EMNLP2026 BUDAPEST OCTOBER 24-29

Special Session at EMNLP 2026

جامعة حمد بن خليفة HAMAD BIN KHALIFA UNIVERSITY

# Culturally Grounded and Trustworthy AI: Perspectives from Islamic Media Ethics

Firoj Alam, Qatar Computing Research Institute

https://islamic-media-ethics-ai.github.io/

# Beyond Language Understanding

***A model can speak a language fluently without understanding the people, beliefs, and values behind it.***

- ***Linguistic competence*** *is not necessarily cultural understanding.*
- ***Factual accuracy*** *alone does not guarantee responsible communication.*
- ***Trustworthy NLP*** *needs cultural context, reliable knowledge, and ethical responsibility.*

# Culture?

*Culture Is More Than Language or Geography*



**Language**

Expressions and meanings



**Traditions**

Customs and practices



**Values**

Norms and expectations



**Beliefs**

Religious and social worldviews

# Culture and Religion

## How are culture and religion connected?

*- Connected, but Not Identical*

ONE RELIGION

### Many cultures



Muslims in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Senegal, and Bosnia share a religious tradition but have different languages and cultural practices.

ONE CULTURAL CONTEXT

### Multiple religions



Bengali-speaking Muslims and Hindus may share regional customs and cultural traditions while holding different religious beliefs.

# Culture, Religion, and Ethics



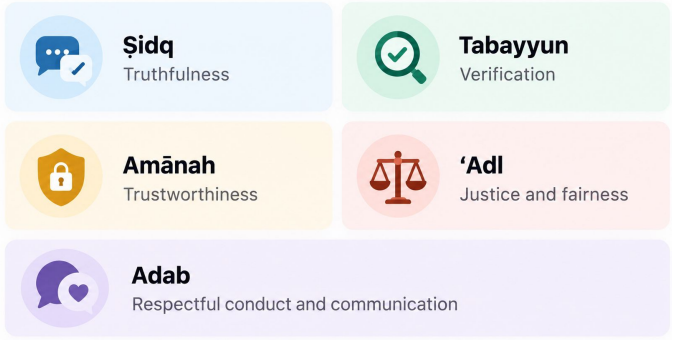

Ethics can draw on both culture and religion, while also questioning established practices.

# Ethics vs. Islamic Media Ethics

**Islamic media ethics** is an ethical approach grounded in Islamic traditions, with substantial overlap with other media ethics frameworks

## Principles for Responsible Communication

Selected principles drawn from Islamic ethical traditions and contemporary media ethics scholarship.




***Can principles of Islamic media ethics inform how we evaluate not only what LLMs say, but also how they verify, represent, and communicate knowledge?***

# What Do We Want to Achieve as A Community?

What makes an AI-generated answer trustworthy when cultural, religious, and ethical perspectives differ?

## Session: "Culturally Grounded and Trustworthy NLP: Perspectives from Islamic Media Ethics"

## Schedule

| Time | Title | Speaker/Presenter | Mode |
|---|---|---|---|
| 16:00- 16:05 | Opening | Firoj Alam, Qatar Computing Research Institute | In-person |
| 16:05–16:20 | AI Systems on Islamic Knowledge Capabilities | Gagan Bhatia, University of Technology Nuremberg | In-person |
| 16:20–16:40 | Silent Until Asked to Speak: Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869), the Written Word and Trust in Generative AI | Mohammed Ghaly, College of Islamic Studies, Hamad Bin Khalifa University | In-person |
| 16:40–16:55 | Whose Norms? Disentangling Cultural and Personal Alignment in Large Language Models | Angana Borah, University of Michigan | In-person |
| 16:55–17:10 | Unequal Representation of the Two Bengals | Md Mohsinul Kabir, University of Manchester | In-person |
| 17:10–17:25 | Multilingual and Multimodal Culturally Grounded Spoken and Visual Question Answering | Shammur Absar Chowdhury, Qatar Computing Research Institute | In-person |
| 17:25–17:30 | Closing | | |

# Summary and Wrap-Up

## Slack channel

