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HANAN ASHRAWI
INSIDE THE TWISTED MIND
OF ARIEL SHARON

AZZA KHATTAB
THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD'S
SUPREME GUIDE SPEAKS OUT

MOHAMED BAKARI
ARE MUSLIM MEN BAD FATHERS?

ZAKI HASAN
EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION
WITH VIGGO MORTENSEN

PLUS
CELEBRATING THE MAWLID
TAKING POLLY TOYNBEE TO TASK
WAKE UP AND SMELL THE HASH!
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FROM THE PULPIT



During such times of violence, ignorance and hatred - of duplicity, bestiality and inhumanity - it is perhaps more difficult but even more necessary to talk about the healing, loving and inspirational nature of the *Mawlid* - celebration of the birth of the Noble Prophet.

This year the Milad un-Nabi, which falls on the twelfth of Rabi al-Awwal, will be celebrated on May 1. Throughout most of the Muslim world it is an occasion of joy - a time to reflect and celebrate, to recite poetry and sing songs; a time to renew and regain our compassion through reminiscing, admiring and learning about his perfect example. The depth and breadth of the Mawlid celebration is one way of measuring the Islamicity of a society. The more veneration and love a community shows for the Prophet, upon whom be blessings and peace, the more likely it is a community guided by authentic Islamic principles.

It is obvious to any objective observer that groups which fanatically oppose the Mawlid tend to always be those who are violent, irresponsible and reductionists. People who have lost touch with the essence of the faith and, basically, their humanity.

The Mawlid is an exercise in pure love. For centuries it has been the basis of training hearts in the art of loving and adoration. A heart that has learnt to love the Noble Prophet will never be seduced by hatred or anger.

From the Muslim point of view, the Prophet is the symbol of perfection of both the human person and human society. He is the prototype of the individual and the collectivity. As such he bears certain characteristics which can only be discovered by studying the traditional accounts of him. The many Western works on the Prophet, with very few exceptions, are useless from this point of view no matter how much historical data they provide for the reader. The same holds true in fact for the new type of biographies of the Prophet written by modernised Muslims who would like at all cost to make the Prophet an ordinary man and neglect systematically any aspect of his being that does not conform to a rationalistic framework they have adopted a priori, mostly as a result of either influence from or reaction to the modern Western point of view.

The profound characteristics of the Prophet which have guided the Islamic community over the centuries and have left an indelible mark on the consciousness of the Muslim cannot be discerned save through the traditional sources and the *Hadith* (Prophetic traditions), and of course, the Quran itself which bears the perfume of the soul of the person through whom it was revealed.

The universal characteristics of the Prophet are not the same as his daily actions and day to day life. They are, rather, characteristics which issue forth from his personality as a particular spiritual prototype. Seen in this light there are essentially three qualities. Prof Seyyed Hossein Nasr describes them as thus: "First, the Prophet possessed the quality of piety in its most universal sense, that quality which attaches man to God. The Prophet was in that sense pious. He had a profound piety which inwardly attached him to God, that made him place the interest of God before everything else including himself.

"Secondly, he had a quality of combativeness, of always being actively engaged in combat against all that negated the Truth and disrupted harmony. Externally, it meant fighting wars, either militarily, political or social ones, the wars which the Prophet named the "little holy war" (*al-jihad al-asghar*). Inwardly this combativeness meant a continuous war against the carnal soul (*nafs*), against all that in man tends towards the negation of God and His Will, the "great holy war" (*al-jihad al-akbar*).

"Finally, the Prophet possessed the quality of magnanimity in its fullness. His soul displayed a grandeur which every devout Muslim feels. He is for the Muslim nobility and magnanimity personified."

During the Mawlid, when one thinks of the Prophet who is to be emulated, it is the image of one who is severe with himself and with the false and the unjust, and charitable towards the world that surrounds him. On the basis of these virtues of strength and sobriety on the one hand and charity and generosity on the other, he is serene, extinguished in the Truth. He is that warrior on horseback who halts before the mountain of Truth, passive towards the Divine Will, active towards the world, hard and sober towards himself and kind and generous towards the creatures about him.

The love of the Prophet - and celebration of the Mawlid - is incumbent upon all Muslims and especially upon those who aspire towards the saintly life. This love must not be understood in an individualistic sense. Rather, the Prophet is loved because he symbolises that harmony and beauty that pervade all things, and displays in their fullness those virtues, the attainment of which allow man to realise his Godly nature.

"Lo! Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet, O ye who believe! Ask blessings upon him and salute him with a worthy salutation." [33:56]

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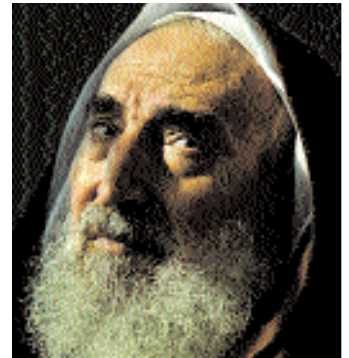
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OPEN LETTER TO ATHAR YAWAR



Dear Athar Yawar,

Peace, or is it pieces, be upon you.

You don't know me, but let me take this opportunity to introduce myself.

The name's Butt, Jamal Butt. I am in my teens and hail from the Midlands. It has always been my ambition to become a great writer one day, Inshallah, ofcourse.

Recently, I began working as a trainee journalist at *Q-News*, the most trail-blazing publication of its kind in the world. Thank God I don't have to explain to you what happens to somebody in my position. I am told things have not changed since you were here almost four years ago: one minute you walk through the door and the next you are assigned to a story. Mine was to find out how Muslims living on the mood a) determine their Eid Ul Adha b) got their visas for hajj and c) would like their *Q-News* delivered to them. Ofcourse, the deadline was yesterday.

But all this is not the real reason why I am writing this open letter to you. I will be honest: I am writing this letter because you get on my nerves every single day I am at *Q-News*.

Let me explain. You might not know this but your ghost - wearing a Sudanese-like *jalabbiyya* and a swirling Dervish hat - haunts the untidy shelves, flickering screens and buzzing phones at *Q-News*. The Editor in Chief starts each day with a well-known *Q*-mantra which goes like this: "If only Athar Yawar was here; If only Athar Yawar was here." I haven't actually counted but I suspect he says it at least 77 times each time.

Naturally, my first response to this was to ask who this geezer, Athar Yawar, is. I will never forget the expression on the Editor's face: "What is a kebab? What is a scarf? Is Urdu going to be spoken in jannah? Is Imran Khan a lamp post?" he spluttered

out in one of those rare moments when he actually loses his temper.

"Athar Yawar," he said, pausing for a moment as if hinting that this person could be up in the heavens, "Ahh. Athar Yawar was one of our trainee journalists. You should try to be like him. He was the best." End of conversation.

So began my search for Athar Yawar. Soon I found you - in the pages of *Q-News*. In the first issue of the publication a teenage boy with glasses (less handsome than me!) looked at me with one of those smiles - the self-assured know-it-all one.

For hours I looked at the picture as I tried to fit it to the *Q*-legend. Believe me, they have a file on you at this place. Only a few, after undergoing the obligatory rituals, are allowed access to it.

What emerges from the file is a story that would make Clark Kent turn red and blue. There, preserved for eternity, are pages and pages of "original" copy produced by the prodigy from Surbiton: on the sides are the handwritten remarks by the Editor: "What a joy! No editing! No subbing! Perfect copy!"

Among the documents that might one day fetch millions are notes scribbled during your famous interview with Bishop Desmond Tutu in the summer of 1992. For obvious reasons, I am not in a position to say what exactly the notes say. But only somebody of your IQ could have made such a normal expression as "repeating the same thing again" so profoundly historical.

I could go on and on. However, the point is to tell you that your ghost at *Q-News* has made my life miserable. It keeps peeking over my shoulder and chortling away at my work. I could swear it kept saying such things as: "Ho ho. That's a split infinitive," "Got your tense wrong again, ha ha ha."

If it was possible, I would have murdered your ghost (in cold blood, what else would such a jinn have in his veins!)

So please write back preferably with suggestions on how to exorcise the *Q*-Office and myself of your ghost. Only halal methods will be implemented.

I have nothing else to say except to ask you one earth-shattering question: How much did you get paid at *Q-News*? At the moment, they have me each day for a price of a chicken *biryani*, a jug of *lassi*, two *ras-malay* and a sweet *pan*.

Take care and good luck in your forthcoming exams. I would like to say, however, that wasting an evening at the Oxford Union listening to the 'confessions of O J Simpson' is not exactly the best way of preparing for your medical exams: unless, of course, it is forensic medicine you are studying with the intention of applying for a job with the Los Angeles Police Department.

