moderate Ottoman tradition, our Islamic center will serve as a place of worship and learning for all Muslims, irrespective of their school of thought (madthab), in the spirit of the verse from the Holy Qur'an:

"O mankind, we have created you from a single male and a female and we have made you into nations and tribes, so you can get to know each other. The most noble before God among you are those who fear God most".

10. This modern and functional facility will represent and hub for teachings authentic Islam, and a place of learning, community spiritual advancement and religious growth and development. It will also become a new reference point for all those who want to learn about Islam from among our brothers and sisters of Christian, Jewish, Sikhs, Buddhist, Hindu and other faiths. We are therefore proud to add this new pearl to the necklace of our numerous other religious places of worship that decorate this beautiful road and our entire city.

11. It is important to note that our Islamic center, apart from disseminating knowledge of Islam, will always try to bridge divides between peoples caused by ignorance and fear of other creeds, and will strive to advocate and expand much needed interfaith dialogue to strengthen community harmony and coexistence among various faiths and creeds which make our cosmopolitan city one of the most vibrant and tolerant places in the world.

12. This is a much needed task, especially in contemporary time of religious intolerance, hatred and distrust which plague many parts of the world, including many Muslim countries currently shattered by sectarian strife, bloodshed and destruction of sacred sites and heritage which had been created for millennia by diverse nations.

13. I would like to thank all our members and supporters, who believed in our project and who, from the early beginnings, put their time and resources towards its realization.

14. I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to some of our distinguished members who are no longer with us. We owe special gratitude to our early pioneers who served our community in the past, who had a great vision when they initially bought this piece of land. They would be very proud to see this Islamic Centre accomplished. It had always been part of their dream. It is their inspiration that guided us and helped us remain steadfast. Our achievement and our joy belong to them too. May God reward their efforts with place in Paradise.

15. It goes without saying that we would not have been able to achieve what we have achieved without understanding, support and sincerity, of our local Council and our State government, as well as our lovely neighbors of different faiths, who have always handed us their helping hand. We therefore commend them all for playing their part in making our dream come true.

16. Last but not least, I would like to thank our members, especially our activists including our sisters and youth for their hard work in raising funds throughout the years, for this noble goal the fruit of which we can now see. Thank you also to our many professionals and tradesmen who dedicated their time and much needed skills during various stages of the construction.

17. Assalamu alaikum (Peace be upon you). May Allah protect our community, restore peace in the world and keep our great country of Australia safe and prosperous.

Thank you all for coming and God bless you!

Sifet Omerovic