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**ISIM**  
for the study of islam  
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The *ISIM Newsletter* is the principal source of information on the activities of the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World. In this inaugural issue you will find information on the plans and policies of the Institute as well as on its organization and structure. The ISIM is an institute under construction; its activities are to develop in the coming years. In order to reach its ultimate goal, the execution of innovative interdisciplinary research with an international orientation, the ISIM needs your support and collaboration. The *ISIM Newsletter* is one way of inviting individual academics and institutes to contribute to the development of this initiative. The ISIM operates in the broad field of the study of modern Islam and Muslim societies and communities, a field in which a multitude of academic traditions and approaches co-exist. Many more institutes are actively involved in this field. Some of them have been in the business for centuries, but quite a number of them, in particular those institutes which focus explicitly on contemporary Muslim movements and societies, are relatively recent. The *ISIM Newsletter* pays special attention to national and international institutes and projects and invites them to use the *ISIM Newsletter* as a means of disseminating news on their plans and activities; as a platform for discussion and exchange; and as a tool to help diminish the fragmentation in the field.

In this first *ISIM Newsletter* an attempt is made to mirror the multifaceted world of Islam, in particular its broad regional spread and its highly diverse local and supra-local expressions and practices, as

well as social and political formations. Furthermore, a variety of research approaches are presented, which often combine methods and principles from various trends and traditions, most notably the social sciences and the humanities. The contents of this first edition are not meant to define the way the ISIM should organize and direct its research. It demonstrates instead the broad scope of interest of the ISIM, both thematically and regionally, and its openness towards the diverse regional, thematic, and methodological approaches. Undoubtedly, many more issues in research need to be addressed.

The *ISIM Newsletter* primarily addresses scholarly concerns, but seeks to disseminate expertise on modern Islam and Muslim societies and communities to various audiences such as policy makers, the media, non-governmental organizations, and educational institutes in general. Just as the ISIM as an institute has to find its way and establish its reputation, the *ISIM Newsletter* has to create its own image and to find ways of effective dissemination and stimulating response. In other words, the Newsletter needs its readers' input. In particular, we invite you to send us information on projects, institutes, seminars, lectures and other activities which you think should be included in the Info Pages of the coming issues of the *ISIM Newsletter*. By your comments, suggestions and critiques, the ISIM can attain its goals of cooperation, service, and high academic standards. ◆

Dick Douwes, editor

O B I T U A R Y

## Dr J.K.M. Gevers

**The Chairman of the board of the ISIM, Dr Jankarel Gevers, passed away on 5 August 1998 at the age of 54. His untimely death was a shock not only for the ISIM, but especially for the University of Amsterdam, of which he had been President for the last 10 years, and for all other institutions and organizations in which he was active.**

Dr Gevers was born in 1944 in Valkenswaard and read Sociology at Leiden University, a study he began in 1962. From 1967, he was affiliated with the department of Sociology and until 1981 was frequently exempted from teaching duties in order to fulfil administrative functions at the university. From 1969 to 1973 he was member of the Leiden University Council as, among others, deputy chairman and member of the committee of finance and planning. In 1974 he became member of the Board of that university. He was appointed advisor for national university planning in the Netherlands in 1978 and was instrumental in the implementation of an operation to redistribute teaching and research tasks to the Dutch universities. As Chairman of the Council of Polytechnic Institutions from 1984 to 1988 and as President of the University of Amsterdam from 1988 onwards, he continuously engaged himself in higher educational affairs. Not limiting his endeavours to the Netherlands, he was also active in the international arena, for which he was conferred *honoris causa* a law doctorate from New York University.

Dr Gevers advocated the concept of universities as independent institutions in the Netherlands that would assume their own responsibilities. He cherished the university as a place of learning, science and culture, and favoured the foundation of institutions of learning beyond the scope of universities, which would



function as arenas for the free exchange of thoughts and ideas. As a true intellectual, he was opposed to the notion of 'political correctness' and was known to be, at times, provocative. He aspired to the classical universal ideals of freedom, truth, justice and beauty, while remaining realistic about the world in which we live. His pragmatism by no means hampered him from living life to the fullest, striving to attain his ideals, and adhering to a humanistic approach.

More than simply an enthusiastic Chairman of the ISIM Board, the role he played in the founding of the ISIM was crucial to say the least. The ISIM, in form and in content, shall carry on in the spirit of Dr J.K.M. Gevers.

We deeply regret his loss and will continue to honour his memory. ◆

The ISIM Board

## Introduction

BY PROF. DR W.A.L. STOKHOF

ISIM Director in Charge

*In addition to opening its doors officially, the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) would like to simultaneously open itself to your cooperation. This Newsletter, which complements the ISIM Website, is to be the main mode of disseminating information about the Institute and its activities.*

*At this crucial stage in the design of research programmes, I would like to solicit your participation to ensure that the ISIM attains its goals of service to the academic community as well as to society at large. In order to set and maintain high standards of research, the ISIM must establish itself firmly in the national and international academic environments. This, we feel, can only be effective through concerted efforts.*

*As the ISIM aspires to international, interdisciplinary collaboration, colleagues from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, the Americas, Australasia, and Europe are asked to contribute through their ideas and suggestions. Sounding board meetings are to be held to offer a structured venue for the dual purpose of introducing the Institute and welcoming international input. Calls for research project proposals will be announced regularly in this Newsletter, but please feel free to contact us in the meantime with any comments or suggestions. ◆*