That wouldn't be such a bad idea. It would mean a fair chance of us mere mortals to get a permanent job at *Q-News*. ■

INTERN AT Q!

Q-News is looking for self-motivated and dynamic young people to train as journalists, project managers and administrators between now and September 2004.

This is not a job for the faint-hearted. You will be thrown in at the deep end where you will be expected to find and develop ideas based on your own initiative.

To this end, a basic knowledge of the mosaic that is the British Muslim community is essential.

You will be totally dedicated, very flexible and ideally, committed to pursuing a career in the media.

We are looking for candidates who have fresh ideas and the ability to carry them through from thoughts to exciting and relevant stories and projects.

An aptitude for learning is more important than actual experience.

If you feel you fit the bill, visit <http://www.q-news.com> for further details.

The Rihla Program

Dar al-Islam - Abiqui, NM



The Rihla Program is a near month long annual course that takes place over the summer season designed for students to gain exposure to traditional Islamic education in an environment that connects them to the vast beauty and wonder of nature.

The approach of the Rihla program is rooted in the authentic narration known as the Jibril Hadith which acts as a basis for the three dimensional approach to our tradition which will be the core focus of the program: Islam (fundamentals of action), Iman (fundamentals of belief), and Ihsan (spiritual excellence).

TEACHERS

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TOPICS

Fiqh - Islamic Jurisprudence
Ihsan - Spiritual Excellence
Sira - Prophetic Biography
Aqidah - Islamic Creed
Tajwid - The art of Qur'anic Recitation
Hadith - Prophetic Narrations
Tafsir - Qur'anic Exegesis



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INSIDE THE CREDIBILITY GAP

“O YOU WHO BELIEVE,
 STAND OUT FIRMLY FOR
 JUSTICE AS WITNESSES TO
 GOD EVEN AS IS IT AGAINST
 YOURSELVES OR YOUR KIN.”
 WHILE JUSTICE IS NOT THE
 SOLE PRESERVE OF ANY
 COMMUNITY, MUSLIMS HAVE
 A PARTICULAR DUTY TO BE
 WITNESSES TO TRUTH EVEN
 WHEN THEIR OWN
 BRETHREN ARE IN THE
 WRONG. WHY THEN HAS
 THE RECENT CALL FOR
 VIGILANCE IN THE
 MOSQUES HIT SUCH A
 NERVE? HASSAN SCOTT
 ASSESSES THE IMPACT.



have picked up on. Indeed, in much Muslim discourse, what we say and how we say it do not clearly match the values we claim. In political terms, there has been too much spin - problems, such as extremism, are claimed to be less severe than they are or the responsibility for them is deflected elsewhere.

The recent - perhaps belated - decision by the Muslim Council of Britain, to urge UK imams to state clearly the incompatibility of terrorist activity with Islam and to urge co-operation with the authorities, has clearly hit a nerve - and not just with Omar Bakri Muhammad and his acolytes, who have said it is 'verging on apostasy', but also with ordinary Muslims.

Far from being an act of 'apostasy', mosques and representative bodies such as the MCB have not yet realised the seriousness of the situation, or gone far enough in educating British Muslims about the threat and possible consequences of potential atrocities in the UK. I say this not because it is expedient, but because it is in accord with Islamic principles, in particular that evil should not be met with evil. Yet it is unusual to see such moral arguments put forward by our leaders, our imams (with some notable exceptions such as in Dudley and Brighton) or in widely distributed publications such as the Muslim News. Consequently, it is no wonder that some Muslims have reacted with suspicion to the MCB's decision.

Instead, we often abandon the moral high ground for arguments based on moral equivalence, such as those put forward in the 2001 MCB book on terrorism *The Quest for Sanity* which essentially said '9/11 was bad, but what happened after was equally bad'. I am not say-

ing that such "representative" bodies are guilty of bad faith or that their real intention is to excuse terrorist acts. To explain such muddled and equivocal thinking we must look deeper.

To put our failure in a broader context, author Ziauddin Sardar has argued, "Muslims everywhere are in deep denial... there is an aversion to seeing terrorism as a Muslim problem and a Muslim responsibility". This denial often goes hand in hand with what Shaykh Hamza Yusuf has called the "discourse of anger". Many Muslim leaders, imams and opinion-makers habitually respond to issues such as Palestine solely on the political level, by stoking up a sense of particular injustice and victimisation. Their intention may just be to try to encourage Muslims to protest, but this indignation is being used by some to build up a feeling that Muslims everywhere are facing conspiracies and humiliation. Clearly our representatives also need to articulate an authentic and balanced response to oppression - one that enables Muslims to be pro-active rather than reactive.

Bodies such as the MCB seem to have little awareness of the wider context of extremism, of its connection with the "discourse of anger" and with distorted interpretations of the Quran and Hadith - for example, the obsession with bida (innovation) - that are now widespread in the community. In a Radio Five programme on the growth of Muslim extremism in Britain, the MCB spokesman suggested that extremists were just a few mischievous and criminal elements with 'no real connection with Islam'.

I hope this position is reconsidered. Doubtlessly, the MCB face great challenges, such as the pervading sense of victimisation in the Muslim community, which should not be underestimated. Confronting such difficulties and opposition is, surely, the essence of leadership. One thing is essential: that there be a wide-ranging debate within the Muslim community itself.

The problem for bodies such as the MCB is that if they state that they are unreservedly against terrorism but are extensively critical of the government's measures against it, their sincerity will be put in doubt. Of course, there will be cause for criticism, but criticism must come with an alternative. In the absence of this alternative, for which Muslims need to take some responsibility, the feeling of victimisation will grow. Muddying the waters or failing to acknowledge the extent of the problem will not further the Muslim interest. ■

The behaviours and values of Muslims are now being intensively questioned. First Kilroy, then government minister Dennis McShane and now former archbishop George Carey and Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor have asked where our loyalties lie and whether we have been strong and clear in our condemnation of terrorism. Are their comments all to be taken as yet more examples of Islamophobia or is there some truth in here that we can learn from?

As some of our critics have suggested, it is not the great majority of 'ordinary' Muslims who should face scrutiny, but those who claim to lead or represent us (and on whose knowledge and opinions we may rely). Overall, the policy statements of our representatives on extremism have been ambivalent and this has contributed to a serious 'credibility gap' - and it is this gap that George Carey and others

DEAR MS. POLLY TOYNBEE...

HAVING GROWN UP WITH OFFICIAL MULTICULTURALISM, CANADIAN ACTOR AND DIRECTOR ANAND RAJARAM HAS A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON THE CURRENT DEBATE. HE TAKES ISSUE WITH POLLY TOYNBEE'S RECENT MISSIVE ON THE MATTER. ISN'T IT TIME THE BRITAIN OF DICKENS AND SHAKESPEARE ALSO BECAME THE BRITAIN OF MEERA SYAL AND ZADIE SMITH?



"If we go along with a dream that we can stop wars, change the movement of the planet, we are lost in the same tragic naiveté that leads to revolutions that fail and other global calamities. What one must do is not cultivate one's garden as though the rest of the world doesn't exist, but introduce all that one wishes to introduce into the widest field into one's own area, where, like with acupuncture, a true touch can reach an actual nerve."
- Peter Brook

Regarding your recent article, "Why Trevor is right", I am absolutely at a loss to understand your position. Please take, for example, the following statement: "it was an error to let alien communities stay in their silos. He wants more teaching of British cultural values, even of Dickens and Shakespeare, and not just to black Britons but to white children, whose heritage is lost in a kind of cultural paralysis."

It is tragic that "white" children have lost their heritage. They need more Chuck and Bill.

Yet, it is wrong to "let" non-white communities "stay in their silos," that is, preserve their heritage. Whites preserving British cultural heritage is a noble deed whereas non-whites maintaining cultural ties is to be discouraged. It seems to me that modern Britain is no longer the Britain merely of Dickens and Shakespeare, but also the Britain of Rushdie, Syal and Zadie Smith.

You also suggest immigrants need to "embrace modern British values". Is the emphasis on "modern" or on "British"? "Modern", by my understanding of the current state of the world ought to be inclusive. In this I think we agree. Where we disagree is on the definition of inclusivity. Assimilation is not inclusive.

As we increasingly emerge from our insular-minded villages and venture into the world, or have the world wander into ours, what is "modern" cannot be selectively defined by any one group. The world communicates, not with distant threatening drums, but in ways recognizing our shared humanity. The unified international reaction against the US/British action in the Middle East was unprecedented in the history of human civilization.

In light of this, praising Mr. Phillips' statement, "'multiculturalism' has had its day", demonstrates insensitivity towards the multicultural masses that inhabit "modern" Britain. Multiculturalism is not a fad. It may have been treated as one, like the current fascination with the kitschy aspects of Bollywood, but in itself, it is recognises the diverse needs of many. The problem is that it serves them from within a Eurocentric frame of mind. This mindset proposes narrow, insipid solutions to "problems" it has not defined or understood.

