

December 19, 2013

Kevin Murphy, Editor

DomainIncite.com

TLD Research Ltd

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RE: DomainIncite article on .Islam and .Halal.

Dear Kevin,

I am writing as MD of Asia Green IT System Ltd. (AGIT), the applicant for the TLDs .Halal and .Islam, in response to the article you published in Domain Incite on December 13, 2014 entitled "*Islamic states to officially object to .islam*"¹. As a follow-up to that article, I request that you publish the following statement on DomainIncite.com.

As you know, there has already been substantial correspondence on .Halal and .Islam. The challenges we have faced in attempting to bring these TLDs to the world's Muslim Communities illustrate the fact that no matter the process, timelines or rules decided through the multi-stakeholder process that is policy development at ICANN, there will always be those that attempt to circumvent it for their own interests. The onus is therefore on the ICANN community as a whole to safeguard its model and ensure it is viable, dependable and trustworthy.

In the case of the new gTLD program, arguably ICANN's most important policy development to date, that trust is built on the procedures set out in the 338 pages of the Applicant Guidebook. There are clear guidelines on how to apply and how to object to an application. If, after the call has gone out for entities the world over to invest considerable energy, time and money in applying, these guidelines are later changed in a way that no applicant could have anticipated, the credibility of the program itself is damaged. That in turn weakens ICANN's claim that it can set, manage and execute crucial Internet expansion programs such as the new gTLDs.

AGIT does not wish to see this happen. We worked for 8 years to prepare our applications and we applied for a total of 8 TLDs² because we are a firm believer in the governance model ICANN

¹ <http://domainincite.com/15301-islamic-states-to-officially-object-to-islam>

² .pars, .islam, .nowruz, .persiangulf, .tci, .shia, .halal and a Persian script IDN TLD which is the rough equivalent of the English word "comrade".

embodies. To us, that model's ideals are epitomized in the new gTLD program's drive to expand the Internet root to new users, new languages, new cultures and new businesses. And ultimately, to allow new communities to reap the benefits of this evolution. Muslim communities the world over have a lot to gain from seeing their members empowered through namespaces that are better suited to their specific needs, easier for them to relate to and use and respectful of their culture and laws.

As Muslims ourselves, this is what we felt we could bring to our community when we first heard of the new gTLD program: our expertise as a technical enabler of TLDs by Muslims, for Muslims. We are looking to fuel the engine, not drive the car. Right from the start, our TLD operations plan included multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms designed to allow a wide variety of significant Muslim community stakeholders to take part in determining how these TLDs should be administered. We propose that PACs, Policy Advisory Councils (PAC), made up of leaders from many of the world's various Muslim communities, serve as governing boards for both TLDs³.

We have garnered significant support for our applications for .Halal and .Islam from Muslim communities, although clearly not all agree that we should operate them. The new gTLD program has included significant, and numerous, avenues to oppose an application. .Halal and .Islam have faced them all. A targeted comment campaign had the Independent Objector (IO) evaluate our applications. He did not object to them, and found they likely would be beneficial to Muslims⁴. The program's Community Objection process was used to oppose our two applications on the grounds that they did not have community support. We prevailed⁵, in both cases⁶, with the expert arbitrator deciding that community opposition was not substantial, and that there was no likelihood of any material detriment to any Muslim community. The GAC was lobbied to submit Early Warnings against our two applications, this being followed by an attempt to obtain full GAC Advice. This effort also failed because the GAC could not reach consensus, as pointed out in the Beijing communiqué⁷ where the lack of consensus to object to .Halal and .Islam was clearly noted.

³ AGIT has reached out to leading Muslim organizations, including the OIC, to participate in the .Halal and .Islam PACs.

⁴ <http://www.independent-objector-newgtlds.org/home/the-independent-objector-s-comments-on-controversial-applications/islam-general-comment/>

⁵ <http://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/drsp/04nov13/determination-1-1-2131-60793-en.pdf>

⁶ <http://newgtlds.icann.org/sites/default/files/drsp/04nov13/determination-1-1-2130-23450-en.pdf>

⁷ <https://gacweb.icann.org/display/gacweb/Meeting+46%3A+Beijing%2C+People%27s+Republic+of+China+7-11+April+2013>

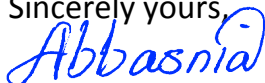
Unwilling to accept the decisions of the IO, expert panels and the GAC, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC⁸) has since taken to writing to the GAC Chair and ICANN Board Chair directly. In late December, only days ago, the OIC passed a resolution objecting to our applications. Some in ICANN circles have used the phrase "taking a second bite at the apple" to characterize attempts to overturn decisions and derail processes. In the case of our applications for .Halal and .Islam, the apple's been eaten to the core!

Never mind that the objection period closed on March 13, 2013. Never mind that the OIC does not speak for all Muslims, contrary to its claims⁹. Never mind that the GAC has already said all it has to say about our applications and that the ICANN Board's New gTLD Program Committee (NGPC) has said it would follow GAC guidance on this¹⁰ ...

The ball is now in the ICANN Board's court. If it bows to the OIC's pressure and blocks our TLD applications, not only will Muslims the world over be prevented from claiming their very own space on the Internet, but I believe it will also be dealing a blow to the new gTLD program's credibility, and to the credibility of ICANN as a multi-stakeholder governance organization.

Let's hope that does not happen, and that instead those in charge of making this key decision are willing to support the rules of the program they themselves birthed on a historic day, in Paris, in June 2008.

Sincerely yours,



Mehdi Abbasnia

Chairman & Managing Director

⁸ <http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/>

⁹ There are an estimated 1.6 billion Muslims. OIC Member States cover 1.3 billion of them, but countries like India (177 million Muslims) are not OIC members. In total, non OIC members have over 321 million Muslims, the same as the total number of Muslims in North Africa and the Middle East.

¹⁰ <http://www.icann.org/en/news/correspondence/dryden-to-crocker-29nov13-en.pdf>