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Writing Systems: Romanization

Standard Arabic System for Transliteration of Geographical Names

Submitted by the Third Arab Conference on Geographical Names**

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**Third Arab Conference on Geographical Names, 3rd
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**Standard Arabic System
for
Transliteration
of
Geographical Names**

**From Arabic Alphabet to Latin Alphabet
(Arabic Romanization System)**

As adopted by the Arab Experts who have attended the Third Arab Conference on Geographical Names in Beirut (3rd ACGN). And as authorized by the representative of the Secretary General of the Arab League

Translated by
Brigadier General P.S.C. Maroun Khraish
Director of Geographic Affairs

ARABIC transliteration ALPHABET

2002 Beirut Modified paper

Romanization	Arabic Character	Romanization	Arabic Character
A	أ	Q	ق
B	ب	K	ك
T	ت	L	ل
TH	ث	M	م
J	ج	N	ن
H	ح	H	هـ
		Ta' Marbūtah	والتاء المربوطة في نهاية الكلمة
KH	خ	W, Ū	و
D	د	Y, Ī	ي
DH	ذ	a opener	فتحة قصيرة
R	ر	ā stretching opener	فتحة طويلة
Z	ز	ā alif maddah	ألف ممدودة (أ)
S	س	a' alif maqsūrah	ألف مقصورة (ى)
SH	ش	u closer	ضمّة قصيرة
S	ص	ū Stretching closer	ضمّة طويلة
D	ض	i breaker	كسرة قصيرة
I	ط	ī stretching breaker	كسرة طويلة
DH	ظ		
'A	مع الفتحة With opener مع الضمة with closer مع الكسرة with breaker مع السكون With Sukūn	'A	مع الفتحة With opener مع الضمة with closer مع الكسرة with breaker مع السكون With Sukūn
'U		'U	
'I		'I	
'		'	
	همزة Hamzah		' ع 'Ayn
Doubling the letter	شدة	GH	غ
		F	ف

DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW ALPHABET

How to describe the transliteration Alphabet:

- a. The new alphabet has neglected the following Latin letters: C, E, O, P, V, X in addition to the letter G unless it is coupled with the letter H to form a digraph GH (Ghayn الغين).
- b. This Alphabet contains:
 1. Latin letters which have similar phonetic letters in Arabic : B, T, J, D, R, Z, S, Q, K, L, M, N, H, W, Y.
ب، ت، ج، د، ر، ز، س، ق، ك، ل، م، ن، هـ، و، ي
 2. Digraphs or Ligatures to represents Latin letters that have no similar phonetic letters in Arabic such as: GH, SH, DH, KH, TH corresponding to the Arabic letters: Thā', Khā', Dhāl, Shīn, Ghayn غ، ث، ذ، ش، ع
 3. One digraph underlined by a Diacritical Mark which is the letter Dhā': ظ
DH, Dh, dh.
 4. Seven letters surmounted or underlined by Diacritical Marks to produce the phonetic convenient sound. Ā, Ū, Ī, I, D, S, H corresponding to the Arabic letters: Ā long opener, Ū long closer, Ī long breaker, Iā' (ط), Dād (ض), Sād (ص), and Hā' (ح).
 5. Two diacritical letters, (◌̣) and (◌̤) that appear on the vowel marks [A (opener), U (closer), and I (breaker)], vowel letters and long vowel marks [Ī (long breaker), Ū (long closer), Ā (long opener)], or as an independent mark as follows:
 - a. Hamzah (◌̣):

'	' A	' U	' I	' Ā	' Ū	' Ī
'	' a	' u	' i	' ā	' ū	' ī

- b. 'Ayn (◌̤):

'	' A	' U	' I	' Ā	' Ū	' Ī
'	' a	' u	' i	' ā	' ū	' ī

6. Diacritical Marks that surmount or underline some Arabic letter in order to intensify their pronunciation (ˆ and ˙): Ā, Ī, Ū, H, I, D, and S.

7. *Vowel letters that follow stretching letters* (أ، و، ي) transliterated as Ā Ū Ī.

c. Vowel marks or lightened vowels: the opener, the closer and the breaker (َ ، ِ ، ُ) transliterated as A, U, and I. In addition to the silent Soukoun beared by consonant letters.

ROMANIZATION RULES

First: Names in Arabic are composed of one definite or indefinite word, or several words. Each word is composed of letters.