You declare, assuming much and knowing little, that "Muslim teaching on women staying one step behind will not do: respect for religion cannot take precedence over respect for British law."

How well-versed are you in the religion of

Islam to be making such a ridiculous statement? Whatever you may think, I know that the idea of the hijab, partly cultural and partly religious (and in many parts of the world, the two are virtually inseparable), is about modesty in dress.

"Modern British values" may find such thinking antiquated. However, should I choose to be a nudist and find the "Modern British" value system prudish, may I parade in the nude in public? Logic will say yes. Then again, "Modern British Values" are not based on logic, but on the values of the majority of the community. As this community grows in size, diversity and cultural education, the value system will change in spite of certain individuals who will try to retain it in all its antiquated glory. France may declare the foulard banned from schools, but by doing so, they are declaring intolerance of varied expressions of faith, demonstrating a profound misunderstanding of the value of religion in the lives of people.

Due to this profound misunderstanding, it is easy to decide that "Muslim equals potential terrorist". And as such, it is easy to decide that integration (read assimilation) of immigrants will stem the tide of those who may wander to remote ideological shores. Here in Canada, groups of French nationalists have been vying for independence since the time of Confederation. Just as in Northern Ireland and Spain, every policy to assimilate the extremists has met with more extremism.

Terrorism is not bound to any one religion. It is an ideology that arises as an extreme response to iniquity and the response to iniquity is not more injustice. The response is not assimilation. The response is not surveillance. The response is to end injustice. You can start by learning a foreign language. You can help by pressuring the government to cancel out "third world debt". You can help by pressuring the government to stop indirectly funding terrorist organizations, stop putting in puppet dictators, stop creating wars for oil. You can help by not putting money before people.

Attempting to squelch another's ideology without fully understanding her or his perspective breeds ignorance. Preach understanding not "tolerance". The so-called "cult of west haters" is actually the "cult of the angry indigent and those who support them". Understand the concerns of the disadvantaged and deal with them. By setting them aside for smear and ridicule you only fuel their frustration. Do not be one of those that pour oil on their fire. ■

HOW WILL AL QAEDA VOTE COME NOVEMBER?

Most recently we have seen two examples of Al-Qaeda's political acumen. Their attack in Spain was so well timed that it swung the elections in favour of the anti-war socialist party.

The second instance of Al-Qaeda's political smarts is the recent incessant attacks against soft targets in Iraq and on American troops to underscore the absence of security and stability in Iraq. It probably prevented President Bush from having another "top gun" electoral campaign moment on the anniversary of the Iraq invasion.

These attacks have sent the message to the world that America's invasion of Iraq has increased terrorism not decreased it. Instead of making the world a safer place, America has now endangered its allies as the attacks on Spain and Turkey suggest.

Al Qaeda not only seems to understand the nature of politics and media in democratic societies but also knows how to work the system to gain strategic advantages.

It would be naïve to assume that Al Qaeda will not vote in the coming American elections in November 2004. The issue that we must ponder is how is it going to cast its ballot? To understand how Al Qaeda will vote, we must try to figure out who it prefers in the White House, Bush or Kerry?

IF JOHN KERRY WINS

If John Kerry wins in November he will probably make the following changes in American foreign policy:

1. He will roll back American unilateralism and seek more international cooperation from Europe, South Asia, Middle East and the UN. Instead of a coalition of the coerced, Kerry will seek a truly international coalition. Coalitions built through a multilateral process will present fewer fissures in the anti-terror campaign for Al Qaeda to exploit.
2. Most probably John Kerry will be interested in reducing rather than expanding the scope and objectives of counter-terrorism. Neocon goals such as reshaping the Middle East, reforming Islam, reconstituting the United States defence doctrines and redefining old Europe, will be abandoned and under Kerry the US will concentrate more on eliminating Al Qaeda and associates than anything else.
3. Much of soft anti-Americanism worldwide is a result of anti-Bushism. Regardless of what Americans think, most of the world finds President Bush uncouth, obnoxious, arrogant, crude and a bully. His defeat itself will reduce anti-Americanism globally and will increase American prospects for victory in this war on terror.

Will Al Qaeda be happy with these developments? I doubt it. Anti-Bushism has helped them divide the world and the growing anger in the Muslim World as a result of George Bush's policies has helped them gain recruits, clones and support. If Bush loses in November they will lose an important asset. Al Qaeda will become the sole target of US energies and surely that must be a disturbing thought to even those who relish the idea of dying while fighting America.

IF GEORGE W. BUSH WINS

If George W. Bush wins in spite of a terrible economy and millions of job losses:

" He might interpret the victory as an endorsement of his anti-terror strategy and probably continue to expand the scope and objectives of his war on terror. Perhaps regime changes in Iran, Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia may be back on the to do list. It is possible that Spain may also figure on the list of regime changes.

" It is also possible that many European and Middle Eastern states may stop cooperating with the US. Already many nations resent President Bush's policies and style, they may begin to actively oppose his global agenda. The easiest way to do so is to withdraw from the coalition and call for more UN participation. We might see more and more nations following Spain and disengaging from the American bandwagon.

All of the above will help Al Qaeda pursue its strategic goals to undermine the West, hurt Americans and American interests, destabilise politics and economies in South Asia and the Middle East and cement the growing cleavages between the US and Europe and the US and the Muslim World.

It is in Al Qaeda's interest that President Bush stays in the White House. Thus, at the moment they are anti-American but Pro-Bush. Come November they will vote for Bush.

HOW YOU MAY ASK?

Fear is the key. If the American voters feel reasonably secure on the terrorism issue then they will have time to focus on economy, unemployment and on cultural issues such as the gay marriage controversy

If at the time of the elections the priorities of American voters are: Economy, Culture, and then Security, or Economy, Security and Culture, John Kerry will probably win. However if by November the voter is either thinking: Security, Culture and then Economy, Bush will win with a landslide. And if the voter is thinking: Security, Economy and Culture, Bush may win narrowly.

Al Qaeda can make Security a more pressing issue than Economy by increasing their activities and even by targeting America again. Karl Rove, the President's political guru will probably work to ensure that Culture continues to figure in the American voter's mind.

But if Bin Laden and Al Zawahiri are both arrested/killed soon, then security will be out of the reckoning and Kerry will win unless new jobs are created in hurry.

As we approach November, Bin Laden and associates will increase the frequency and intensity of their attacks to ensure that George W. Bush Wins. Al Qaeda will be determined to make security a bigger issue than economy so the worse the economy gets the worse terrorism we are likely to see. ■

"SPEAK FROM YOUR HEART, NOT FROM YOUR FEARS"

ON MARCH 20TH MILLIONS MARCHED AGAINST THE CONTINUED OCCUPATION OF IRAQ. SERGEANT OMAR MASRY SEES THINGS A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY. AN AMERICAN MUSLIM RESERVIST SERVING WITH THE US ARMY'S CIVIL AFFAIRS UNIT IN BAGHDAD, HE IS WITNESSING A CHANGING IRAQ FIRST HAND. THE PATH TO PEACE IS NOT EASY BUT, HE ARGUES, IN THE ABSENCE OF SANCTIONS AND DICTATORSHIP, IRAQIS FINALLY HAVE A SHOT AT CREATING A JUST SOCIETY.



As the months pass by here in Iraq, soldiers are being put into roles where they have to interact with Iraqis in a more relaxed setting. That means some soldiers who have never left their home state before, are now eating next to Iraqi Civil Defence Corp recruits in chow halls, or looking at a row of magazines in the Post Exchange next to a *niqabi* reading a women's fitness magazine. It is, for lack of a better word, "cute", when you see a tough looking infantry captain doing the traditional Arab male kiss on the cheeks when a contractor comes by or he checks up on the local politicians in his assigned sector.

I came to Iraq in April 2003 along with my hopes and fears. Would my leadership make decisions that would create cultural backlashes or would they become so accommodating of the local political situation that we would become caught up in a form of gridlock - with nothing changing and our tour of duty stretching out longer than necessary?

I remember when the war first ended many NGOs rushed into town, some competent and focused, others well-meaning but disorganised. They would meet with the military to find out the security situation, share knowledge, and make sure we weren't duplicating efforts. Some of the NGOs had charters that wouldn't let them interact with us, or let us be seen with them. Others that were contracted by USAID or DfID (UK) had a direct relationship with us.

