

### Reviews of John W. Kiser's Book...

COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL: Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader, 1808-1883)

"Today more than ever, Muslims and non-Muslims alike need to be reminded of the courage, compassion and intellect of Emir Abd el-Kader. Kiser beautifully tells the dramatic story of how the moral compass provided by Abd el-Kader's faith and learning propelled him to become one of 19<sup>th</sup> century's most admired figures. His conduct in war, in prison and in exile represent the true concept of jihad. Abd el-Kader's jihad provides Muslims with a much-needed antidote to the toxic false jihads of today, dominated by anger, violence and politics. Thank you John Kiser for the great service of bringing him back to life. Abd el-Kader is truly a treasure for the world." His Royal Highness, Prince Hassan bin-Talal of Jordan

"John Kiser weaves the intricate tale of Abd el-Kader's heroic life and spirit as deftly as the emir maneuvered his armies on the battlefield. With engaging history and stylistic flare, Kiser brings to life the inspiring story of a great world leader that many Western readers will not have heard of before. Importantly, Kiser's work skillfully reveals that Abd el-Kader's legacy transcends the bounds of both time and age, discovering the 19th Century scholar-priest-warrior as the perfect elixir for the contemporary West's chronic difficulties understanding the East." Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, Author of What is Right about Islam

"In Abd el-Kader, Kiser gives us a lens to understand the highest traditions of the Arab Muslim culture... Explaining the importance of Abd el-Kader's voluntary surrender, a French general tells his parliament: "Abd el-Kader is the embodiment of a principle—that of great religious affection...this man has become the living symbol of an idea that moves the masses deeply." The emir's real value for interfaith dialogue is that he is a devoutly conservative Muslim. In a way, this is who we should be negotiating with." David Mc Allister-Wilson, President, John Wesley Seminary

"The life and times of Emir Abd-el-Kader is one of those dazzling biographies that informs our modern life. A fascinating figure, Abd-el-Kader was a man of God, who put his Muslim religion into practice and who served as a bridge between the European and Islamic worlds. We have much to learn from his life and from this book, which offers us a vivid glimpse of some of the most important events of the 19th century."

Susan Eisenhower, Chairman of the Eisenhower Group, author of Mrs. Ike.

"Kiser's book is highly relevant to what is going on in the Islamic world. Abd el-Kader is the embodiment of the true moral, theological and rational ideas taught by Islam. I strongly recommend this book be translated into Arabic, Persian and Urdu."

Muhammad Ammar Khan Nasir, Editor Monthly "Al-Sharia", Pakistan.

I hope and pray we can make Abd el-Kader's life and message more accessible to people in this time when it is so sorely needed. Kiser does a beautiful job of mixing a dramatic narrative with solid scholarship.

Reza Shah-Kazemi, editor of Islamic World Report, author & research associate of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London; Board of Directors, Matheson Trust UK

John Kiser has given us an absorbing and beautifully written story of a great hero who is a model warrior for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The reader is bound to be moved by the life of this remarkable man who was the very opposite of a fanatic, and when (the reader) closes the book, it will be with a vastly enhanced understanding of the ethical and spiritual commonalities between Christianity and Islam.

Jane Geniesse, author of The Passionate Nomad: The Life of Freya Stark

John Kiser's engagingly written and intelligently crafted Commander of the Faithful examines the life of a genuine hero of the Arab world in the nineteenth century...Kiser artfully shows how and why Abd el-Kader emerged as a world icon, and whose example is badly needed today. I highly recommend this book.

Philip Khoury, past president of the Middle Eastern Studies Association and Ford Professor of History, MIT.

This engrossing and uplifting story of emir Abd el-Kader who led the resistance to French colonial rule could only have been written by someone with a profound knowledge of the French and Arab worlds and a keen sense of the eternal struggle between morality and Realpolitik...It is not surprising that the author has published in both the Marine Corps Gazette and the Journal of Cistercian Studies

Fredrick Starr, Chairman Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

John Kiser has outdone himself. Before the applause has died for his seminal work on The Monks of Tibhirine, he now brings us a masterful rendition of Abd el-Kader, a bigger than life historical figure who honored his faith through a life of integrity and chivalrous behavior. Kiser reminds of one who stands as a giant for the ages, one we could do well to study and emulate.

