

## Participant's Biodata

**Dr Anicee Van Engeland (av5@soas.ac.uk)**

**Maitrise (Paris II Assas), LL.M (Harvard Law), Ma (Paris II and Paris III), PhD (IEP),  
HEA Fellow**

Anicée Van Engeland is a lecturer in law at SOAS. Before entering academia, Anicée worked 7 years in human rights and humanitarian organisations. Anicée's main areas of research and practice are Iranian law, Afghan law Shia law, Islamic law, international humanitarian law, international human rights, Islamic human rights and Islamic humanitarian standards. Her main field work is the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Dr. Hamid Mavani (hmavani@hotmail.com)**

**Claremont, California, USA**

Professor Mavani obtained his graduate degrees from McGill University at the Institute of Islamic Studies. His expertise in Islamic Studies stems from not only academic training but specialized theological training at the traditional seminaries in the Muslim world. His primary fields of interest include Shi'i law and gender justice, Islamic theology and political thought, Islam and secularity, transnational Islam in Asia, intra-Muslim discourse, and Muslims in North America. He is the author of a book recently published by Routledge titled, *Religious Authority and Political Thought in Twelver Shi'ism: From Ali to Post-Khomeini* (Routledge, June 2013) under Studies in Political Islam series. Professor Mavani's scholarship also includes translations of Islamic texts from Arabic and Persian into English. His most recent translation from Persian to English is a work on jihad by Ayatullah Salehi Najafabadi, providing a novel and a creative re-reading of this much misunderstood concept.

**Shaykh Kumail Rajani (komail\_rajani@yahoo.com)**

**Al-Mustafa International University**

Kumail Rajani, a PhD student in Comparative Hadith Sciences, has been a student at the religious seminay of Qum (Hawza) since 1997 and has been attending Dars al-Kharij since 2008. He has been teaching different Islamic sciences and comparative religions in the Hawza of Qum and other institutions for the last 8 years. He was awarded the best teacher's award at Imam Khumaini College at Al Mustafa International University in 2008. His major interest lies in Comparative Religions, Islamic Jurisprudence, Shiite Hadith and Khoja history. He has been advisor and supervisor for more than thirty BA and MA dissertation.

**Dr. Alireza Bhojani ([alireza@almahdi.edu](mailto:alireza@almahdi.edu))**

**Al-Mahdi Institute**

Ali-reza is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the Al-Mahdi Institute. After completing his professional qualifications in Optometry, he enrolled on to the Four Year Hawza Programme at the Al-Mahdi Institute in 2004. On graduating from the programme he won a scholarship from the Centre of the Advanced Study of the Arab World to pursue his research for a further four years at Durham University. As part of this programme he read for an MA in Research Methods, for which he was awarded a distinction, and completed a PhD thesis examining the relationship between Morality and Law in Shi'i Islam, with particular reference to the role of reason as a source of Shari'a. He is currently lecturing on the Four Year Hawza programme in subjects including Theology, uṣūl al-fiqh and Fiqh and sits on the Institute's Education and Research Board.

**Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Muhaghegh Damad ([mdamad@ias.ac.ir](mailto:mdamad@ias.ac.ir))**

**Shahid Beheshti University**

Grandson of late great Ayatollah Abdul-Karim Ha'eri Yazdi -The founder of the Hawza of Qum- Ayatollah Mohaghegh Damad had two separate courses of education. He first attended the renowned Fayzieh School at Qum, Iran, where he received his traditional Islamic education in Arabic language and literature, Qur'an and hadith, Islamic philosophy, theology and jurisprudence. On this background he achieved the status of Mujtahid (Ayatollah) in 1970.

Parallel to his traditional studies he pursued a modern academic education, first at Tehran University. There he was awarded a B.A. in Islamic Philosophy (1969) and an M.A. in Islamic Jurisprudence (1980). After that he went to Belgium, to conduct research for a Ph.D. in Law (Doctorat en Droit) at the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve, being awarded his doctorate in 1996.

