



PRESS RELEASE
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Major Arab translation initiative launches to widen access to books

-100 titles announced today as first candidates for translation

-Hawking, Eco, Habermas and Murakami amongst first translated and available at the launch

Abu Dhabi, 21st November - In a bid to tackle a gap created by one thousand years of limited translation of foreign writing into Arabic, Kalima, a major translation initiative, launched today and announced its much-anticipated first ever list of 100 candidate books for translation.

Kalima ("word" in Arabic), is one of the boldest and most significant cultural initiatives to come out of the Arab world in years, and is set to widen access to books and knowledge by funding the translation, publication, and distribution of high-quality works of classic and contemporary writing from other languages into Arabic.

Kalima announced that the following are the very first of the 100 candidate titles to have been translated and will shortly be ready for distribution and sale:

- Il Segno (The Sign), Umberto Eco
- The Halo Effect, Phil Rosenzweig
- The Future of Human Nature, Jurgen Habermas
- A Briefer History of Time, Stephen Hawking
- Kafka on the Shore, Haruki Murakami
- The Arab Roots of Capitalism, Gene Heck

The remaining candidate titles are at different stages of rights acquisition and translation, and will be published over the coming months, when this is completed.

"The rest of the world enjoys a wealth of domestic and translated writing, why should the Arab world be any different?", said Karim Nagy, Chief Executive of Kalima. "Today's announcement is great news for Arabic readers all over the world who want to read a greater variety of quality writing in their mother tongue – something which they have been deprived of for so long. We can now start putting Arabic readers back in touch with great works of world literature and academia and begin filling the gaps in the Arabic library".

He continued: "By uniting publishers, literary agents, authors and translators to form a solid chain, we hope to bring about a translation revival in the Arab world and generate a steady flow of quality foreign writing being translated into Arabic. We would like to thank our partner publishers in particular for helping to bring this hugely important initiative to life".

Currently in most Arabic countries, many quality works of world literature or academia are only available in their original language, making them inaccessible for most readers. To put the scale of the problem into perspective, Spain translates in one year the number of books that have been translated into Arabic in the last 1,000 years*.



“Kalima reflects a broader cultural renaissance emerging from the Arab region, including a revived interest in the Arabic language. Through Kalima, we want to give Arabic readers the opportunity to read and enjoy a breadth of quality writing from around the world in their mother tongue. Arabic is a beautifully expressive language, and one that should be more widely celebrated and valued”, said Mohamed Khalaf Al-Mazrouei, Director General of the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage, which has seeded Kalima’s funding.

Each year, new titles will be selected and translated, with the number increasing each year as funding grows. The title selection process has been carefully designed to strike a balance between different literary genres, juxtaposing the works of classic authors with more contemporary writers. The selection also includes academic, business and educational material. The translated titles will be made available throughout the Arab world through traditional and non-traditional book distribution channels.

Nadine Gordimer, whose book *The Pickup* is one of the first 100 titles to have been selected for translation, said: “I am delighted that *The Pickup* has been selected for translation as part of this very worthwhile initiative. For authors, Kalima offers an opportunity to be published in Arabic, gaining for them a readership to which they rarely have access, and promoting an international culture”.

* Source: UNDP Arab Human Development Report 2003

Note to Editors

About Kalima

Kalima – “word” in Arabic – is a non-profit initiative seeded by a grant from the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage, which funds the translation, publication, and distribution of high-quality works of classic and contemporary writing from other languages into Arabic. The initiative brings together authors, translators, publishers and distributors.

Throughout Europe’s “Dark Ages” and until the end of the first millennium, Arab scholars and libraries led the world in producing and preserving knowledge in science, medicine, philosophy and the arts. In addition, during that time, knowledge flourished thanks to the many translations of important works into Arabic. Since then, however, very few foreign works have found their way into Arabic – producing a gap that Kalima aims to close.

Partner Publishers

Kalima’s partner publishers for the six translated titles are:

TITLE	AUTHOR	PARTNER PUBLISHER
Il Segno (The Sign)	Umberto Eco	Centre Culturel Arabe
The Halo Effect	Phil Rosenzweig	Arab Scientific Publishers
The Future of Human Nature	Jurgen Habermas	Librairie Orientale
A Briefer History of Time	Stephen Hawking	Dar El Ain
Kafka on the Shore	Haruki Murakami	Centre Culturel Arabe
The Arab Roots of Capitalism	Gene Heck	Arab Scientific Publishers

Appendix I: Full list of first 100 titles selected as candidates for translation