

Internet Fatwas

An analysis of select fatwa-issuing Islamic websites

Nicholas Hanoian

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The Project

Background

- **Fatwa:** a nonbinding legal opinion on a point of Shari'a given by a mufti (jurist) in response to a question posed by a private individual, judge, or government
- Historically, fatwa-issuing muftis were prominent members of their own neighborhoods
- Usually the entire process remained within local communities, but requests could sometimes go to other towns or even countries

Topic and Objectives

- What is the current landscape of (English) fatwa-issuing websites?
- What are the common traits and differences among these websites?
- What are the styles of interpretation that these sites use, and how do they compare to what we have studied in this course? I plan to focus specifically on fatwas relating to divorce.

Why I'm Interested

- We did a lot of theoretical work during the semester, investigating the different aspects of *fiqh*, and using this to determine whether Islam is compatible with human rights
- The internet impacts us in many ways, including influencing our beliefs
- I wondered how the quality, integrity, and methods of these fatwa-issuing websites would compare to that of the scholars which we have already studied

Sources

- Author from University of Wales who has done extensive work on Islam in modern society
- Wrote three books on the topic:
 - Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments (2003)
 - iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam (2009)
 - Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments are Transforming Religious Authority (2018)
- You can get an idea of how Islam on the internet has changed over the last 20 years

HASHTAG ISLAM



GARY R. BUNT

Author of *iMuslims: Rewriting the House of Islam*

Other Academic Sources

- Islam Dot Com: book by Mohammed el-Nawawy and Sahar Khamis (2009)
 - Similar in some regards to Bunt's work
 - Looks more at discussion-based forums, with back and forth conversations between users
 - I was not able to access any of the sites used in the book (references only contain academic sources)
 - None of the sites that I looked at had this forum-like format
 - All of the ones I was able to access were questions with single answers
- The Politics of Virtual Fatwa Counseling: paper by Jens Kutscher (2008)
 - Investigates the influences of governments on the content of fatwa-issuing websites

Fatwa Websites

- Developed by a team of Indian muftis (jurists)
- Many more fatwas in Urdu (29,406) than in English (9,141)
- The Urdu fatwas have a higher frequency of spiritual questions than the English ones

DARUL IFTA
DARUL ULOOM DEOBAND - INDIA

English Fatwas
Total: 9141

Home | Ask Question | Search Fatwa

Search Fatwa

Latest Fatwa

- Fajr Salah timing ...
- I usually recite tasbihat-e-Fatimah from left to right hand. Is it correct way? Can we recite it only right hand? ...
- How to perform salah in a vehicle (Qiblah, sajdah, ruku) and should I perform qaza of that salah afterwards? ...
- What is the meaning baby girl name Aya? ...
- Better name choice according to Islam / Quran ...
- Dua For growing beard quickly ...
- About paying zakah ...
- نمازوں کی در رکعت میں میسیلناکا کا پہنچا ...
- شہر کی وفات کے باوجود اپنی ڈھونٹ کاہنے مुسلاخ ...
- ایکسپریس ٹرین میں سوئے ...
- Can a traveler be a imam and lead Isha prayer fardh 4 rakahs? ...
- Dua which I can recite so that nobody can ever insult me or put blame on me. ...
- Imam Confused about his oduhu(ablution) ...