One day an NGO working with Palestinian refugees showed up. These weren't refugees in the sense they were living in tents after having just left their native land. They had been there for up to 50 years, some of them receiving subsidised rent from the former

regime, much to the resentment of many Iraqis. Every day, they had some sort of drama. First, they wanted to carry weapons, and then they kept having other Iraqi agencies bring up the Palestinian issue. At first I didn't really catch the significance, but then I realised their worry was that the US was going to make all the Palestinians into Iraqi citizens, forcing them to abandon any right of return. Then they came back asking for an NGO to partner with them to buy rental housing for a year. At this point, the other NGOs decided to just politely make fun of them asking if they would consider Iraqis worthy as well of subsidised housing and maybe two chickens in every family's pot too. Such resentments are not easily resolved.

The next drama was over the female interpreters working for us. The US military was and still is hurting for Arabic speaking soldiers so we have to hire many Iraqi interpreters. A lot of them live or work very closely with the teams they go out with and while there was a lot of distrust or apprehension at first, the interpreters realised they were taking bigger risks than the soldiers were, since those opposed to our presence could go after their family or friends for "collaborating" with us. One day a female interpreter came to me in tears. This meek, soft spoken *muhajiba* had just heard that the imam in her area was making accusations of impropriety about the Iraqi women working with us. In a country that's roughly 65% female (thanks to the many wars) there's always a few looking for a green card, but most of the Iraqi females were quite professional and held themselves up well. Not only that, I would hear our own officers assigned to some of the combat units put out guidance such as: "If a picture was taken of you sitting next to an Iraqi female and



she was dressed in a manner that would make you not want your wife back home to see it, send her back home to change.”

So bearing this in mind I went up to the *Assassins Gate* - where a car bomb had recently gone off - and found an Iraqi wearing a business suit in the full heat of the sun looking for a job. I offered him roughly three months salary to go and bring three Imams from the mosques near the translator's house. Somewhat puzzled to be summoned to the Republican Guard Palace by an Arab-American soldier, the three Imams showed up ready to defend their position. After a long discussion, requiring me to disprove one conspiracy theory after another, I started making some progress. The final blow to their rhetoric was when I told them, “Look, I don't care if you love or hate the Americans but let us be honest: a country that should have so much is very broken. I tell the Americans I work with, when they find out I am Muslim, that I do not care if they hate me because I am Muslim or have Arab blood, but what I don't like is when someone believes something false out of ignorance. If you want to demonstrate or speak out against an injustice please do so, but speak from your heart, not from your fears”.

It was at that point that we reached some mutual understanding and heaved a big sigh of relief. We bid each other farewell and I walked back inside our operations centre only to have a Colonel and a Captain show me the pamphlets they wanted to distribute to the Iraqis in their assigned area and asked for my advice. I couldn't help but think, “Not bad for a 23 year old whose only experience in the Middle East was a two month trip at 16 to Lebanon.”

Now, as we move towards political transition, our roles begin

to change. Bureaucracy takes shape, reconstruction projects on a grand scale start to become realities on the ground, and newer troops arrive and with them a changing attitude. I hear less of the “I'm a one man army” sentiment and more of a “hey, what can we do to improve relations with this neighbourhood and that mosque” mindset. Far from faultless, it seems to be something the popular media likes to ignore since it lacks the apparent “sexiness” of pathetic attempts at anarchy created by small number of people in a population of 25 million.

One day, I went to a women's issues meeting and there was a few military folk, a few USAID workers, a few American NGO representatives and some Iraqi women there. After the meeting I met an Iraqi-American Muslim woman and we began to lament the dearth of professional Arab and Muslim American groups working in Iraq. Her response was “they are in denial that the Iraqis are better off now that Saddam is gone. When I told others I was coming to Iraq the people at my mosque told me not to come because it would seem like I was helping Bush.”

We both agreed this was the classic Arab habit of shooting oneself in the foot to spite the foe. I myself would argue just the opposite. If Arab and Muslim American groups are here in Iraq they can serve as ombudsman, they can highlight true problems, serve as “media-savvy” advocates, promoting reform from within and creating dialogue with senior American officials that they are forced to address. Most importantly they can help a people and a society that is truly fragmented. Make no mistake about it, the battle last April is not what destroyed so much of Iraq, it was the triple cruelty of sanctions, a destructive regime, and poor policy decisions by the both regional neighbours and the international community. I will walk away from this experience with a true contempt for both how cruel comprehensive sanctions are and the need to fix underlying international problems before they fester into terrorism, religious intolerance, or tacit support for totalitarianism.

Forces of unification, the Iraqi spirit of tolerance and diversity infused with a “don't tread on me” nationalism are going to be what makes this nation a place where Shia clerics from Iran flee from “madhab persecution”, Arab liberals and reformists from Egypt escape censorship, and a nation gets treated with respect instead of being the victim of proxy wars waged in its name. The Iraqi people are far stronger than the forces of disintegration. It won't be the Americans that pull this off - we are here on their graces - it's going to be mothers that speak out against corruption headmasters and clerics that tell assassins they won't be intimidated by wahabbis and religious xenophobes. It's those people that will be the embodiment of the hadith “the ink of a scholar is far holier than the blood of a martyr.” ■



As the problem of illicit drugs pervades all sectors of society, the Muslim community has been far from immune. Statistics show that nearly nine per cent of the prison population in the UK are Muslim and nearly twenty-five per cent of them are in prison due to drug related crimes. Increasing abuse of drugs has meant that our communities are prone to increased levels of crime, disorder and violence.

FAILING STATUS QUO

After decades of trying to crack the drug problem, there has been little success in the prevention of the steady upward trajectory in the scale of drug abuse. The most recent figures show, if anything, that the situation is becoming worse. In 1998, there were nearly 3,500 drug-related deaths in Britain, a rise of nineteen per cent in four years. The number of drug abusers is doubling every four years: there are currently around 270,000 registered drug dependents - 540 times the number registered in the 1960s. For many the cycle of dependency is becoming lifelong, and treatment agencies face the prospect of developing services for the elderly. The age of first use is also falling and fifty-eight per cent of 20 to 24 year-olds now report having used illicit substances at some point in their lives.

The failure of existing strategies to effectively tackle the drugs epidemic is evident. "The war on drugs has been a resounding failure" was the bleak verdict of Rowena Young on the UK's drugs policy in a report for the Foreign Policy Centre in 2002. The report went on to say that, "Drug policy in the Western world stands out as a story of continuing, almost unmitigated failure. While other problems, from unemployment to youth crime, have proved amenable to serious debate and imaginative solutions, drug policy sometimes appears frozen."

Most Western states have long pursued a twin track approach to drug policy, combining prohibition with treatment, which offers few answers to the deeper causes of the drugs epidemic.

Prohibition has clearly failed to address the original problem it set out to curb. Instead, it has concentrated efforts on easy targets such as small time user-dealers and seizures of soft drugs. By giving

the illusion of success (arrests and seizures have long shown substantial increases year on year) while preserving the failing status quo, it is likely that prohibition has played an unhealthy role in creating the conditions for rapid sustained growth. Sized at around US \$100 billion, the global drug industry is in economic terms a huge success story, a vast global industry that accounts for as much as half of some countries' income.

While medical treatment can reduce harmful behaviour and improve physical and emotional health, its ability to transform the features of an individual's life that lead to drug misuse is doubtful. It is not at all uncommon to encounter people who have been round the treatment cycle a dozen times and some studies suggest relapse rates are as high as ninety per cent.

IDENTIFYING THE REAL CAUSES

So why has the war on drugs been a "resounding failure"? The simple reason is that the analysis of why people become addicted is flawed, and resultantly, the solutions that are advocated tend to be superficial and directed towards symptoms of the problem, rather than the underlying cause. Thinkers, politicians and health care professionals have tended to segment the drugs problem and related issues into different components - legal, medical, social, economic, etc. - without identifying and addressing the underlying cause.

One significant cause of the drug epidemic that is constantly overlooked by thinkers, politicians and health care professionals is the underlying way of life that permeates throughout every facet of Western society - capitalism. Capitalism, which advocates the separation of religion from life, posits that man is capable of deciding his own destiny in this life and should be free to do as he pleases, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain.

Western liberal values have a close association with the widespread mentality of instant sensual gratification, encapsulated by the famous Latin phrase, *Carpe Diem*, which roughly translates to "enjoy the present day". As such, there is often little need to worry about the future or the consequences of one's actions. Instant sensual gratification is what is required, and as much of it as possible. While one individual's quest for sensual gratification may be

IN AN ONGOING DEBATE ABOUT MUSLIM DRUG ABUSE, DR IMRAN WAHEED ARGUES THAT UNLESS WE OPEN OUR EYES AND BOLDLY RECOGNISE THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM, THE SITUATION WILL ONLY WORSEN.

