

that people are unwilling to stake their reputation on attesting to its literary excellence.

We should pause to consider: What other literary style can we think of which has produced an indisputably great work of literature but is at the same time guaranteed to bring the most wretched failure to anyone else who tries his hand at it?

Generally, it is not a bad idea for a writer to emulate a successful style. However, a challenge to produce a single chapter like the Quran – the shortest chapter being merely three verses of modest length – has proven impossible to meet.

We should remember that not all Arabic speakers are Muslim. Many are Christians and Jews. Some are atheists. They live all over the world. Among all of these non-Muslim Arabs, there are leading poets and prose writers and important literary critics. None of them claim that they or anyone else has produced a literary work that resembles the Quran in both style and quality.

For an Arabic speaker, this is an obvious thing. Any Arab who looks at people's attempts to write in the Quran's style usually breaks out in laughter at its awkwardness or banality.

For non-Arabic speakers, though they cannot experience this directly, they can ascertain that no serious literary claim has been made.

Granted, there is subjectivity in any literary evaluation. This would pose a problem in a challenge with a single judge or a panel of judges, or if there is a biased criterion like "only Muslims scholars can be judges".

However, there is no such restriction in the challenge.

The general consensus of the international Arabic literary community – and the Arab masses – is that nothing exists to meet the challenge. This is an objective yardstick.