تاجدہ ترین فتاویٰ

- فرض نمازوں میں انتہا اور لیٹائے ...
- گیئسی زیارتی کی صورت میں طبیعت اور نمازوں کیے ادا کریں؟ ...
- فرم انکو اپنی کرنا جائز ہے یا ناجائز؟ ...
- کیا حجت میں علم حاصل کرنے کے بارے میں سوال ہو گا؟ ...
- آئیں ہم رکھنا کیا ہے؟ ...
- چاروں کا عانع قرآن سے کرنے پر اجرت ہے؟ ...
- اٹھاگہ کیا ہے تمیری رات کو چھپے کے بعد خواب دیکھا کر میخاکھاہیاں
- نمازوں کی لیے یاد کا صد دراثت فتح نہیں ہے ...
- کیا چادر کے پورے کھانا حالی ہے ...
- منیش چوتھے کی وجہ سے گزر کی عقامت چھوٹ جانے کا اعلیٰ ہے اور کیا کہا ...
- پا ہے؟ ...
- لائے کے لیے چھوڑ کیا ہے؟ ...
- قیام پر قدرت کے پارہ ٹھوڑی کا چھوٹ کر نمازوں پر چھوڑ ...
- ... امام احتمت کیا اے اے ٹھوڑی کو رکھتے کے لئے ...

- Follows the teachings of Shaykh Muhammad Nazim Adil al-Haqqani, a Turkish, Sufi sheikh
- Has a set of scholars which issue and individually sign their fatwas
- Lots of fatwas on interpretations of dreams

The screenshot shows the homepage of eShaykh.com. At the top, there is a banner with a green circular badge that says "DAILY TOP 1000 LIST". Below the badge, Arabic text reads "وَامْسِبُرْ فِي أَمْرِكَ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ" and English text below it says "consult in your affairs those who fear Allah Almighty". The main title "eShaykh.com" is prominently displayed in the center. Below the title, a subtitle reads "relevant answers to issues of creed, law, society, family and spirituality". A navigation bar at the top includes links for Home, About Us, Ask a Question, Prayer Request, Dream Interpretation, New User Registration, and social media icons for Facebook and YouTube.

Important Announcement

Under the leadership and guidance of His Eminence ad-Sayyid as-Shaykh Muhammad Nazim Al-Haqqani, the leader of the Nasiriyah Naqshbandiyah Sufi Order, we are pleased to inform you that the Nasiriyah Naqshbandiyah Sufi Order is strictly based on Shari'ah, the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet, and the pristine teachings of the esteemed and noble teachers of the Naqshbandi shaykhs.

Our mission remains to be true to the teachings of our guide, the late Mawla Shaykh Nazim Al-Haqqani, and to continue to develop and enhance the legacy Mawla Shaykh Nazim has built all over the world.

We are not responsible for the actions of anyone claiming to be an adherent of the Sufi Order. All actions are to be judged against the yardstick of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam.

10,223 Pageviews
Mar. 24th - Apr. 24th

Qur'an & Tafsir (155)

- Injunction to Sadaqah recitation of Surah to Others
- 2-285 Books precede Prophets
- Prophet's wife got a dream about Quran
- How The Quran From Hads Related?
- Prophet Musa mentioned most in Quran
- More...

Salaat - Prayer (334)

- Touching private parts and wudu
- Women's chronic discharge & wudu
- Ramadan witr in congregation
- Wudu on floors
- Hospital wudu after recently begun wazifa
- More...

Takhrif (43)

- Hadiths about Turban
- Hadith of Saved Sects
- Hadith of Creation
- Knowledge of Gibri (as)
- Khalq
- More...

Permission (463)

- Awayad without bayyah
- Daily Ile matters permission from Mawla
- Arranging marriage meeting with Maalikaa Shaykh (private message)
- The permission to read Datal Khayrat
- Quada Ghousia and Na'e a'Ali
- More...

Marriage/Divorce (841)

- Forgiveness from ex boyfriend
- Am doing istikhara waiting in middle of divorce
- marriage hindrance
- Wife to return home
- Muslim dating
- More...

Hadith (268)

- Day of Judgement Is it true ?
- Miscarriage before 120 days
- Relatable Hadith Translations
- Touching private parts and wudu
- Prophet Moses (as) Metime
- More...

