Arab Division of Experts on Geographical Names

Standardized Arab System

For Transliteration

Arab letters to Roman letters (Latin)

Arabic Romanization System - (Romanization)

**Adopted at the 11th Conference of the United Nations Group
of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)
Item 11 / 2 New York 2017**

INTRODUCTION:

Since the beginning of creation, everything on this universe has a name, everything turned from a nerd to a knowing when it is named. This includes human being, animal, plants and inanimate. To distinguish anybody or anything it should be named and without names it will be difficult to deal with anything, in this universe we can find many people and tribes spread all over the earth with many different and mixed accents. In order to be easy dealing and cooperating among people, the man turned to communicate his language or accent to others by various means such as transliteration letters from language to another without changing the pronunciation of the word.

First of all, the geographical name is the name given to landmark of area on the earth surface, and also it is given to any landmark outside the earth (such as: stars, planets, galaxies... etc.).

The importance of the geographical names lies in studying the names and the origin of its derivation, checking the names in terms of pronunciation and the sites named after it, studying the development of geographical names, the relation between the name and daily life of human being as the name is related with the personal documents of the individual, the media, education, history, mapping, producing charts, atlases, as well as it is related with genealogy, commerce, industry and agriculture. It is involved in the most specific matters in daily life of individual and community.

To facilitate communication among various people and languages, it was necessary to transliterate from language to other languages. It is known that writing in the same language has no problem, but the problem is in transferring this language to letters in other languages in which the Romanization system was used. This system means in simple words: writing a language or lines in Roman letters so that the original

transferred word remains in its position and pronunciation while reading it in its Roman letters. At the beginning, the Roman letters were adopted to be the letters that all other languages basically are transferred to. From here the problem appeared even for those involved in both languages (transferred to and from), and it became more complicated when local dialect and spoken tones are involved. It is known that in every country there are more than one local accent, and it becomes more complicated with the existence of a group of local dialects at the level of Arab World. This is clear when you deal with an individual who lives between east and west or north and south the Arab World, even it is clear between the north, west, south or east of the same country. It is became more complicated if we take into consideration the interference of languages in the same Arab country such as the existence of other languages than Arabic which resulted interference and intermixture of some words in these languages with the mother tongue (Arabic). In addition, parts of the Arab world has been subjected to foreign domination and colonization in its various languages in which some words and vocabularies were interred to the original language (Arabic). Many factors helped to use Romanization System such as: writing development, the increasing of friction between civilizations and the languages, development of media, communications and the overlapping relationship between people and countries, occupation, colonization and easy transportations.

We must mention the role of Holy Quran in preserving the fluent Arabic language, as if a person from eastern or western Arab world spoke in fluent Arabic the other one will understand him. From this point of view, we find the great importance of using the fluent Arabic in writing Arab names or transliterating fluent words and names to Roman letters wherever it is possible.

Romanization process has started long time ago, especially when the orientalists appeared as most Roman systems were judgmental and

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differs from one person to another, based on how to write the Arabic word as it is pronounced in Latin letters (audio). This has had several problems such as the same Arabic word may be pronounced in several types according to the place or origin, in addition that the Romanization process was affected by the origin language of the Orientalist. Many attempts appeared in the Romanization process such as: Hans Wehr Arabic Dictionary on 1936, the American Congress Library L.C, American Libraries Association ALA, British Specification BSI BS4280, the special specification of the Islamic Knowledge Department, ISO233, International Magazine of Middle East Studies IJMES, the special specification of the Islamic Studies Institute in McGill University in Canada, Romanization System of the Holly Quran Words. Also special specifications for some Arab countries were appeared and used locally without any coordination among Arab countries in this field until the standardized Arab specification was set down and introduced to the United Nations to be adopted in 1972, then was amended in 2002. Finally this Standardized Arab System which was prepared by Arab Experts in 2007, was officially approved after extensive discussions in New York in 2017.

The Chairmanship of the Arab Division of Experts on Geographical Names wishes that Arab countries be obliged to use this system for the benefit of our countries.

