

His Mission: Spread the Koran That He Translated Throughout Brazil

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
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Professor Helmi Mohammed Ibrahim Nasr distributed Thursday, March 16, copies of the Portuguese translation of the Koran at Islamic centers in the Greater São Paulo, the largest metropolitan region in Brazil, in the southeast of the country.

He insisted on delivering 160 copies personally to four institutions. "This is just the beginning of distribution. There will be over 50 places throughout Brazil," stated the professor. The translation was by Nasr himself and it was released last year.

Nasr, who is a professor at the University of São Paulo (USP) and vice president for international relations at the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce, delivered 40 copies to Brazil Mosque, in the central region of the city, where the offices of the Muslim Beneficent Society is also located.

To the president of the organizations, Nazih Saad, most of the Arab Islamic community in São Paulo does not know how to read Arabic, and a translation is therefore important.

"This work is of great value. It is going to help the community to comprehend Islam better," said Saad.

According to the professor, 1,000 copies will be distributed in São Paulo. "It is still too little," he said, and has already ordered another 10,000 copies at the World Islam League, in Saudi Arabia, which is responsible for the authentication of the translation. In Brazilian capital Brasília, distribution has already totaled 3,000 units.

Another 40 copies were delivered to the Brazil Islam Center, which is also going to distribute the books to libraries and cultural centers.

"I believe that this translation is a very honorable work," stated the secretary general at the organization, Nasereddin Khazraji.

According to him, the translation of the Koran is written in a simple and easy manner.

"The translation has not lost the beauty and taste of the verses," he added.

Another 40 copies were delivered to the vice president of the Center for Promotion of Islam in Latin America, Ali Ahmad Saifi.

"This is a treasure that we are being given," stated Saifi, who is going to give the book to some people and distribute it to libraries and Islamic institutes in São Paulo.

"The work by professor Helmi must be remembered as one of the most important translations about Islam in recent decades," he added.

The professor also delivered copies of the holy book to the president of the Brazilian Superior Islamic Council, Mustafa Mourad.

Translation

Nasr started translating the Koran in 1984, and took four years to complete the work. There was then a long period of revision before the official release of the work, which took place in October last year, in Brasília.

The version is the only one recognized by the World Islam League and was printed at King Fahd Complex, in Medina, Saudi Arabia, an organization connected to the Saudi government. To date, the Complex has already printed the holy book in 40 languages.

Nasr was born in Egypt and came to São Paulo in 1962 to establish the Arabic department at USP, at the request of the late president Jânio Quadros, who had met with Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser the previous year. The professor came to Brazil to spend just one year, but is here to date.

Last year, during the Summit of South American - Arab Countries the professor also released an Arabic-Portuguese dictionary.

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