Zakat & Sadqah (61)

- Injunction to Sadaqah recitation of Surah to Others
- Flexibility in a Sadaqa promised to others
- Zakat al-Mal

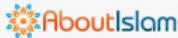
Siyam - Fasting (103)

- Do I need to do kaftarah?
- Fasting 3 days a month
- Fasting according Meccah time when some days of Ramadan are short and some not

Sunnah (247)

- Touching private parts and wudu
- Women's chronic discharge & wudu
- Hijab and duood
- acts of salatw'
- Ramadan witr in congregation

- Presents a list of counselors which are mostly professors in Islamic studies, several of which reside at U.S. universities
- Each post lists the specific mufti which issued the fatwa
- Fatwas have a short summary, and then present an explanation with greater depth
- Inherited some content from a previous, but no longer operational website OnIslam.com



Wed, Apr 24, 2019 (Shua'ban 18, 1440)

Counseling Muslim News Discovering Islam Shariah Family & Life Video Blog Youth Q & A More

Home > Ask the Scholar

Search Submit Question Receive Answer See All Categories

How to Benefit Optimally from Ramadan

How Should Muslim in the US Welcome Ramadan?

How Do I Resolve Missed Ramadan Fasts Due to...

Mufti: Sheikh Ahmad Kutty

Apr 23, 2019

Fasting

Mufti: Dr. Muhammad Abu Laylah

Apr 23, 2019

Fasting

Mufti: The Fatwa Center at Islamweb

Apr 22, 2019

Fasting

What Does Islam Offer the Environment?

How Can I Make Up Missed Fasts of My Deceased Father?

Is It Permissible to Pollute Water?

Mufti: Ask the Scholar Editor

Start Ramadan with a Clear...

Hannah Morris

Thu, Apr. 25, 2019 | 13:00 Makkah NOT YET

LIVE SESSIONS

Relationships & Marriage...

Nasila Meemaris-Clay

West, Apr. 24, 2019 | 16:00 Makkah NOT YET

How to Benefit Optimally from Ramadan

Anas alaykum. Are there any tips that you can suggest for us in order to benefit optimally from fasting the month of...

How Should Muslim in the US Welcome Ramadan?

How Do I Resolve Missed Ramadan Fasts Due to Non-Valid Excuses?

What Does Islam Offer the Environment?

How Can I Make Up Missed F...

Follow Us

8

- Based on the authority of Ayatullah al Uzama As-Sayyed Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani, an Iraqi Shi'a cleric
- Presented in many languages: French, Turkish, Azari, English, Urdu, Persian, and Arabic
- Responses are fairly blunt, often only indicating whether an action is permissible or not with no justification



Question & Answer » Topics

Search in All Questions:

Number of questions: **783**

Quick search in the titles of questions.:

Topics in alphabetical order

A

[Ahl-e Kitab](#) [Abortion](#) [Adoption](#) [Alcohol](#) [Azadari](#) [Autopsy](#) [Adulthood - Puberty \(Buloogh\)](#) [Artificial Insemination](#) [Adultery](#) [Animals](#)
[Adhan and Iqamah](#)

B

[Buying & Selling](#) [Black Clothes](#) [Burial of the Dead](#) [Backbiting](#) [Beard](#) [Blood money - \(Diyyah\)](#) [Blood Donation](#) [Black Magic](#) [Bribery](#) [Business](#)
[Blood](#)

- The site describes itself as “balanced” with “moderate views”
- Fatwas will often have verses from the Qur'an or Sunna, along with statements from well-respected jurists
- Posts will sometimes have opinions from a few different scholars and declare one to be the best interpretation
- No information on site about qualifications of those posting fatwas

A screenshot of the Fatwa section of the Islamweb.net website. It features a large "FATWA" logo with "FATWA FOR ALL" underneath. Below the logo is a question about missed fasting during Ramadan. To the right, there are sections for "Fatwa Of The Week" and "View By Subject".

