

13 July 2017

Original: English and
Arabic

**Eleventh United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 8-17 August 2017

Item 14 a) of the provisional agenda*

Writing systems and pronunciation: Romanization

Romanization System from Arabic letters to Latinized letters 2007

Submitted by the Arabic Division **

* E/CONF.105/1

** Prepared by the Arabic Division

**Standard Arabic System
for
Transliteration
of
Geographical Names**

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

2007

ARABIC transliteration ALPHABET

Romanization	Arabic Character	Romanization	Arabic Character
◌ْ	همزة ء	GH	غ
Ā	ا	F	ف
B	ب	Q	ق
T	ت	K	ك
TH	ث	L	ل
J	ج	M	م
H	ح	N	ن
KH	خ	H	هـ والتاء المربوطة في نهاية الكلمة
D	د	W, Ū	و
DH	ذ	Y, Ī	ي
R	ر	a	Short Opener
Z	ز	ā	Long Opener
S	س	ā	Maddah
SH	ش	a'	Alif Maqsourah
Ṣ	ص	u	Short Closer
Ḍ	ض	ū	Long Closer
Ḍ	ط	i	Short Breaker
DH	ظ	ī	Long Breaker
◌ّ	ع	Doubling the letter	شدة

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 (الغين Ghayn).

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 represent Latin letters that have no similar phonetic letters in Arabic such as: GH, SH, DH, KH, TH corresponding to the Arabic letters: Thā^ʾ, Khā^ʾ, Dhāl, Shīn, Ghayn غ، ذ، ش، خ، ث

3. One digraph underlined by a Diacritical Mark which is the letter Dhā^ʾ: ظ DH, Dh, dh.

4. Seven letters surmounted or underlined by Diacritical Marks to produce the phonetic convenient sound. Ā, Ū, Ī, Ṭ, Ḍ, Ṣ, Ḥ corresponding to the Arabic letters: Ā long opener, Ū long closer, Ī long breaker, Ṭā^ʾ (ط), Ḍād (ض), Ṣād (ص), and Ḥā^ʾ (ح).

5. Two diacritical letters, (^ʾ) and (^ᶞ) 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 (^ʾ):

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

b. Ayn (^ᶞ):

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

6. Diacritical Marks that surmount or underline some Arabic letter in order to intensify their pronunciation ([˘] and _˙): Ā, Ī, Ū, Ḥ, Ṭ, Ḍ, and Ṣ.

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	أ آ	أ أُ أُو أُوْدُ	ء أ أُ ئ ي
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
Ḍ,d	ض	ض	ض ض	ض ض
Ṭ,t	ط	ط	ط ط	ط ط
DH,Dh,dh	ظ	ظ	ظ ظ	ظ ظ
‘, ‘A, ‘a, ‘U, ‘u, ‘I, ‘i, ‘, ‘Ā, ‘ā, ‘Ū, ‘ū, ‘Ī, ‘ī,	ع	ع	ع ع	ع ع
GH,Gh,gh	غ	غ	غ غ	غ غ
F,f	ف	ف	ف ف	ف ف
Q,q	ق	ق	ق ق	ق ق
K,k	ك	ك	ك ك	ك ك
L,l	ل	ل	ل ل	ل ل
M,m	م	م	م م	م م
N,n	ن	ن	ن ن	ن ن
H,h	ه	ه	ه ه	ه ه
W,w,Ū,ū	و	و	و و	و و
Y,y,Ī,ī	ي	ي	ي ي	ي ي
Fathḥah A,a (Short) Ā,ā (Long)	الفتحة () قصيرة (ا) طويلة	آ	آ	omitted آ
Ḍammah U,u (Short) Ū,ū (Long)	الضمة () قصيرة (و) طويلة		ؤ	omitted ؤ
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	ب ب	<i>Bayrūt</i>	بيروت	
T t	ت	ت ت	ت ت	<i>Turbul</i>	تربل	
J j	ج	ج ج	ج ج	<i>Jizzīn</i>	جزين	
D d	د	د د	د د	<i>Dāmūr</i>	دامور	

R r	ر	ر ر	ر ر	Rūmiyah	روميه	
Z z	ز	ز ز	ز ز	Zabadānī	زبداني	
S s	س	س س	س س	Sūryā	سوريا	
F f	ف	ف ف	ف ف	Fārayā	فاريا	
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	Mansūrah	منصورة	
N n	ن	ن ن	ن ن	Nā'imah	ناعمة	
H h	ه	ه ه	ه ه	Hilāliyyah	هلالية	