WAKE UP AND SMELL THE HASH!

realised through drugs and binge drinking, some try to find solace in fast cars and the acquisition of vast amounts of material wealth while others engage in 'retail therapy', building up large debts in the process. Though most liberals preach self-discipline as an insurance policy against this kind of pernicious excess, there is little doubt that their call has fallen on deaf ears due to the insatiable appetite towards hedonistic behaviour that we witness in today's society.

The amount of pleasure that a drug will provide by intoxicating the mind and temporarily making people see pleasing images and enjoy a feeling of 'ecstasy' provides sufficient motivation to take it. The potential side effects, the long term problems or the cost to society do not even figure in the decision making process; the only thing that counts is instant sensual gratification. In this respect, there is little difference between the stereotypical unemployed inner city drug user and the white collar highflying city analyst who snorts cocaine after hours.

The notion of being accountable only to oneself and that material wealth and sensual pleasure are the markers of success in life, make up the very fabric of the society we live in. As a consequence of these ideas, which are often reinforced through schooling, media, music and the entertainment industry, many Muslim youth now associate with these ideas. Muslim youth are attracted towards free mixing with the opposite sex, consuming alcohol and illicit drugs and hiding their true lives from their parents and the community.

Society tends to live a basic contradiction - on the one hand trying to stem the tide of drugs while on the other hand allowing drugs to be glamorised through music, film and soap opera - which means that despite the best efforts of those who work hard to counter the drugs problem, we continue to see exponential growth in the numbers experiencing problem drug use [Drugs: Dilemma and choices, The Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2000].

CONCLUSION

Secular values, whether in the West or East, have led humankind to become confused about right and wrong, astray from the guidance of the revelation of Allah, and societal problems such as drugs and crime have spiralled out of control. Consequently, the debate needs to focus on these values and

whether they are themselves in need of rehabilitation and treatment, first and foremost. If we are to tackle this growing epidemic amongst the Muslim community, then we cannot merely accept current approaches to drugs which have failed according to many experts.

At the level of the individual who has fallen prey to drugs, it is essential that in addition to medical treatment, the primary cause behind the uptake of drugs is addressed. In my opinion, the notion that life is primarily about one's pleasure, benefit and enjoyment must be eradicated, since Islam made the worship of Allah Most High the purpose of life and not man's whim or his personal pleasures. This is not to say that every Muslim must behave in an angelic way, as this would obviously be utopian nonsense. However, having a balanced perspective about the objective in life certainly mitigates against the hedonistic culture we currently see in the West.

At the family level, there is a need to educate our children about secular liberal values so that they avoid them and don't become yet another statistic in the drugs epidemic, as Allah Most High says "O you who believe, save yourselves and your families from the fire whose fuel is Men and Stones." Our youth should take role models from the illustrious Islamic heritage such as the likes of Muhammad bin Qassim, Tariq bin Ziyad and Abdullah ibn Masud, rather than musicians, film stars, footballers or entertainers.

At a societal level, our communities need to become model communities that exhibit the best qualities that Islam gave us. Muslims in the West must not isolate themselves, nor run to adopt decadent values. We must maintain our values and demonstrate them in our trade, relationships, morals, interactions and dealings with people in the West. Our mosques must become centres of excellence and learning, not centres for sectarian division. Our marriages should be examples of tranquillity and stability. Our youth should exhibit good morals and the best attributes, rather than become by-products of 'job culture'. Our women should show the true examples of modesty and honour, resisting the call to discard their identity for the sake of acceptance.

This model community will shine in the darkness that envelops society and will act to counter the propaganda war that is fought to hide the truth about Islam and its strength of thought and civilisation. ■

DAYS OF MOURNING

AS MADRID BURNED AND THE VICTIMS WERE STILL BEING IDENTIFIED, **NURUDDIN MARGARIT** SAT IN GRANADA AND WATCHED THE COVERAGE, HORRIFIED AND HEARTBROKEN. WHILE SPANIARDS TOOK TO THE STREETS TO CALL FOR PEACE AND DEMONSTRATE AGAINST TERRORISM, HE SAT DOWN TO WRITE A LETTER TO HIS FELLOW CITIZENS. *PEACE BE UPON YOU*, HE BEGINS...



Pace, with capital letters, is what we all need after an act as terrible and despicable as the one that took place in Madrid. Peace is what we wish for all the victims - that God give them peace for having died at the hands of such unjust people. With such a painful exit from this world, May God cover them in His mercy and may He grant their families, and those who remain His kindness and peace - peace with ourselves, our families, our neighbours, our countries, and with the world.

I feel profound sadness, consternation and pain at what has happened. And if, as many facts seem to point to, this act was carried out by people who call themselves Muslims, it is, if possible, even sadder. I am writing as a Spanish Muslim, although I see humanity as universal. Nationality is something contingent; the true nature of humanity knows no borders. Islam maintained this from the very beginning. After all, doesn't the Quran tell us that "from Him we have come and to Him we return"? I know that in these days of mourning some people will want to label Islam as cruel, backwards and fanatical. Islam and terrorists will be lumped together without thought. It is possible that some Muslims, especially those living under oppressive and dreadful conditions, completely different from those we enjoy in Europe, will feel in some way that 'they deserved it' or that 'it was their time to experience some suffering too.' But deep down these people are also shocked, and I don't think, except for the criminals capable of planning and committing these attacks against mankind and God, that they harbour ill wishes towards us. We have to, despite the suffering that is upon us, try to understand their despair too. Just as we are only able to react in pain and anger at losing our loved ones and at the wounds inflicted on us, they too have long felt degraded as people.

I'm not trying to justify the unjustifiable. I only want to point out that no Muslim of real faith, who lives according to the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad, could commit such an atrocity. The shortsighted use of the sacred texts to validate these acts is evidence of their blindness.

It is time for change. Hatred towards the "West" cannot justify the silence of Muslims. One can disapprove of the actions of one's government, but that does not excuse us from struggling to isolate those who carry out these actions, to demonstrate that they do not represent Islam but, on the contrary, deep down they hate it. We have to make our unanimous opinion clear concerning these unjustifiable actions, which ignore not only human rights, but more importantly, the divine law. Hasn't God prohibited murder in the Quran? Didn't the Prophet say that for he who kills a man it is as if he killed the whole of humanity? Hasn't killing women and children and mutilating bodies been prohibited even in war?

Who are these so-called Muslims who, ignoring the divine law that they claim to represent, carry out an indiscriminate attack against people who not only are innocent, but mobilised en masse against the Iraq war? How dare they claim that Muslims love death and killing? Was this not the argument of Pharaoh, that he gave life and death? Wasn't it for this he received divine punishment?

I believe now is the time to state clearly that people who carry out such atrocities cannot be considered believers. They are hatred personified; the remnants of what must once have been human beings. How can these people be Muslims, since they lack all those qualities that characterise a Muslim? Where is their love for God and His creation and where are the noble qualities of compassion, mercy, forgiveness, humility, patience, serenity, in short, all the noble character traits which described the blessed Prophet. Theirs is not *jihad* in the path of God but rather it's *jihad* in the path of their own desires. No one is more confused and farther from God's path than he who confuses his own interests with God's.

Muslims - nationals and immigrants - also perished in the attacks. Those who carried out the bombings have violated the laws of God. Their causes are not our causes; their actions are not our actions and their beliefs are not ours. We trust in God and know that he does not wish us ill, unlike these agents of evil who are deluded into thinking they can correct the world, with suffering and hatred, by taking things into their own hands. We are Muslims, we submit to God, we trust in His wisdom, we believe in His words: "Yet it may happen that you will hate a thing which is better for you; and it may happen that you will love a thing which is worse for you; God knows, and you know not." We accept the situation in which God has placed us and do not rebel against Him with such unfounded and unjust acts.

We should adopt the position described by Shaykh al-Alawi of Algeria, the great saint of the early twentieth century: "The West has defeated us in the material world, but we can win their hearts." How can we transmit the rich spiritual inheritance contained in the Islamic tradition if we do not confront clearly those who use Islam for their dark interests? Let's not deceive ourselves. These people cannot but be followers of the lowest and most subversive interests, diametrically opposed to the objective of every religion, which is to return man to his real and whole humanity.

That is why, as an unknown Muslim, who holds no rank in any organisation or community, I express my humble opinion based only on the Quran, the way of the Prophet and what our ancestors have transmitted to us. I only hope that my fellow citizens will hear my arguments and that God will accept this small contribution for peace. ■

A STARTLING LEVEL OF DIGNITY

AS A LONG TIME RESIDENT OF MADRID, USMAN HASAN HAS AN INTIMATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CITY'S MUSLIM COMMUNITY AND THE COUNTRY'S TORTURED RELATIONSHIP WITH ISLAM. IN THE WAKE OF THE TERRORIST ATTACKS HE REFLECTS ON HIS TIME IN THE SPANISH CAPITAL AND FINDS THAT THE PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE TRAGEDY BODES SURPRISINGLY WELL FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY RELATIONS.