Ayatollah Mohagegh Damad is one of the very few high-level Mujathids in Iran to have been educated in international law in the West; he is also recognized as one of the most important philosophers of the Shia world, acknowledged to be one of the leading teachers in the Hawza of Qum.

**Prof. Haider Ala Hamoudi ([hamoudi@pitt.edu](mailto:hamoudi@pitt.edu))**

**Associate Professor of Law**

**Associate Dean for Research & Faculty Development**

Professor Hamoudi received his B.Sc. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1993. He was both a member of the Physics Honor Society, Sigma Pi Sigma, and a Burchard Scholar for Excellence in the Humanities and Social Sciences. In 1996, Professor Hamoudi

received his J.D. from Columbia Law School, where he was a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar. After graduating, he served as a law clerk to the Honorable Constance Baker Motley in the Southern District of New York and then worked as an Associate at the law firm of Debevoise & Plimpton until 2003. In 2003 and 2004, Professor Hamoudi served as a legal advisor to the Finance Committee of the Iraq Governing Council, as well as a Program Manager for a project managed by the International Human Rights Law Institute of DePaul University School of Law to improve legal education in Iraq. He joined the University of Pittsburgh School of Law as an Assistant Professor in 2007.

Professor Hamoudi's scholarship focuses on Middle Eastern and Islamic Law, particularly, but not exclusively, as it pertains to matters of commerce. He has called for a reassessment of the manner in which law in the Muslim world is understood and approached, with less reliance on medieval texts and more emphasis on the positive law of the nation states of the Muslim world and on the political, social, economic and ideological influences that influence its interpretation. He has written for numerous law reviews, spoken at conferences in Yale University, Harvard University, Columbia University, the American Association of Law Schools and the New York City Bar Association, and given interviews to various news organizations including *The New York Times*, *Forbes.com*, *Slate.com*, *the McNeil-Lehrer News Hour Online* and *the New York Law Journal*. In 2009, Professor Hamoudi was awarded the Hessel Yntema prize, awarded by the American Society of Comparative Law for the best article produced in the *American Journal of Comparative Law* the previous year by an author under the age of 40.

**Dr. Rahim Nobahar (r\_nobahar@hotmail.com )**  
**Faculty of Law, Shahid Beheshti University**

Dr Rahim Nobahar is assistant Professor at Shahid Beheshti university. He holds an LLB, LLM and a PhD in Law, Criminal Law and Criminology. Prior to which he attended the religious seminary in Qum for over 20 years studying Arabic Literature, Logic, Theology, Islamic Philosophy, Islamic hermeneutics, Jurisprudence, Qur'anic Studies reaching the degree of *Ijtihad*. His current teaching and research interests span across the fields of Human Rights in Islam, Islamic Family Law, Islamic Inheritance Law, Islamic Criminal Law, the Rules of Islamic Jurisprudence, Qur'anic Exegesis and he has published extensively across these fields.

**Dr. Ali Fanaei (a.fanaei@almahdi.edu)**  
**Senior lecturer in Quranic & Legal Hermeneutics, Al-Mahdi Institute**

Dr Ali Fanaei, completed 17 years of seminary studies in the Hawza Ilmiyya of Qum which included seven years of al-Kharij (graduate) study. His teachers during this time included; Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Muhaqiq Damad, Ayatullah Tabrizi, the Ayatullah Haeri, Ayatullah Vahid, Ayatullah Montazeri, and the Ayatollah Ahmad Mianaji.

During this time he was also awarded an MA in Islamic Theology from the University of Qum taking special interest in modern theology and philosophy of religion. He then moved to the UK to conduct research at the Department of Philosophy in the University of Sheffield. This led to the award of an Mphil for research on Moral Scepticism and Moral Realism followed by a PhD for research regarding the epistemic justification of moral beliefs.