Examples:

بلد - البلاد - جبل المكمل - الدار البيضاء - مكة المكرمة

Balad , Al Balad, Jabal Al Makmil, Ad Dār Al Baydā', Makkah Al Mukarramah

Second: There are twenty eight letters in Arabic, starting with the (Hamzah) ' , and ending with (yā'): (Alif (Hamzah)', Bā', Tā', Thā', Jīm, Hā', Khā', Dāl, Dhāl, Rā', Zayn, Sīn, Shīn, Sād, Dād, Tā', Dhā', 'ayn, Ghayn, Fā', Qāf, Kāf, Lām, Mīm, Nūn, Hā', Wāw, Yā').

We recognize this alphabet that contains basic letters, Digraphs, letters with diacritical marks, diacritical letters, vowels and vowel marks as follows:

Transliteration Alphabet

أبجدية التحويل

Transliteration Alphabet	Arabic Alphabets	Arabic Alphabet		
		Beginning	Middle	End
'A, U, I, Ā, Ū, Ī, A'	أ	آ آ	أ أ	أ أ أ
B, b	ب	ب	ب ب	ب ب
T, t	ت	ت	ت ت	ت ت
TH, Th, th	ث	ث	ث ث	ث ث
J, j	ج	ج	ج ج	ج ج
H, h	ح	ح	ح ح	ح ح
KH, Kh, kh	خ	خ	خ خ	خ خ
D, d	د	د	د د	د د
DH, Dh, dh	ذ	ذ	ذ ذ	ذ ذ
R, r	ر	ر	ر ر	ر ر
Z, z	ز	ز	ز ز	ز ز
S, s	س	س	س س	س س
SH, Sh, sh	ش	ش	ش ش	ش ش
Ṣ, ṣ	ص	ص	ص ص	ص ص

D,d	ض	ظ	ض	ض
I,t	ط	ظ	ط	ط
DH,Dh,dh	ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ
‘, ‘A, ‘a, ‘U, ‘u, ‘I, ‘i, ‘, ‘Ā, ‘ā, ‘Ū, ‘ū, ‘Ī, ‘ī	ع	ع	ع	ع
GH,Gh,gh	غ	غ	غ	غ
F,f	ف	ف	ف	ف
Q,q	ق	ق	ق	ق
K,k	ك	ك	ك	ك
L,l	ل	ل	ل	ل
M,m	م	م	م	م
N,n	ن	ن	ن	ن
H,h	ه	ه	ه	ه
W,w,Ū,ū	و	و	و	و
Y,y,Ī,ī	ي	ي	ي	ي
Fathah A,a (Short) Ā,ā (Long)	الفتحة () قصيرة (ا) طويلة	أ	أ	omitted أ
Dammah U,u (Short) Ū,ū (Long)	الضمة () قصيرة (و) طويلة		و	omitted و
Kasrah I,i (Short) Ī,ī (Long)	الكسرة (.) قصيرة (ي) طويلة		ي	omitted ي

Third: Arabic letters that have similar basic phonetic Latin letters are transliterated as follows:

Transliteration Letters	Arabic Letters			Examples		Notes
	Beginning	Middle	End	Romanized	Arabic	
B b	ب	ب	ب	Bayrūt	بيروت	
T t	ت	ت	ت	Turbul	تربل	
J j	ج	ج	ج	Jizzīn	جزين	
D d	د	د	د	Dāmūr	دامور	
R r	ر	ر	ر	Rūmiyah	رومية	
Z z	ز	ز	ز	Zabadānī	زبداني	
S s	س	س	س	Sūryā	سوريا	

F f	ف	ف ف	ف ف	Fārayyā	فاریا	
Q q	ق	ق ق	ق ق	Qalamūn	قلمون	Guttural
K k	ك	ك ك	ك ك	Karbalā'	كربلاء	
L l	ل	ل ل	ل ل	Lubnān	لبنان	
M m	م	م م	م م	Manṣūrah	منصورة	
N n	ن	ن ن	ن ن	Nā'imah	ناصية	
H h	ه	ه ه	ه ه	Hilāliyyah	هلالية	

Fourth: Arabic letters Hā', Sād, Dād, and Iā' (ط، ص، ض، ط) have no similar Latin phonetic letters. They are all transliterated as letters underlined with diacritical marks as follows:

Transliteration Letters	Arabic Letters	Examples		Notes
		Romanized	Arabic	
<u>H</u> h	ح	<u>H</u> urān أو <u>H</u> awrān	حوران	H Guttural
<u>S</u> s	ص	<u>S</u> ur	صور	S Guttural
<u>D</u> d	ض	<u>D</u> ab'ah	ضبعه	D Guttural
<u>I</u> i	ط	<u>I</u> arāblus	طرابلس	T Guttural