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First: Transliteration Alphabet of Arab letters to Roman Letters:

ARABIC TRANSILERATION ALPHABET

Arabic letters	Romanization	Arabic letters	Romanization
أ	A a	ق	Q q
ب	B b	ك	K k
ت	T t	ل	L l
ث	Th th	م	M m
ج	J j	ن	N n
ح	<u>H</u> <u>h</u>	هـ	H h
خ	Kh kh	و	W w
د	D d	ي	Y y
ذ	Dh dh	Short	A a
ر	R r	Long opener	Ā ā
ز	Z z	(آ)Alif Mamdoude	Ā ā
س	S s	(ى) Alif Maqsourah	Á á
ش	Sh sh	Short closer	U u
ص	S s	Long closer	Ū ū
ض	<u>D</u> <u>d</u>	<u>Short</u>	I i

Arabic letters	Romanization		Arabic letters	Romanization	
ﻁ	**T̲**	**t̲**	**Long breaker**	**Ī**	ī
ﻅ	**Dh**	**dh**			
ﻍ	**Gh**	**gh**	شدة	Doubling the letter	
ﻑ	**F**	**f**			

Arabic letters			Romaniza-tion	Arabic letters			Romanization
ع '	}	opener	**'A 'a**	همزُ ةٌ	}	opener	**'A 'a**
		long opener	**'ā 'Ā**			long opener	**'Ā 'ā**
		closer	**'U 'u**			closer	**'U 'u**
		long closer	**'Ū 'ū**			long closer	**'Ū 'ū**
		breaker	**'I 'i**			breaker	**'I 'i**
		long breaker	**'Ī 'ī**			long breaker	**'Ī 'ī**

Arabic letters	Romaniza-tion		Arabic letters	Romanization
ﻍ	**Gh**	**gh**	شدة	**Doubling the letter**
ﻑ	**F**	**f**		

Second: Symmetry and difference between representing Arabic Letters and Romanization:

- **Arabic letters that have similar letters in Roman (one letter) are:** (ب B, تT, ج J, د D, ر R, ز Z, س S, ق Q, ك K, ل L, م M, ن N,هـ H, و W, ي Y).

- **Arabic letters that don't have a similar Roman letters are:**
  1. Arabic letters were represented by two connected Roman letters to form one Arabic letter: (ث Th, خ Kh, ذ Dh, ش Sh, غGh).
  2. One Arabic letter was represented by two connected Roman underlined by (-) to form the letter ظ (Dh).
  3. Arabic letters were represented by one underlined Roman letter: (طT), (ض D), (ص S), (ح H).
  4. Two Arabic letters that don't have an equivalent in Roman letters were represented by two symbols are: Hamzah (') and ayn (').
  5. Alef Maqsourah (ى) represented by á Á.

- **Roman (Latin) letters that don't have an equivalent in Arabic letters,**
  It is divided into two types:
  1. Roman letters weren't represented by equivalents in Arabic letters are: (C,E,O,X) and the composed letter (ch).
  2. Letters were represented by Arabic letters close to it in pronunciation (voice): (G represented by غ), (P represented by ب) and (V represented byف).

Rule 1:

Names in Arabic are composed of definite or indefinite words, two or several words or more. Words are composed of letters.

Examples: (الدار – Jabal al Mikmil جبل المِكّمِل – Al Balad البلد – Balad بلد Makah al Mukarramah مَكة المكَرمة – 'Ad Dar al Baydá البيضاء).

Rule 2:

There are twenty eight letters in Arabic, starting from the (Hamzah) and ending with Yā' (y): (', b, t, th, j, <u>h</u>, kh, d, dh, r, z, s, sh, <u>s</u>, <u>d</u>, <u>t</u>, - <u>dh</u>, 'Ayn ('), gh, f, q, k, l, m, n, h, w, y). These letters come in different shapes according to its location in the word.

We recognize these letters by the basic letters, compound binary letters, phonetic letters and vowels according to the following table:

Transliteration Alphabet and the position of Arabic letters in the word

Arabic letter	Roman letter	Arabic letter		
		Beginning	Middle	End
أ	,	أ أ إ آ	ـأ ـؤ ـئـ ـئـ ئـآ	ى ؤ أ ء ئ
ب	B b	بـ	ـبـ بـ	ب ب
ت	T t	تـ	ـتـ تـ	ـت ت
ث	Th th	ثـ	ـثـ ثـ	ـث ث
ج	J j	جـ	ـجـ جـ	ـج ج
ح	<u>H</u> <u>h</u>	حـ	ـحـ حـ	ـح ح
خ	Kh kh	خـ	ـخـ خـ	ـخ خ
د	D d	د	ـد د	ـد د
ذ	Dh dh	ذ	ـذ ذ	ـذ ذ
ر	R r	ر	ـر ر	ـر ر
ز	Z z	ز	ـز ز	ـز ز
س	S s	سـ	ـسـ سـ	ـس س
ش	Sh sh	شـ	ـشـ شـ	ـش ش
ص	<u>S</u> <u>s</u>	صـ	ـصـصـ	ـص ص
ض	<u>D</u> <u>d</u>	ضـ	ـضـ ضـ	ـض ض
ط	<u>T</u>	طـ	ـطـ طـ	ـط ط