Fourth: Arabic letters Hā', Sād, Dād, and Iā' (ط، ض، ص، ح) 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> <u>h</u>	ح	<u>H</u> ūrān أو <u>H</u> awrān	حوران	H Guttural
<u>S</u> <u>s</u>	ص	<u>S</u> ūr	صور	S Guttural
<u>D</u> <u>d</u>	ض	<u>D</u> ab'ah	ضبعه	D Guttural
<u>I</u> <u>i</u>	ط	<u>T</u> arāblus	طرابلس	T Guttural

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

Transliteration Letters	Arabic Letters	Examples		Notes
		Romanized	Arabic	
TH th	ث	<i>Thālith</i>	ثالث	Pronounced TH as in third in English
KH kh	خ	<i>Khuraybah</i>	خريبه	Pronounced as CH in Dutch
DH dh	ذ	<i>Dhahab</i>	ذهب	Pronounced as THE in English

SH sh	ش	<i>Shamlān</i>	شملان	Pronounced <i>SH</i> as in <i>Sharp</i> in English
GH gh	غ	<i>Ghādir</i>	غادير	Pronounced as the Parisian <i>R</i>

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

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

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 Qaṣir أم قصر .

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

Example: ‘Ayn Ibil عين إبل .

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> ‘Iḥāq 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 بعلك
Bi‘r As Sabi‘ بيئر السبع

Eighth: Vowel letters are transliterated as follows:

a. The Alif أَلِف : Ā ā a'

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

4. Alif Maqsoura: a'

Example: Salwā' سَلْوَى

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 وَ وَاوُ

(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 علّو

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

Example: Sawdā' سواداء

c. **The letter yā'** ياء

1. At the beginning of the word:

The letter yā' is always represented by ي Y

Example: Yātar ياطر

2. In the middle of the word: ي ي ī y

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

Example: Abū Qīr أبو قير

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

Example: Mayādīn ميادين

3. At the end of the word: ي ، ي ī y

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

Example: Al wādī الوادي

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

Example: Btikhnāy بتخناي

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

Example: 'Aydāmūn عيدمون

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

Example:

Abū Qīr أبو قير Amir عامر Maydūn مِيدُون

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 مِيدُون 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 ميادين Mawāsīm مواسم

And not as vowel letters: **Ī Ū**

Examples:

Shādi شادي Hūrān حوران

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 بيروت

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

Example: Rub Tlātīn رُب ثلاثين

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

Example: Jīsr Al Bāshā جسر الباشا

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 (ّ) الشدّة , the letter is doubled.

Examples: Al Ghaddārah الغدّارة

Al Mas^ʿūdiyyah المسعوديّة

Ad Duwwār الدوّار

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 Ā آ

Example: **Ārām** آرام

2. in the middle of word ʾā آ

Example: Mir^ʾāb 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، هـ، و، ي

A, B, J, H, Kh, ʿ, 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:

Az Zaytūn	and not	Az-Zaytūn	الزيتون
Al Balad	and not	Al-Balad	البلد

Twelfth: Tā' marbūtah (ة), Alif maqsūrah (ى) 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** إميل لحد **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 إبل

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 D**inniyah *not* Minyah-**Ad-D**inniyah منية الضنيّة

Jiwār Al **H**awz *not* Jiwār-Al-**H**awz 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 مطل الشمس

‘Ayn Al **K**harrūbi عين الخروبي

Jal Ath **T**hurayyā جل الثريا

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

Examples:

Al Miyyah <i>Wa</i> Miyyah	المية و مية
Mizhir <i>Wal</i> Majdhūb	مزهـر والمجذوب

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 ^ʿ labak	(Heliopolis)	بعلبك
Jubayl	(Byblos)	جبيل
Al Batrā ^ʿ	(Petra)	البتراء
Ad Dār Al Bayḍā ^ʿ	(Casa Blanca)	الدار البيضاء

Sixteenth: Remarks:

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

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

Examples:

Ma ^ʿ ād	معاد
Sadd Ma ^ʿ rib	سد مأرب
Ma ^ʿ rūb	معروب
Salwa ^ʿ	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 دهب *might be confused with* Dhayb ذيب

Else, it could be transliterated as formal Arabic (Fuṣḥā') language. Therefore, the first letter should be accentuated with the relative vowel sign (Fatḥah, 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 أدم

As/hum أسهم *not* Ashum أشم

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

Examples:

Ibn Al Muqaffa' ابن المقفع

Ḥamad *Ibn* '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 *Ibn* 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

AL JABER Ibrahim (Jordan)

reporter

AL RACHED Mohamed (K.S.A)

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Vice chairman

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