Fifth: The Arabic letters Thā', Khā', Dhāl, Shīn, and Ghayn (غ، ذ، ش، خ) are transliterated as digraphs composed by two letters giving the suitable sounds:

Transliteration Letters	Arabic Letters	Examples		Notes
		Romanized	Arabic	
TH th	ث	<u>Th</u> ālith	ثالث	Pronounced TH as in <i>third</i> in English
KH kh	خ	<u>Kh</u> uraybah	خريبه	Pronounced as CH in Dutch
DH dh	ذ	<u>Dh</u> ahab	ذهب	Pronounced as THE in English
SH sh	ش	<u>Sh</u> amlān	شمالان	Pronounced SH as in <i>Sharp</i> in English
GH gh	غ	<u>Gh</u> ādīr	غادير	Pronounced as the Parisian R

Sixth: The letter Dhā' (ظ) is written as a digraph underlined by a diacritical mark as follows:

DH, Dh, dh (ظ) . Example: Dhahrān ظهران

Dh is pronounced as a guttural "the" in English.

Seventh: 'Ayn and Hamzah are written as diacritical letters (' / ') and are transliterated as follows:

a. Hamzah: At the beginning of the word :

It is transliterated by the suitable vowel mark it bears:

- If the vowel mark is an opener (fatḥah), (hamzah) should be transliterated as an *A*.

Example: Abū Kamāl أبو كمال .

- If the vowel mark is a closer (Ḍammah), (hamzah) should be transliterated as a *U*.

Example: Umm Qasir أم قصر .

- If the vowel mark is a breaker (Kasrah), (hamzah) should be transliterated as an *I*.

Example: 'Ayn Ibil عين ابل .

b. Hamzat al qati'

Anywhere situated in a composite name, it is always pronounced and transliterated as an (opened hamzah) *A* (hamzah maftouḥa).

Examples:

Ayyūb	أيوب
Wādī Ayyūb	وادي أيوب

c. Hamzat al wasl:

Pronounced in the first word of a composite name and omitted in the rest

Examples:

Al Mandib المنذب

Babul Mandib بابلمنذب

In transliteration it should be considered always as (hamzat qati'). Example:

Bab Al Mandib *instead of* Babul Mandib

d. Hamzah at the middle of the word:

It is written independently; Example: lu'lu'ah لؤلؤة

e. Hamzah at the end of the word:

It is written independently; Example: Al Batrā' البتراء

f. 'Ayn anywhere situated in the word:

1. When it bears a vowel sign, it should be transliterated before the suitable letter as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| (a) With the opener 'A 'a. | <u>Example:</u> 'Akkā A (Guttural). |
| (b) With the closer 'U 'u | <u>Example:</u> 'Umān U (Guttural). |
| (c) With the breaker 'I 'i | <u>Example:</u> 'Iṭāq I (Guttural). |
| (d) With the long opener 'Ā 'ā | <u>Example:</u> 'Ārayyā. |
| (e) With the long closer 'Ū 'ū | <u>Example:</u> Mas'ūdiyyah. |
| (f) With the long breaker 'Ī 'ī | <u>Example:</u> Shnan'īr. |

2. When ' is silent (Soukoun on it) it is transliterated independently.

Example: Ba'labak بعلبك .

Eighth: Vowel letters are transliterated as follows:

a. **The Alif** أَلِف : **Ā ā**

1. At the beginning of the word:

It follows the same rule as the Hamzah at the beginning of the word

2. In the middle of the word: ā

Example: Kamāī کمال

3. At the end of the word: ā

Example: Thurayyā ثريا

b. **The wāw** وَ : **W w, Ū ū**

1. At the beginning of the word:

Always transliterated as W w waw واو .

Example: Wādī وادي

2. In the middle of the word: ū w واو وُ

(a) Following a stretching letter, it should be transliterated as ū.

Example: Damanhūr دمنهور

(b) Following a soft letter, it is transliterated as w

Example: Flāwī فلاوي

3. At the end of the word: ū, wāw

(a) Following a stretching letter, it is transliterated as ū

Example: Wādī Jilū وادي جيلو

(b) Following a soft letter, it is represented as w, waw

Example: Bayt 'Illaw بيت علو

4. At any position when it is silent: w, waw

Example: Sawdā' سوداء

e. The letter yā' ياء

1. At the beginning of the word:

The letter yā' is always represented by → Y

Example: Yatar ياطر

2. In the middle of the word: → → ī y

(a) Following a stretching letter it is transliterated as: → → ī y

Example: Abū Qīr أبو قير

(b) Following a soft letter it is transliterated as: → → y yā'

Example: Mayādīn ميادين

3. At the end of the word: → → ī y

(a) Following a stretching letter it is transliterated as: → → ī y

Example: Al wādī الوادي

(b) Following a soft letter it is transliterated as: → → y yā'

Example: Btikhnāy بتخناي

4. Anywhere situated in the word, when silent, it is transliterated as: → → y yā'

Example: 'Aydāmūn عيديمون

A letter is called "stretching" if its vowel mark is compatible with the following vowel letter.