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Arabic letter	Roman letter	Arabic letter		
		Beginning	Middle	End
	t̲			
ظ	D̲h̲ d̲h̲	ظ	ظـ ـظـ	ـظ ظ
ع	'I 'Ā'A ' Ū U 'Ī	عـ	ـعـ ـعـ	ـع ع
غ	Gh gh	غـ	ـغـ ـغـ	ـغ غ
ف	F f	فـ	ـف ـفـ	ـف ف
ق	Q q	قـ	ـق ـقـ	ـق ق
ك	K k	كـ	ـك ـكـ	ـك اك
ل	L l	لـ	ـل ـلـ	ـل ل
م	M m	مـ	ـمـ ـمـ	ـم م
ن	N n	نـ	ـنـ ـنـ	ـن ن
هـ	H h	هـ	ـه ـهـ	ـه ـة ه
و	W w	و	ـو ـوْ و	ـو و
ي	Y y	يـ	يـْ ـيـ يـ	ـي ي
Short Fat̲h̲ah (´) Long Fat̲h̲ah (ـا)	A a ā Ā	آ	ـَ ـَا	omittedـَا

Arabic letter	Roman letter	Arabic letter		
		Beginning	Middle	End
Short <u>D</u>ammah(ُ)	U u		ـُ ـُو	omitted ـُو
Long <u>D</u>ammah(ـُو)	ū Ū			
Short Kasrah (ِ)	I i		ـِ ـِي	omitted ـِي
Long Kasrah(ـِ)	ī Ī			

Rule 3:

Arabic letters that have one simple basic phonetic Roman letter should be transliterated according to the Romanization System as follows:

Arabic Letter			Transliteration Letters	pronunciation	Examples	
beginning	middle	end			Arabic	Romanization
بـ	ـبـ ـب	بـ ب ب	B b	Bā'/باء	بَغداد	**B**aghdād
تـ	ـتـ ـت	ـت ت	T t	Tā'/تاء	توِنس	**T**ūnis
جـ	ـجـ ـج	ـج ج	J j	Jīm/جيم	جِنين	**J**inīn
د	ـد د	ـد د	D d	Dāl/دال	دارفور	**D**ārfūr
ر	ـر ر	ـر ر	R r	Rā'/راء	رَفَح	**R**afa<u>h</u>
ز	ـز ز	ـز ز	Z z	Zayn/زين	زَبَداني	**Z**abadānī
سـ	ـسـ	ـس س	S s	Sīn/سين	سوريَّة	**S**ūriyyah

Arabic Letter			Transliteration Letters	pronunciation	Examples	
beginning	middle	end			Arabic	Romanization
	ســ					
فـ	ـفـ ف	ـف ف	F f	فاء/Fā'	فاس	**F**ās
قـ	ـقـ ق	ـق ق	Q q	قاف/Qāf*	قِنا	**Q**inā
كـ	ـكـ ك	ـك ك	K k	كاف/Kāf	كَرْبَلاء	**K**arbalā'
لـ	ـلـ ل	ـل ل	L l	لام/Lām	ليبيا	**L**ībyā
مـ	ـمـ ـم	ـم م	M m	ميم/Mīm	مَقديشو	**M**aqdīshū
نـ	ـنـ ن	ـن ن	N n	نون/Nūn	نُواكْشو ط	**N**uwākshūt
هـ	ـهـ هـ	ـه ـة ه	H h	هاء/Hā'	هِلالِيّة	**H**ilāliyya**h**
و	ـو و	ـو و	W w	واو/Wāw	وَكْرَه	**W**akrah
يـ	ـيـ يـ	ـي ي ـي	Y y	ياء/Yā'	يافا	**Y**āfā

Rule 4:

Arabic letters (ح، ص، ض، ط) which haven't equivalent in Roman Alphabet by adding sound mark (underline) beneath its equivalent letter to magnify its pronunciation as follows:

Arabic Letter	Transliteration Letters		Pronunciation	Examples	
				Arabic	Romanization
ح	<u>H</u>	<u>h</u>	حاء/<u>H</u>ā'	حَوَلِّي	<u>H</u>awallī
ص	<u>S</u>	<u>s</u>	صاد/<u>S</u>ād	صَفَاقِس	<u>S</u>afāqis
ض	<u>D</u>	<u>d</u>	ضاد/<u>D</u>ād	ضَبْعَة	<u>D</u>ab'ah
ط	<u>T</u>	<u>t</u>	طاء/<u>T</u>ā'	طَنْجَة	<u>T</u>anjah