“Usman? But we were expecting an English teacher?”
 “I am English.”
 “But your name is Arab.”
 “I am a Muslim but I'm not an Arab. You lot are the Arabs.”

For my first teaching assignment in Spain I was persuaded by my new employer to change my name to Oliver to suit student expectations. I reluctantly agreed, on the grounds that it sounded a bit like Usman, I was desperate for the job and I happen to be a big *Laurel & Hardy* fan. The above exchange however, became a standard first day routine during my subsequent years at the British Council in Madrid.

The trouble was, my last line, “You are the Arabs”, would invariably cause offence to certain class members, and bafflement among the remainder. The idea that all my students came from “pure Spanish” lineage, somehow managing to avoid any inter-marriage contamination for almost nine centuries during which everyone south of Toledo spoke Arabic and inter-faith mixing was the norm, seems perfectly feasible for your average Madrileño. Worse still, there are people in this European capital city whose entire impression of Islam is based on last year's Muslim contestant on Spain's version of Big Brother, who was criticised for stopping to pray as this meant he wasn't contributing fully in the games of his housemates.

This was a state of affairs which left me quite puzzled. The requirement for every zebra crossing to be accompanied by a set of traffic lights, as the zebra alone wouldn't get drivers to stop, and the linguistic use of consecutive negatives in a phrase were concepts I had only associated with the Arab world. Not only did I find the Spanish language replete with nouns starting in ‘al-’, but also there were countless Spanish girls called Nuria, Fatima or Almudena, often unaware of their name's origin. Shortly after arriving, the cultural parallel was epitomised for me when one day at around Asr time, I followed what I thought to be the sound of a distant *adhan*, only to discover the source was not a mosque, but the open window of a basement flat where an old, scratched flamenco record was



playing.

Spain is a country of emphatic communication, where conversation is made more colourful by bold hand gestures, loud voices and frequent facial contortions, meaning you have to identify the language being spoken before you know whether you are watching locals or Moroccan immigrants.

Yet flat hunting here meant often being questioned by prospective landlords as to my background, usually to ensure I wasn't one of these very Moroccans. Furthermore, the Madrid region's first Muslim cemetery, unfortunately located in the nationalist party stronghold of Griñon, has swastikas painted along its gleaming white walls more frequently than they can be scrubbed off. It was a tougher job at Madrid's largest mosque on the M30 highway. The vandal's splatter of blue paint, which appeared on September 12th 2001, remained for four months before contractors with scaffolding were called in to do the job properly.

So how did this irony come about?

What set of circumstances could lead a society to become so Arabic, yet anti-Arab? One has only to look into Spain's past. A lengthy period of poverty, caused by political, economic and social isolation ended little over 20 years ago, sparking the widespread desire to make up for lost time and become an accepted member of the “first world”.

Contemporary history books tell of a dark period of occupation by backward people. Although Spain has long since made it to the first world of economic superiority, an inferiority complex remains. Anyone who doubts this need only observe Spanish reaction to an old French saying that “Africa starts at the Pyrenees”.

Spain, and particularly Madrid, has changed. On an obvious level it has been from international isolation to full integration.

The Spanish concept of a “Moro” is also giving way. This derogatory blanket phrase for all things Moroccan, Arab or Muslim is recently being used with more discretion in Madrid. Upon my arrival in 1997 an estimated 85% of those attending the Abu Bakr Mosque in the Estrecho neighbourhood, one of the two purpose-

built mosques in Madrid, were Moroccan by birth. Seven years on and the visible diversity at Friday prayers encompass large numbers from Senegal, Pakistan, Nigeria, Palestine, Syria and Indonesia to complement the North African contingent. Conspicuous by their low numbers though, are native Spanish Muslims.

One of the very few I know is Salim. Although he has been a Muslim for almost 20 years his friends at work still know him as Gonzalo. Until recently only his closest work friends knew he was a Muslim.

By contrast, Yusuf, whom I got to know outside the Israeli embassy at a demonstration one Sunday, was a man who stood out in any crowd. This was on account of his large physical stature, booming fog horn of a voice, assertive nature and above all his massive fleece of a ginger beard. These were presumably the reasons why all press and security cameras were trained on him as we talked. Had they not been, they might have made more of the fact that among this crowd voicing their disapproval at Israeli policies, only one third of the protestors were apparently Muslim. The remainder resembled a complete cross section of Madrid's middle-classes, from communist students in Che Guevara T-shirts to middle aged couples in their Sunday best. Here was a sign of things to come as two years later we were to see just such a crowd swell to 2 million with the support of 90% of Spaniards, united under the banner 'No a la Guerra', all trying in vain to stop the Iraqi invasion.

Yusuf, however, didn't attend the anti-war demos. By then he had long been occupying a prison cell somewhere. About his alleged involvement in planning the September 11th attacks or membership in the Basque terrorist group ETA from his pre-Muslim days I am not qualified to comment, but if the authorities were looking for an identikit made to order terrorist suspect, then unlike Salim, Yusuf was their "perfect" man.

Now add to this scenario the unspeakable wickedness of the train bombings, the graphic accounts of scattered human remains on a busy commuter platform, of mobile phones ringing on motionless corpses, calls from anxious loved-ones which were never answered, or of those recovering the bodies "not knowing which bits to pick up and put on stretchers".

However much the falling Aznar government tried to convince us ETA was responsible, logical suspicion from the very outset was of an Al-Qaeda type monstrosity.

Such news aroused fears in Muslim quarters of a knee-jerk reaction leading to emotionally charged lynch mobs. There was a precedent of a xenophobic rampage a couple of years ago in Andalusia after a psychiatrically disturbed Moroccan murdered his Spanish girlfriend, but this time it could be on a scale rarely seen in western Europe. On this count at least, we needn't have worried.

A friend of mine had an appointment for her young daughter to have her tonsils out on the Thursday morning of these barbaric train bombings. Among the hundreds she witnessed sobbing in the hospital corridors she saw grief, she saw pain and she saw anger. Even at that early stage however, this was anger with a purpose.

Spain decided to vent its collective anger in a more positive way

- at the general elections. By then the country had witnessed 3 farcical days to match a soap opera plot. One would describe the media coverage as laughable were it not for the tragic circumstances.

Barely had the emergency sirens started screeching along the usually peaceful Calle Recoletos in central Madrid when Foreign Minister Ana Palacio announced ETA's involvement was "crystal clear". Mrs Palacio is famously represented by Spanish TV satirist Carlos Latre, as a docile mindless figure, devoid of personality and endlessly repeating parrot fashion phrases. Her response at 2.30pm, after ETA had publicly condemned the attack and an Arab newspaper received a letter of guilt from a militant group, was that ETA links remained "crystal clear".

Plans for the following day's mass public demonstration in Madrid were drawn up soon afterwards and released to the media. This included where and when it was to take place. Private TV channel Telemadrid is one of those who failed to broadcast the details, due to what it described as an "error of judgement". A communiqué from President Aznar's Moncloa office was sent to all media at the same time ordering a certain slant to news items in the national interest.

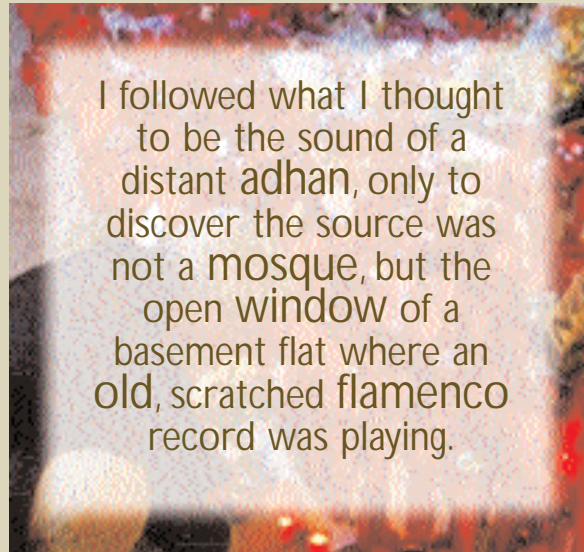
Telemadrid's decision to only send one late arriving camera, to a demonstration of 2 million while the rest of the world gave live coverage, was described as a "journalistic error". The decision to show 'Asesinato Febrero' (a controversial film dramatising ETA terrorists) on Friday was "nothing to do with" Aznar's directive, neither was the decision to withhold news of a video found, of a Moroccan claiming responsibility for the bombing and associating it with the Iraqi invasion, until 1.30am the night before the general election, at the end of a live 2nd division football match and when most voters had gone to bed. "We didn't think it necessary to prolong Madrid's tragedy", claimed Telemadrid director Manuel Soriano.