Missed fasts in Ramadan without a valid excuse and delayed making up for them

Question: Eminent Shaykh, I did not fast for three days in Ramadon without a valid excuse when I was fifteen and seventeen. But now, my Lord has bestowed upon me the favor of guidance, Alhamdulillah...[More](#)

Fatwa Of The Week

A selection of weekly Fatwas

View By Subject

Fatwas listed according to the subject

- Derives authority from its “General Supervisor” Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid of Saudi Arabia
- Appears to be the most popular out of all of the sites
- Has an associated (Arabic) twitter account with over 1 million followers and 26 thousand tweets

Wednesday 19 Shaban 1440 - 24 April 2019

English Log in

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

Search for answers

Categories Send a question New Answers Get to know Islam Books & articles About User guide

New Answers

Is it acceptable to feed children when feeding the poor as an act of expiation (kafaarah)? 24-04-2019

He has money that he put into a business partnership with his brother, and he has some savings; how should he pay zakaah on his wealth? 23-04-2019

He has a sickness that makes him unable to remember the number of rak'ahs and prostrations; should he do the prostration of forgetfulness? 22-04-2019

Can a poor child be given food that is given as an act of expiation (kafaarah)? Does the value of the food given as expiation matter, if the person is in a rich country and gives the expiation in a poor country? 21-04-2019

It is not permissible to sell or buy a waqf 20-04-2019

Ruling on advertising a campaign for vaccination of children in the mosque so that people will attend it 19-04-2019

Ruling on investing waqf funds 18-04-2019

A Brief Look at 'Eesa (Jesus)

- peace be upon him -

The Month Of Sha'baan

Is it mustahabb to fast the whole of Sha'baan?

