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To whom it may concern

I am greatly excited to be asked by the University of Sheffield to express my support and to be a partner for the initiative of the *AHRC Research Network proposal, Heavenly Acts: aspects of performance through an interdisciplinary lens.*

Both in my capacity as a Naqshibandi community spiritual worker, and as a Muslim generic prison chaplain, this project echoes the work that I have been doing for many years.

In a variety of community arenas (mosques, festivals, outdoor processions and community halls) we have been organising and conducting spiritual and ritual gatherings in which we have taught and led the attendees in acts of spiritual performance. Our sacred acts of worship and devotions include prayers, singing, poetry, the Zikr (chanting), the Hadrah (standing, swaying, chanting), cross cultural musical instrumentation through the Qawwali (Indian subcontinent Sufi musical devotion) and eating.

In prisons, I have organised similar acts of Islamic devotions and rituals for Muslim and non-Muslim inmates.

These sacred acts span across many languages. English, Arabic, Punjabi & Urdu are the most common, and most attendees are able to partake in at least two of these languages. The audience comprises people from all backgrounds. Although the overwhelming numbers are from the youth section of the community, we have a small number of elders joining in and we cater for men and women. We also help the audience to partake by giving the transcriptions of Arabic into English. Further on, our attendees come from a rich multilingual, social class and ethnic background.

I envisage that this project will contribute to the enrichment of knowledge of what happens in our local community and elsewhere and provide opportunities to share with different communities and stakeholders common approaches and understandings as well as celebrate differences in respect of performance and ritual.

Yours sincerely

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Khadim al-Ummah