Rule 5:

The Arabic letters (ت، خ، ذ، ش، غ) are written in Roman letters on the form of compound bilateral letters (Digraphs) each of two letters as follows:

Arabic Letter	Transliteration Letters		Pronunciation	Examples	
				Arabic	Romanization
ث	Th	th	ثاء/Thā'	ثَقِيف	**Th**aqīf
خ	Kh	kh	خاء/Khā'	خانيونس	**Kh**ānyūnis
ذ	Dh	dh	ذال/DHāl	ذيبان	**Dh**ībān
ش	Sh	sh	شين/Shīn	الشارقة	Ash Sh**ā**rqah
غ	Gh	gh	غين/Ghayn	غدير	**Gh**adīr

Rule 6:

The letter ظ in Romanization is written in two compound Roman underlined letters (Digraphs +Diacritic Mark) as follows:

ظ (<u>Dh</u>, <u>dh</u>) for example: ظهران (<u>Dh</u>ahrān), ظفار (<u>Dh</u>afār), is pronounce like (The) in English but from throat not from mouth (Guttural).

Rule 7:

'Ayn (') and Hamzah (') are written as (Diacritical Signs), Hamzah (') and 'ayn (') as follows:

Hamzah at the beginning of the word:

- The diacritical sign (') is not written but represented by its mark:
  - If it is opener (Fat<u>h</u>a), Hamzah should be written A in Roman letters. Example: أبو كمال   **A**bū Kamāl.
  - If it is a closer (<u>D</u>ammah), it should be written U in Roman letters. Example: أم قَصْر   **U**mm Qa<u>s</u>r.
  - If it is a breaker (kasrah), it should be written I in Roman letters. Example: عَيْن إبل   'Ayn **I**bil.
- When Hamzat al Qati' situated at the beginning of the word, it is pronounced and written such as:
  أيّوب   '**A**yyūb
  وادي أيّوب Wád**Ī** '**A**yyūb
  - When Hamzat al Wasl situated at the beginning of the word, it is pronounced and not written such as:
    ابن الوليـــد   Ibn al Walīd

  - Hamzah at the middle of the word should be written independently.

    For example: لؤلؤة Lu'lu'ah , قراءات Qirā'āt , سيئون Si'ūn

  - Hamzah at the end of the word should be written independently.

    For example: الزرقاء Az Zarqā'

'Ayn anywhere it situated in the word:

1- If it bears a vowel sound, it should be written before the letter:

With opener (Fat<u>h</u>a)	' A	'a	Example: عكّا عَـدَن	'Akkā 'Adan
With closer (Dhammah)	'U	'u	Example: عُمــان	'Umān
With breaker (kasrah)	'I	'i	Example: عِــراق سبعِـل	'Irāq Sib'il
With long opener	'Ā	'ā	Example: عارَيّا	'Ārayyā
With long closer	'Ū	'ū	Example: باعون	Bā'ūn
With long breaker	'Ī	'ī	Example: قَبعيت رَعيت	Qab 'īt Ra'īt

2- When it is silent: it should be written independently without any voice or sign. For example: بَعْلَبَك Ba'labak , بِئر السبع Bi'r as Sabi'

Rule 8:

Vowel letters are written in Roman letters as follows

a- The Alef:
   At the beginning of the word: it follows the Hamzah in the rule 7.
   At the Middle of the word: ā , for example: كَمال Kamāl
   At the end of the word   : ā , for example: مادبـا Mādabā
   Alif Maqsourah   : á , for example: سَلوى Salwá
b- Al Waw:
   It is written (و W) wherever it is found , for example: وادي Wādī
c- Al Yā':
   It is written يـ Y wherever it is found , for example: ياجوز Yājūz

Rule 9:

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

(1) Al Shaddah (ّ) Doubling the letter, for example:

الدمَام   Ad Dammām

المَسْعوديّة Al Mas'ūdiyyah

عَمّـان   'Ammān

(2) Al Maddah or the strenched Alif is the combination of the Hamzah with the Alif, it is written as follows:

At the beginning of the word: (آ   Ā) for example: آرام Ārām

At the middle of the word   : (آ   'ā) for example: مُوَاب Mu'āb

Rule 10:

Definite article (Al الـ):

(1) Before the 14 letters called lunar letters:

(A أ, B ب, Jج , H ح, Kh خ , ' ع, Gh غ, F ف, Q ق, K كـ, L ل, M م, H هـ, W و, Yي), it is written as it is pronounce originally (Al الـ) and the lunar letters keep its original pronunciation as follows:

المَغْرب Al Maghrib , الكُوَيت Al Kuwayt , القَيْروان Al Qyrawān

(2) Before the 14 letters called solar letters:

(T ت, TH ث, D د, DH ذ, R ر, Z ز, S س, SH ش, S ص, D   ض, T ط, DH ظ, L ل, N ن), it is written by doubling the first part of solar letter and pronounced Hamzah as follows:

الشارقة   Ash Shriqah

الرياض   Ar Riyād

كَفْر الزيات Kafr az Zayyāt

الدَوْحة   Ad Dawhah

(3) The first letter of the definition is written in a capital letter with a capital letter, as well as the first letter of the name and the second small, and no plural sign is placed between them.

as follows:

الزَيتون   Az Zaytūn   and notAz-Zaytūn

الخرطوم   Al Khartūm and not Al-Khartūm

Note: There should be one space between the definite article (Al) and the word.

Rule 11:

Tā' Marbūtah (ة), Tanwīn, at the end of the word:

(1) Tā' Marbūtah should be lightened to (h), pronounced and transliterated (h) to Roman letters as follows:

عَرّابة   'Arrābah

قَسَنطينَة   Qasanṯīnah

And should be pronounced (t) if it is added to another word as follows:

دَولة ليبيا   Dawlat Lībyā

جزيرة العَرَب Jazīrat Al 'Arab

(2) Tanwīn is neglected and the last letter remains silent as follows:

جَبَلٌ   Jabal

بَلَد   Balad

Rule 12: Exonyms

a. Single Exonyms:

It is composed of one word, should be written, transliterated and pronounced in Arabic according to their original language.

b. Compound Exonyms:

If the Exonyms is composed of two or several words, in which some of them are Exonyms, it should be transliterated according to original system, the endonyms are transliterated according to Arabic Names Transliteration System such as: إميل لحّود   Emile La<u>hh</u>ūd

The Arabized Exonyms or those have been used for quite enough time, should be considered endonyms as follows:

عَيْن إِبِل   'Ayn Ibil

Ibil in Aramaic language means Irrigation.

Rule 13:

Composite names:

(1) If the name is compound, every part should be written separately. The first letter of every part should be capitalized (Capital letter) and the other letters are written in small Roman letters.

(2) No signs are used to link the different parts of the compound name.

مَنِية الضَنية Minyat a<u>d</u> <u>D</u>inniyah   وليس   Minyah-a<u>d</u>-<u>D</u>inniyyah

جِوار الحَوز Jiwār al <u>H</u>awz   وليس   Jiwār-al-<u>H</u>awz

(3) The first letter of the digraph is written capital.

جَبَل حوران Jabal <u>H</u>ūrān

(4) The compound name of two words conjunct by conjunction, should be transliterated by adding the conjunction to the definite article Al, or separately (Wa) or (Wal):

مِزْهِر والمجْذوب   Mizhir Wal Majdh<u>ŭ</u>b

المية ومية   Al Miyyah Wa Miyyah

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Rule 14:

Double Names:

Some cities may have double names known historically and internationally, so we write the Arabic name followed by the old historical name between brackets.

القُدْس	Al Quds	(Jerusalem)
جُبَيْل	Jubayl	(Byblos)
البَتْرا	Al Batrã	(Petra)
الدار البيضاء	Ad Dar al Bay<u>d</u>ā'	(Casa Blanca)
حلب	<u>H</u>alab	(Aleppo)

Rule 15:

Remarks:

Distinguish between Hamzah (') and Ayn ('):

(1) The diacritic marks may create some ambiguity between Hamzah (') and ('), they should always be distinguished.
Examples: مُعاذ   Mu'ādh
سد مأر ب   Sadd Ma'rib
مَعروب   Ma'rūb

(2) Using Diagraphs (Sh sh, Th th, Kh kh, Dh dh, Gh gh) may create some confusion, so the two letters form the Digraph may be separated by a dot (.).
مَكْحول   Mak.<u>h</u>ŭl

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(3) The word (ibn) begins with (hamzat Wasl), so it should be transliterated as (Hamzat Qati') as it is mentioned in rule 7 of this system:

ابن المقفّع   Ibn al Muqaffa'

The way of writing names must take into consideration writing the name as it is officially adopted in each country, however Ibn and Abu are written in several forms: ibn, bin, banū, banī, Abā, Abī, bū, …etc.

(4) The word "Abd" should be written separately:

عَبد المطلب   'Abd al Mu<u>t</u>talib

وليس   'Abdul Mu<u>t</u>talib

Rule 16:

Classical Arabic should be used in Romanization on letters and structure.