As for Ana Palacio's election day statement that evidence implicating ETA was "...crystal clear", Spain had an immediate opportunity to give her its "crystal clear" answer.

Memories of life under Franco mean that people here have a sometimes healthy mistrust of their leaders and place great value on the right to vote. Ignoring these people a year ago, when 90% of them said 'Stop the War' and Spanish troops were sent into conflict regardless, had a high price. The conservative government paid it with their jobs, but over 200 paid it with their lives.

The startling level of dignity displayed throughout Spain by millions on a rainy Friday night belied every stereotype of hot headed Latin emotion. There were no outcries for 'pre-emptive strikes' on any 'rogue nations', only the rational desire for punishing those responsible and making Spain a safer place. The calls were against terrorism and for peace. With the potential for further attacks still on people's minds, Spaniards confronted their fears and took to the streets anyway.

This was not a call for revenge, but a call for justice. This kind of justice was irrespective of whether your name happened to be Oliver or Usman, Salim or Gonzalo, Fatima, Almudena or even Yusuf. It was the collective reasoned assertion, even at this most painful moment, that without justice there can be no peace. ■



I followed what I thought to be the sound of a distant adhan, only to discover the source was not a mosque, but the open window of a basement flat where an old, scratched flamenco record was playing.

SHAYKH AHMED YASSIN

1938-2004

"I would fight my own brother if he took over my home. I don't fight Jews because they are Jews. I fight them because they have stolen and arrogated my land, home and orchards and condemned my people to everlasting misery."

SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE

The assassination by Israel of Hamas founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in Gaza on 22 March will undoubtedly have a profound psychological impact on Hamas, especially in the foreseeable future. Indeed with Yassin's death the movement has lost the spiritual mentor whose patriarchal leadership and moral and political weight shaped it for many years.

Yassin was the second most important Palestinian leader after Palestinian Authority (PA) President Yasser Arafat. His absence will be felt throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, especially at a psychological level.

However, for a staunchly ideological movement like Hamas -- where the idea is more important than the leader -- it is unlikely that Yassin's death will seriously undermine the movement in any permanent way. In fact, he had already effectively stopped running the movement's day-to-day affairs several years ago due to his deteriorating health and relatively old age. Nonetheless, he remained until his death the most effective and eloquent spokesman of Hamas and the entire Palestinian Islamist camp, despite his severe physical disability.

Ahmed Ismael Yassin was born in 1938 in the now non-existent hamlet of Al-Joura, near the present-day Israeli town of Ashkelon - or Askalan in Arabic. In 1948 the young Yassin was forced to flee along with his family and thousands of other refugees southwards to the Gaza Strip after Zionist forces overran his village and threatened to kill its inhabitants. This nightmarish experience seems to have had a particularly strong impact in shaping the psychological build-up of a boy who would later on become one of Israel's most trenchant enemies.

Yassin always told foreign journalists inquiring about his implacable attitude towards Israel that his fight was not against Jews but against people who have occupied his land and are oppressing his people. Needless to say, his bitterness and sense of indignation were further enhanced by the abject poverty and rampant misery prevalent in the refugee camps of Gaza where he and his family lived during his teenage years.

In 1952, Yassin was injured while playing sport, leaving him quadriplegic for the rest of his life. However, paralysis did not put an end to his ambitions, which in 1959 led him to Egypt where he spent some time studying at Ain Shams University. There he received a college diploma and, more importantly, was deeply influenced by the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1962, shortly after his return to Gaza, Yassin was briefly detained by the Egyptian authorities in connection with his activities within the Muslim Brotherhood in opposition to the regime of then Egyptian President Gamal Abdel-Nasser.

Yassin thereafter worked as a teacher of Arabic and Islamic studies and as a preacher at Gaza mosques. This allowed him to propagate the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood and to gather hundreds of supporters who later came to form the nucleus of Hamas. The message he spread was that the loss of Palestine in 1948 was merely a symptom of the stagnation of the Islamic ummah. The solution he demanded lay in the reinstatement of Islam as a unifying political force by overthrowing all existing Arab secular regimes which he viewed as un-Islamic or anti-Islamic.

In 1982, Yassin started to form local resistance cells under the code name Majd, with the help of some prominent Muslim Brotherhood figures in Jordan who financed his weapons purchases. Soon afterwards the Israeli occupation authorities found out and Yassin was arrested and sentenced to 13 years in prison for "forming

a terrorist group and possessing illegal weapons".

Three years later he was released from Israeli custody as part of a prisoner swap between Israel and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command, headed by Ahmed Jibril. A free man - and with the Israeli repression of Palestinians reaching unprecedented heights of brutality and savagery - Yassin founded the Islamic Resistance Movement or Hamas in mid-1987. The newly founded resistance group carried out a number of effective attacks mainly on Israeli occupation troops in the Gaza Strip, killing a number of Israeli soldiers and officers.

In 1989, two years into the first Intifada, Yassin was again arrested by Israeli occupation authorities. This time he was sentenced to 40 years in prison, charged with "inciting to violence" and "ordering the killing of Israeli soldiers".

Yassin spent nearly eight years in jail where his health deteriorated significantly as a result of his paralysis and the poor health and living conditions in his cell. He lost vision in one eye, while also suffering from respiratory problems and hearing loss.

In 1997, Yassin was freed from prison after the late King Hussein of Jordan insisted that the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu release him in exchange for the release from Jordanian custody of two Mossad agents who carried out an unsuccessful assassination attempt on Khaled Meshaal, the head of the Hamas contingency in Amman. Yassin's subsequent triumphant return to Gaza significantly enhanced Hamas' status and granted the movement the position of "second among equals" vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority.

Yassin vehemently opposed the Oslo Accords, which he viewed as a "disgraceful capitulation" and "great deception". Indeed, the intensive construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, along with the continued confiscation by successive Israeli governments of large swathes of Palestinian land, seemed to vindicate his views in the eyes of many Palestinians.

Prior to the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000, Yassin was placed under house arrest, his telephone communications severed by the PA, which was under tremendous pressure from the United States and Israel to "rein in" Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The Hamas leader was always careful not to allow recurrent frictions with the PA to evolve into any kind of civil war, which he viewed as "the ultimate Palestinian red line".

During the ongoing Al-Aqsa Intifada, Yassin consistently held fast to the "robe of resistance". He argued that freedom is earned, not granted on a silver platter, and that that which is taken by force can be only recovered by force. He vehemently defended human-bomb attacks - suicide bombings - against Israel, especially those carried out on military targets, arguing that they constituted the sole and only weapon available to the Palestinian people in the face of a far more powerful enemy that is hell-bent on exterminating and crushing them. He repeatedly demanded an end to all attacks targeting Palestinian and Israeli civilians. However, Israel consistently rejected all initiatives to that effect.

For Israel and its guardian-cum-ally the US, Yassin was an embodiment of terror and evil. For most Palestinians and the bulk of Arab and Muslim peoples, Yassin represented a symbol of resistance against a sinister military occupation. ■

KHALED AMAYREH is a journalist who lives in the Occupied Palestinian town of Dura with his wife and family.

CONVERSATION WITH DR ABDAL AZIZ AL-RANTISSI



THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH DR ABDAL AZIZ AL-RANTISSI BY KUL AL-ARAB NEWSPAPER DONE THREE YEARS AGO. DR AL-RANTISSI, WHO WAS MURDERED BY THE ISRAELI ARMY ON APRIL 17, WAS A PRACTICING PEDIATRICIAN AND MARRIED WITH SIX CHILDREN.

Are you originally from Khan Younis?

No. I was born in Yubna and I fled from there with my family to the Gaza Strip in 1948. Yubna is in the center of the country close to Jaffa. It was mentioned in the battles of Saladin.

Have you visited Yubna?

Yes, and I have seen our house. I found a right-wing family living there.

How did that affect you?

Very strongly. The image of my city, as my parents have told me, my home and my parents' flight with me in their arms does not leave my mind. In general, the issue of forced exile from our homeland has had a profound effect on my thinking.

Where did you study religious?

I studied in Egypt for nine years, where I qualified in pediatric medicine. While there, I was greatly influenced by the philosophy of the Muslim Brotherhood. When I returned to Gaza in 1976, I became part of the Muslim Brotherhood movement.

When did you become a leader in Hamas?

I was one of seven: Shaykh Ahmed Yassin, 'Abdel Fattah Dukhan, Mohammed Shama', Dr Ibrahim al-Yazour, Issa al-Najjar, Salah Shehadeh and myself.

Some say that Hamas took advantage of the Intifada for its own benefit. Is that the case?