Douglas Johnston, author of Religion—The Missing Dimension in Statecraft

Abd el-Kader is a special gift that comes from the sands of Algeria. John Kiser is right to explore the riches of this man who led an exemplary life and was friends with Muslims jews and Christians alike. We need to learn more

about the complexities of the political, military and cultural interactions that built the world as it is today. Kiser's book is an invitation to discover and pause, appreciating the life of an unexpected hero.  
Andrea Bartoli, Combie Chair for Conflict Resolution, George Mason University,

With this new work, John Kiser continues the fascinating and valuable exploration of religious coexistence that he began with *The Monks of Tibhirine* (2002). *The Commander of the Faithful* is a passionate portrait of the remarkable man whose struggle to unite his people and break the colonial yoke won him worldwide recognition, and whose courageous action in saving Christians in Syria from slaughter brought him worldwide admiration. Kiser gives us an exhilarating ride through Abd el-Kader's life in Algeria, exile in France and Turkey, and his final years in Damascus.

It is indeed the stuff of legend, a story beautifully told, aching to be made into a big budget movie. But, what is more important is the message for the modern reader that is embodied in the book's third part, which offers vivid images of Abd el-Kader's religious faith in action. In an era when Islam is feared and widely misunderstood in the West, when we are often told that Islamic values are threatening to our way of life, here is the story of a Muslim hero whose tolerance, humanity and forbearance offer a persuasive rebuttal... In a moving chapter called "The Emir's Letter" Kiser's discourse on Abd el-Kader's belief system illuminates an Islam that can comfortably coexist with the faiths of other children of Abraham. Indeed, an Islam that demands it. This excellent book is both highly entertaining history and a powerful argument for respect and tolerance across religions.  
Kenton W. Keith, Former US Ambassador to Qatar and Vice President, Meridian International Center  
Washington, DC

John Kiser's *Commander of the Faithful* is an extremely important book for both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences. With remarkable detail, Kiser describes the 19<sup>th</sup> century Abd el-Kader's struggle against French colonialism in Algeria, a rebellion he waged with courage, dignity, and chivalry, earning him the respect of the very people he was fighting. Muslims remain profoundly lacking in modern heroic exemplars, and in Abd el-Kader, we can look to a leader – a scholar, spiritual master, and warrior – who struggled for justice in his own society without transgressing the limits of just war. Kiser does a fantastic job of introducing us to this hero, and I can't wait for others to read the book!

Daisy Khan Executive Director, American Society for Muslim Advancement

Abd el-Kader lived by a chivalric code steeped in the Arab concept of honor. When, in our own day al-Qaeda terrorists claim the title of "knight," it's worth recalling a time when Arab warriors embodied the noblest attributes of knighthood: courage compassion and restraint. John Kiser brings both the man and his world brilliantly to life.  
Steve Simon, research fellow, Council on Foreign Relations

Abd el-Kader teaches the French and the world that to achieve success, moral authority is necessary, not simply military might... This fascinating revival of a 19<sup>th</sup> century world hero's story holds valuable lessons for today's Middle East Warrior. It would be a worthwhile addition to any reading list.  
Col. Jon Smythe, USMC (ret.)

Kiser writes with much affection and as a humanitarian observer of human strengths and weaknesses. It is truly a relevant book.

A.A. Sachedina, Professor of Religious Studies University of VA

The more extensive commentary provided by the widely respected, Deobandi scholar, Mohammed Ammar Khan Nasir

The Book's relevance in the Contemporary Context: A Pakistani Scholar

I have had the chance to minutely study the book, "The Life of Emir Abd-el-Kader". In my opinion, it is significantly relevant to what is going on in the world, especially the Muslim world, today. Abdul Qadir is not only a symbol of the Muslim concept of resistance and struggle against foreign domination, but also an embodiment of true theological, moral and rational ideas taught by Islam. First, he is not overwhelmed by a blind zeal to fight at all costs; rather, he is capable of weighing the pros and cons and making wise judgments. Secondly, he is strictly guided in his decisions and his general attitude by the legal limitations and moral obligations set forth in the Divine law. Thus, he knows when to put the "infidels" to death and when to put his own life at risk to save them. Thirdly, his political animosity with the French does not make him blind to what is common between his own religion and theirs, and, barring some reservations; he can equally appreciate the common religious lineage that the Muslims share with the People of Book. Finally, he can put himself in his adversaries' shoes, look into the complexities of the situation, and understand the different factors that compel them to follow a certain course. All these aspects have been evidently shown in the book and I strongly recommend that it be published in English and translated into Arabic, Persian and Urdu as well.

Muhammad Ammar Khan Nasir, Editor Monthly "Al-Sharia", Gujranwala, Pakistan.

Other possibilities in the pipeline

John Entelis—Professor of Middle East Studies at Fordham

Prince Turki—former Saudi Ambassador to US

David McAllister Wilson—President, Wesley Seminary

Prince Hassan of Jordan