



UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Professor Azizah Y. Al-Hibri
KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights
T.C. Williams School of Law
Richmond, VA 23173
Fax. (804)289-8683

Dear Professor Al-Hibri:

I have seen your statement concerning the frieze of the Supreme Court with the figure of the Blessed Prophet of Islam. In addition to the issues discussed in your statement I would like to emphasize the following points:

1. Figures "depicting" the Blessed Prophet are found not only in Persian and Turkish art, but in Mogul art as well.
2. In all such cases the "depiction" is not meant to be an actual picture or image of the Blessed Prophet resembling his actual features but a stylized treatment almost like a masque to represent him in the scene with which the artist had been dealing. That is why in most miniatures if one were to put away the turban, halo, etc. one could hardly distinguish one bearded face from another. Also it is important to note that these "depictions" did not at all seek to follow the literary descriptions of the features of the Blessed Prophet as found in so many classical poems in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. The authoritative and powerful *fuqahā'* in the Ottoman, Persian and Indian worlds were aware of the distinctions made above and therefore did not usually oppose such miniatures for Sharī'ite reasons.

I cannot imagine that people today would consider themselves as better Muslims or authorities in *fiqh* than the numerous '*ulamā'*', both Sunni and Shi'ite, who preserved, protected and promulgated the *Sharī'ah* for centuries in some of the most central areas of the Islamic world and major centers of Islamic civilization.

Sincerely yours,

والسلام عليك

S.H. Nasr

Seyyed Hossein Nasr
University Professor