Alongside being heavily involved in the training of students here at the Al-Mahdi Institute for over five years now, he has also been writing & publishing a number of important and influential works for Iranian audiences in Farsi, through which Dr Fanaei is becoming known as one of the most important of a select group of roshan fikri ('enlightenment thinkers') whose engagement with questions pertaining to the modern world is informed with the deepest Hawzawi credentials.

**Professor Michael Bohlander Dr. iur A.iur. FRSA ([michael.bohlander@durham.ac.uk](mailto:michael.bohlander@durham.ac.uk))  
Chair in Comparative and International Criminal Law**

Prof. Michael Bohlander is a former German judge with a particular interest in comparative and international criminal law. He joined Durham Law School in 2004. From 1999 until 2001 he served as the Senior Legal Officer of a Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague. He also helped train the judges of the Iraqi High Tribunal which tried Saddam Hussein. His publications (19 books and over 140 articles, case comments, book reviews etc.) have been widely cited by courts of several domestic and international jurisdictions. Professor Bohlander's main research interests lie in international and comparative criminal law, including their linguistic and cultural aspects. In 2012, he was the first non-Muslim visiting scholar ever to teach at the Faculty of Law of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, when he was also received by the Grand Imam of al-Azhar in a private audience. His most recent research project investigates the use of the maqasid al shari'ah for a practical conversation between Islamic and secular legal thinking.

His article "Sisters in Law – Using Maqāṣid al-Shari‘ah to Advance the Conversation between Islamic and Secular Legal Thinking" will be forthcoming in one of the next issues of *Arab Law Quarterly*.

**Shaykh Arif Abdul Hussain ([arif.abdulhussain@almahdi.edu](mailto:arif.abdulhussain@almahdi.edu))  
Senior Lecturer and Director, Al-Mahdi Institute**

Shaykh Arif founded the Al-Mahdi Institute in 1993, and currently serves as its Director and as Senior Lecturer in uṣūl al-fiqh and Muslim Philosophy. Shaykh Arif has been at the forefront of developing and delivering Advanced Islamic studies, tailored toward training students capable of addressing the needs of contemporary societies, for over twenty years. During this time he has also never ceased in his commitment to sharing the Human face of

Islam at all levels of society through a combination of his world renowned inspirational and thought provoking public lectures, a long-term commitment to intra and inter faith dialogue and a dedication to encouraging the development of indigenous expressions of Islam throughout the world that can contribute to the pursuit of human development in its fullest sense.

Shaykh Arif was educated at the Madrassah Syed Al- Khoei, London and graduated with Honours in 1988 where he also taught Grammar, Logic, Islamic Law and Usul al-Fiqh. He then travelled to Iran to further his studies and received his training at Hawza Ilmiyyah of Qum between 1989-93. He also attended private training and research studies with leading scholars of Qum between 1990 and 1994. Alongside these studies he was also teaching in Qum across a wide spectrum of the traditional Muslim scholarly disciplines. On his return to the U.K. after founding the Al-Mahdi Institute he continued his graduate (kharij) training in Usul al-fiqh and fiqh from 1994 and until 2000 under Ayatullah H. Amini.

**Professor Seyed Mohammad Ghari S Fatemi (smohammad@hotmail.com)  
Reader in Islam, Legal Hermeneutics & Human, Al-Mahdi Institute**

Seyed Fatemi spent thirteen years studying to the highest level in the traditional educational seminaries of Qum under the direct instruction of some of the leading scholars of the present day. Alongside his traditional education Seyed Fatemi was also trained in Public Law at Tehran University, receiving the award of both an LLB and an LLM. In 1999 Seyed Fatemi was awarded with a PhD from the Faculty of Law at the University of Manchester for research engaging with Comparative Human Rights.

Seyed Fatemi's teaching and research interests include; the Philosophical foundations of human rights, International and comparative Human rights, Islam and Human Rights, Usul al-Fiqh and Hermeneutics, the History and Development of Fiqh, and Muslim Theology.