Example:

Abū Qīr أبو قير 'Āmir عامر Maydūn مَيْدُون

Here Q, ' and d are stretching letters.

A letter is called “soft” if its vowel mark is not compatible with the following vowel letter.

Example: Maydūn مَيَدُون Here M is a soft letter.

d. The vowel letters (و) w, and (ي) y

They are treated as consonants after soft letters, for that reason they are transliterated in their original form: *W Y*

Examples:

Mayādīn مَيَادِين Mawāsīm مَوَاسِم

And not as vowel letters: *Ī Ū*

Examples:

Shādī شَادِي Hūrān حُورَان

Ninth: The vowel marks (opener, closer, breaker and silent) A U I are transliterated in the form of their compatible vowel letters as follows:

a. The “Opener” is compatible with Alif and transliterated as A a

Example: Bayrūt بَيْرُوت

b. The “Closer” is compatible with Wāw and transliterated as U u

Example: Rub Thlāthīn رُبُّ ثَلَاثِينَ

c. The “Breaker” is compatible with Yā’ and transliterated as I i

Example: Jisr Al Bāshā جِسْر الْبَاشَا

d. The “Silent” (Soukoun) is beared by consonant letters or vowels after soft letter and has no corresponding in the transliteration alphabet.

Tenth: The markers (Ash Shaddah, Al Maddah) (doubling and stretching) are transliterated as follows:

a. Doubling () الشدَّة , the letter is doubled.

Examples: Al Ghaddārah الغَدَارَة

Al Mas‘ūdiyyah المَسْعُودِيَّة

Ad Duwwār الدَّوَار

b. The Maddah or the stretched Alif is the combination of the Hamzah with the Alif

It is transliterated as follows:

1. at the beginning of word \bar{A} \bar{I}

Example: $\bar{A}r\bar{a}m$ آرام

2. in the middle of word 'ā \bar{I}

Example: Mir'āb مرآب

Eleventh: Definite article: Al

a. Preceding all 14 letters called lunar letters:

أ، ب، ج، ح، خ، ع، غ، ف، ق، ك، ل، م، ن، هـ، و، ي

A, B, J, H, Kh, ' , Gh , F, Q, L, M, H, W, Y

"Al" Is transliterated as it is pronounced originally and lunar letters keep their original pronunciation.

Examples: *Al wādī* الوادي

Al Bāb الباب

b. Preceding all 14 letters called solar letters:

ت، ث، د، ذ، ر، ز، س، ش، ص، ض، ط، ظ، ل، ن

T, Th, D, DH, R, Z, S, Sh, S, D, I, Dh, L, N

The definite article Al is assimilated to the first silent part of the doubled sun letter preceded by the Hamzah "A" as follows:

At, Ath, Ad, Adh, Ar, Az, As, Ash, AS, Ad, At, Adh, Al, An

The definite noun is pronounced as it is originally:

Examples:

Ash shams الشمس

Ar Riyād الرياض

Kafr *Az Zayyāt* كفر الزيات

- c. The first letter of the article (Al) and the first letter of the name should be capitalized. No signs should be used to form parts of names:

Examples:

<i>Az Zaytūn</i>	<i>and not</i>	<i>Az-Zaytūn</i>	الزيتون
<i>Al Balad</i>	<i>and not</i>	<i>Al-Balad</i>	البلاد

Twelfth: Tā' marbūtah (ة), Alif maqsūrah (ة) and Tanwīn (nunation) at the end of the name:

- a. Tā' (marbūtah) at the end of the name is pronounced *tā'*; in transliteration, it should be lightened to **h**.

Example: Al Qinnābah القنابة

But when followed by another word in a composite name, it should be transliterated as **t (tā')**.

Example: Qinnābat Brummānā قنابة برمانا

- b. Alif maqsūrah should be transliterated as "A', a' " in order to distinguish it from the stretched Alif (Ā, ā), or the Alif followed by Hamzah (Ā', ā').

Example: Marsa' Maṭrūh مرسى مطروح

- c. The nunation is neglected and the last letter keeps silent.