Encouragement to fast al-ayyaam al-beed and the month of Sha'baan

Increased Deaths in the Month of Sha'ban

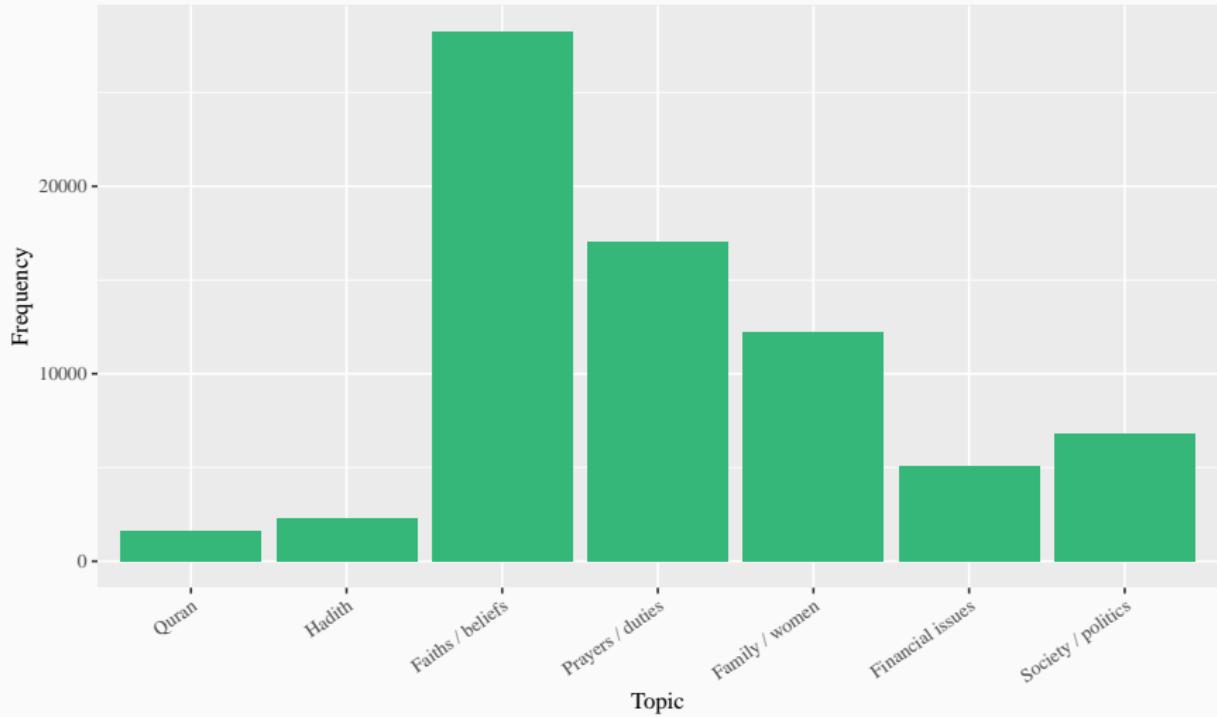
Bid'ah of Sha'baan

Analysis of site sizes and fatwa categories

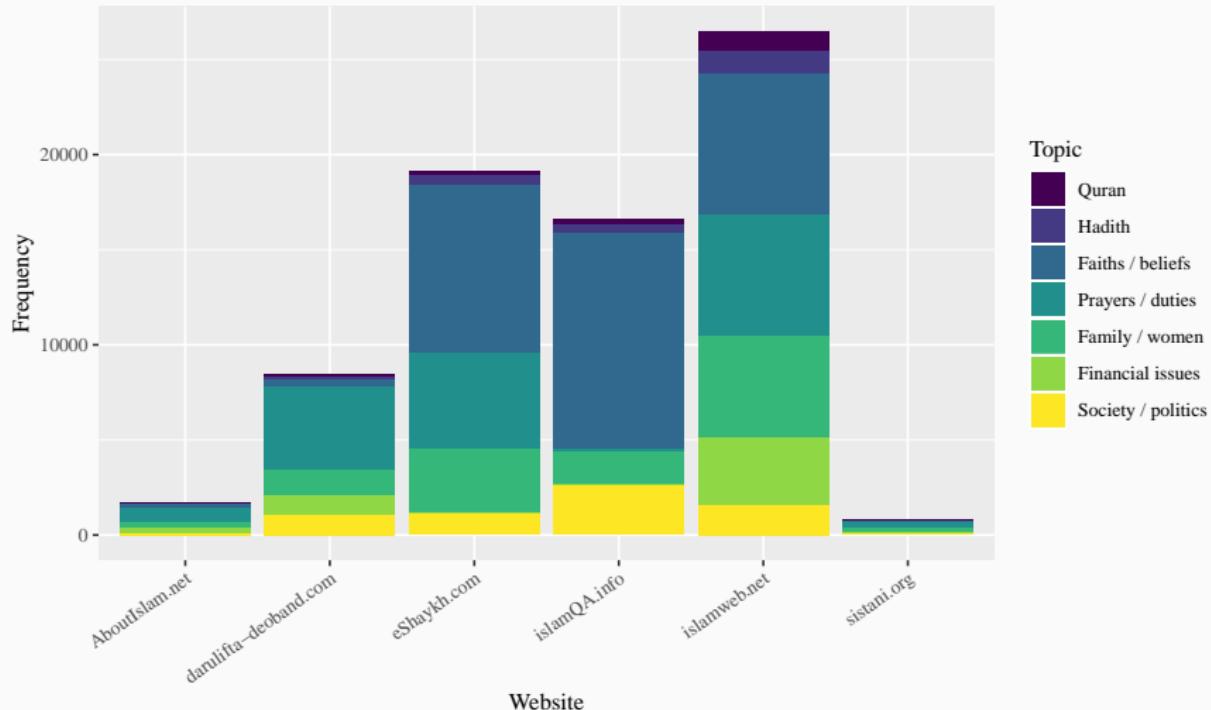
Data Collection

- All of the sites had some kind of organization of fatwas based on categories.
- Some were easy to get the data from, actually listing the number for each category while collecting the data from others was a more involved process
- The sites, as one would expect, did not have all of the same categories so I had to reorganize those site-specific categories into several general categories
- This is flawed due to the fact that some fatwas that were pooled together at the site-level which ideally would have been split into two different general groups
- However, it is accurate enough for the purposes of the analysis here

