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“Religious Dimensions of Democratization
Processes in Muslim-Majority Nations”

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ABSTRACT

“Challenges to Democracy and Justice in the Arab World”

By: Mubarak Awad, Ph.D.
(American University, Washington, DC)

The Arab Spring was triggered in Tunisia when Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire after claiming he was slapped by policewoman Fedia Hamdi. This incident sparked a movement in the Arab world that had depth in culture, tradition, dignity and human rights. It is humiliating and degrading to both Arabs and Muslims alike to see dictators in the Arab world intimidating their citizens. A major challenge to democracy today is when college graduates in repressed Arab countries are not able to find jobs. This leaves the youth with feelings of hopelessness, and affirms that a four-year college education was a waste of time. Resentment begins to grow as educated youth see how only a few people from an elite circle, the military or government officials are able to get involved in profitable business ventures. The repressed Arab state lost its vision for unity and social justice. The Arab Spring was against state authoritarianism, corruption, human rights abuses, sectarianism and lack of democracy and social justice. In Tunisia and Libya the movement happened so fast, the international community took a direction promoting use of arms which resulted in Muslims killing Muslims, and Arabs killing Arabs. The Arab Spring took repressed Arab regimes by surprise, and government workers had no time to think how to react, and hence, used their armies against civilians to end the conflict quickly, rather than negotiating with their own people for a just solution. The Arab Spring is proving to be a missed opportunity for spiritual Muslim leaders to get together from different regions and countries to form a “regional team of peace-keepers” to help quell dissension and prevent the intervention of outside forces from Europe and the US. Today, Syria experiences a full-scale civil protest between the government and opposition forces. A continuous civil uprising against the government of Bahrain continues, despite government changes. Kuwait, Lebanon and Oman are implementing government changes in response to protests. Morocco and Jordan are also instituting constitutional reforms in response to growing protests. Ongoing protests in Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Mauritania and other countries show that the Arab Spring is young and its effects will be felt ten years from now. This movement is a warning, and an inspiration for new generations to get themselves free from the repression, corruption and social injustice of dictatorial rule experienced by their parents.