Example: Jabal جبل = جبل not Jabalun, and Balad بلد = بلد not Baladun.

Thirteenth:

a. The simple exonyms:

Simple Exonyms composed of one word are transliterated and pronounced according to their original international transliteration system (ويغان Weygan, غورو Gouraud , فوش Foch), and are written in Arabic according to their pronunciation.

Re-transliteration is not allowed under all circumstances.

b. The complex exonyms:

Exonyms composed of several words are transliterated according to their original transliteration system; Embedded endonyms follow the Arabic Romanization rules.

Example: **Emile Lahhūd** اميل لحود **Hālāt Sur Mer** حالات سور مير

The Arabized exonyms or these exonyms that have been used for quite enough period of time should be considered as endonyms.

Example: 'Ayn Ibil عين ايل

Ibil in Aramaic language means irrigation.

Fourteenth: Composite names:

- a. Every word should be written separately. First letter is capitalized others linked letters are written in small Latin letters.
- b. No signs or marks are used to link the different parts of a composite name.

Examples:

Minyah Ad Dinniyyah *not* Minyah-Ad-Dinniyyah منية الضنيّة
Jiwār Al Hawz *not* Jiwār-Al-Hawz جوار الحوز

- c. The first letter of the digraph is written capital at the beginning of the word, the second is written small.

Examples:

Muṭill Ash Shams مطلق الشمس
'Ayn Al Kharrūbī عين الخروبى
Jal Ath Thurayyā جبل الثريا

- d. The conjunct names should be written in transliteration, with independent conjunction **Wa** or joined to the definite article **Al**.

Examples:

Al Mīyyah	<i>Wa</i> Mīyyah	المية و مية
Mizhir	<i>Wal</i> Majdhūb	مزهر والمجدوب

Fifteenth: Double names:

Locations and cities may support more than one name such as historical and world wide known names. For this reason, two names should be written; one of which between brackets.

Examples:

Ba‘labak	(Heliopolis)	بعلبك
Jubayl	(Byblos)	جبيل
Al Batrā’	(Petra)	البتراء
Ad Dār Al Baydā’	(Casa Blanca)	الدار البيضاء

Sixteenth: Remarks:

- a. Distinction between Hamzah (’), ‘Ayn (‘), and Alif maqsūrah (A’):

The diacritic letters may create some ambiguity between Hamzah (’), ‘Ayn (‘), or the diacritic mark of Alif maqsūrah (A’). They should be carefully distinguished.

Examples:

Ma‘ād	سعاد
Sadd Ma‘rib	سد مأرب
Ma‘rūb	معروب
Salwa’	سلوى

- b. The use of digraphs: Sh Th Kh Dh Gh may create some confusion. A slash (/) that separates between the confusing letters should resolve the problem.

Examples:

S/haylah سهيلة *might be confused with* Shaylah شيلة
 D/hayb دهيب *might be confused with* Dhayb ذيب

Else, it could be transliterated as formal Arabic (Fushḥa') language. Therefore, the first letter should be accentuated with the relative vowel sign (Fathḥah, Dammah, and Kasrah).

Examples:

Suhaylah سهيلة
 Duhayb دهب

But, if the Digraph falls in the middle of the word, then a slash must be used

Examples:

Ad/ham أدهم *not* Adham أذم
 As/hum أسهم *not* Ashum أشم

- c. The word (ibn) begins with (Hamzat Wasl) and should be transliterated as (Hamzat Qati⁶) as stated in rule seven.

Examples:

Ibin Al Muqaffa' ابن المقفع
 Hamad *Ibin* Abd Al 'Azīz حمد بن عبد العزيز

However the form of national or local normalization of geographical names containing the word *Ibn* or *Abū* should be taken into consideration when transliterated.

Abu and *Ibin* may appear under several forms *Abū* , *Abī* , *Abā* , *bū* , *Bin* , *Banū*, *Banī*, etc

They should be transliterated as officially normalized.

d. The word "Abd" (عبد) should be written separately from succeeding words.

Examples:

‘Abd Ar Raḥmān *not* Abdul Raḥmān عبد الرحمن

‘Abd Al Muṭṭalib *not* ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib عبد المطلب

The approval on this System has been granted by the general committee of the conference, after voting on it and amended by a sub-committee created for this purpose and it was signed by all the members of the general committee and authenticated by the representative of Arab League's general secretary according to procedures.

Beirut in 31 may 2007

Signature

Editor

JABER Ibrahim (Jordan)

reporter

EL-RACHED Mohamed (K.S.A)

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