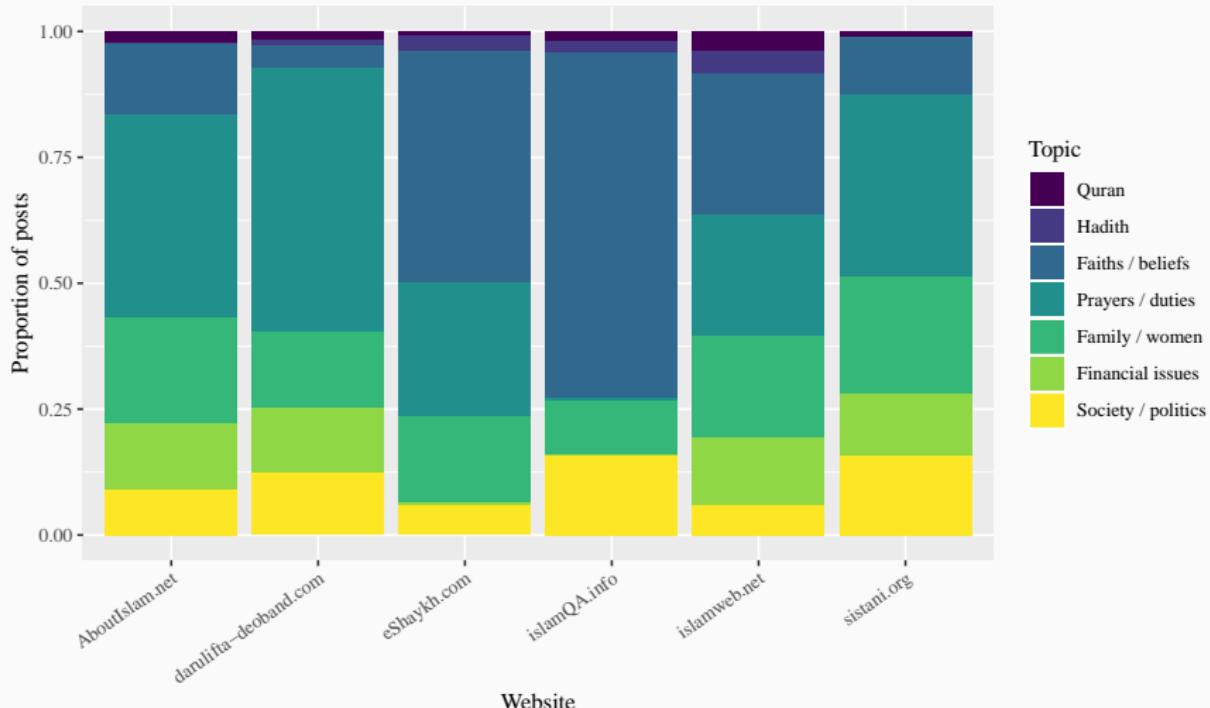
Number of posts by category



Number of posts in each category by site



Distribution of post categories for each site



Conclusion

Findings so far

- Each site has a different concentration, with some focusing more on faith and others more so on duties
- Some sites stick to the traditions of issuing fatwa more than others (i.e. whether or not they post the author)
- Handling language barriers is a big challenge for these sites, and content is rarely the same for all versions of the sites

Still to be done

- Picking a few fatwa from each site and thoroughly analyzing them
- I plan to focus on divorce, possibly only female-initiated divorce (khula / khul')
- Of the posts on each site that I've looked at so far, these seem to be the most interesting questions
- There are many questions about whether certain acts do or do not qualify as a divorce
- A common one is whether saying "I divorce you" in a joking manner counts (most muftis say that it does)
- There are many more complicated variations on this, especially when it comes to women requesting a divorce because of the greater amount of power that men have with divorce

Questions?