(With a bitter laugh) Whoever says that does not know anything. Frankly, we were the ones who declared the Intifada and encouraged the people to rise up. The seven of us gathered together after the truck incident [in which four Palestinians were killed] and instructed people to exit the mosques chanting "Allah Akbar" (God is great). A month and a half later the PLO joined and a united leadership was formed. This is after it was said, at first, that the Mossad was behind the Intifada.

What effect did [the deportation to] Marj al-Zuhour have on you personally and on your comrades?

Marj al-Zuhour was a cornerstone. After that, Hamas emerged as a player in the international arena. Prior to this incident, the movement had been local and limited. Later on, it became even better known through the martyr operations which shook the world.

But the suicide operations also branded you as terrorists assaulting civilians?

You call them "suicide operations" and I call them "martyr operations". They are not terrorism. They are a response to Israeli terrorism, individuals and governmental, against Palestinian civilians. We should remember that these martyr operations began after the massacre committed by the terrorist Baruch Goldstein [in the Hebron mosque in 1994] and intensified after the assassination of Yahya Ayash.

But why civilians?

We do not support the killing of civilians and we would prefer that not one civilian be killed. If Israel's aggressive acts of killing, starving, arresting and settlement building stop, then we will halt our operations against [Israeli] civilians.

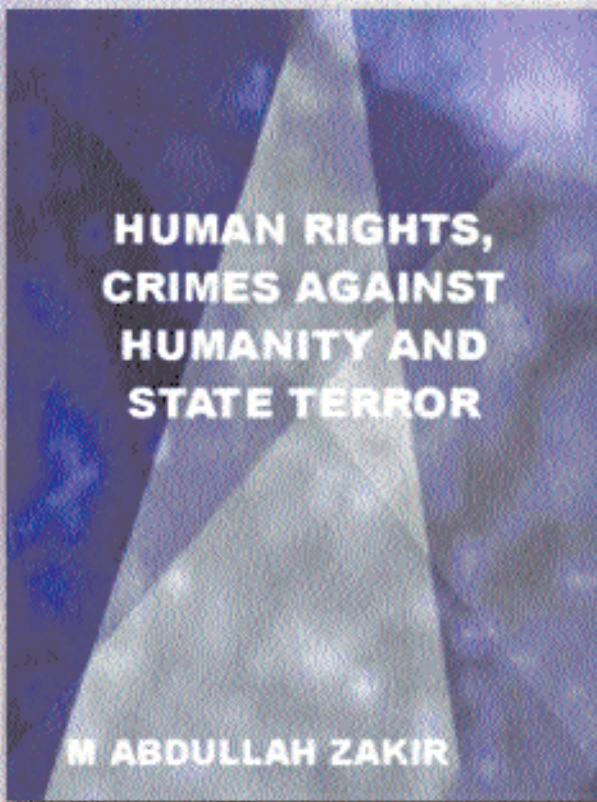
So you would agree to a settlement with the Israelis?

No settlement, no peace and no halt of jihad as long as there is occupation. But we have announced our readiness for a truce in which there would be a withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza in return for a ceasefire.

Would [Hamas] formally recognize Israel though this truce?

No recognition of the Zionist entity. For if I cannot liberate [Palestine] then the future generations will inevitably do so.

Dr Rantissi, don't you see that this has only become a slogan which will be difficult to achieve because of the balance of power and the weakness, the division and the despair of the Arabs?



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Yes. I agree that the balance of power is not to our advantage. But does that justify giving up Palestine? The matter is neither one of strength or weakness: it is about justice and struggle. Ultimately, the issue of Palestine can and will only be determined by the response and actions of the Palestinian people who have shown that they are willing to sacrifice anything for the liberation of their land and their freedom.

Why do you attack Arafat? What do you want from him?

[We attack Arafat] because he gave up Palestine and abandoned the National Charter. Have we forgotten that the PLO was originally established in 1964 for the liberation of the 1948 lands?

But the PLO believes that it is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people?

We differ with the PLO on this. We had a dialogue with them prior to the release of Shaykh Ahmed Yassin, and said that the PLO does not represent all the Palestinian parties and movements; therefore it is not the sole legitimate representative of the people.

But Hamas is asking for one third of the seats on the national council and one third of the PLO institutions. Don't you think this is too much? It is actually too little. Today we are demanding 40 percent representation, although we are sure that we represent more [of the population] than that.

Where did you get these estimates, especially since you did not participate in the elections?

I'm not here to evaluate Hamas' strength. However, Hamas is strong. You only have to look at the student councils in universities in the West Bank and Gaza.

But the latest opinion polls show support for Arafat at 62 percent and for Ahmed Yassin at 4 percent.

(Laughingly) That is a joke.

Were you satisfied with the deal under which Sheikh Yassin was set free?

I was not satisfied. Israel released the Shaykh only as a deal with Jordan after the attack on Khalid Meshaal.

Let us return to the issue of the struggle. How do you see the future of the Jews in this county?

The only matter which concerns me is the future of my people. And what worries me is for how long they will remain displaced and their lands occupied.

Is there no possibility for accepting a part of Palestine in order to end the struggle?

All the land of Palestine is a part of the Islamic faith and the Caliph Omar bin al-Khattab declared it for all Muslims. Therefore, no individual or group has the right to sell it or give it up.

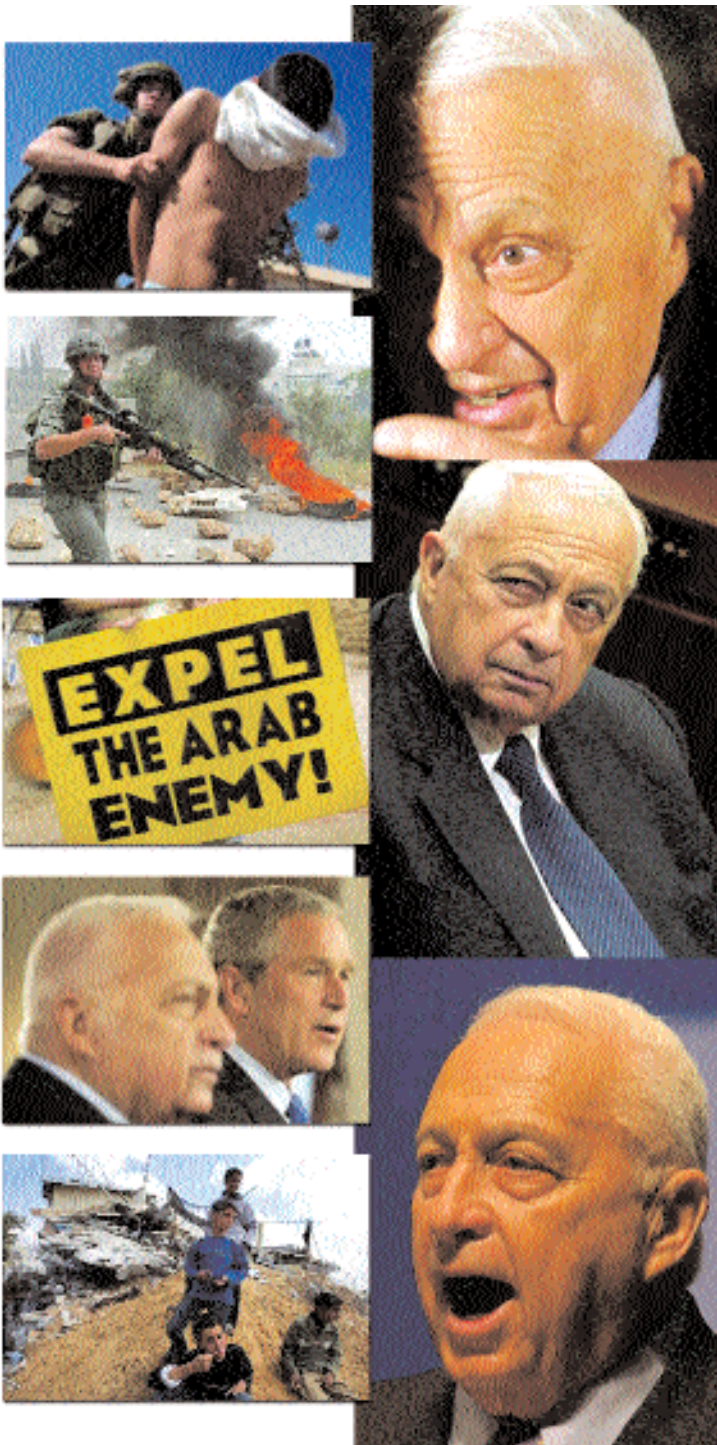
I see that you have no security men. Aren't you afraid of being killed or assassinated?

Could I possibly have more security than Rabin had? And he was assassinated. We know that there are dangers but we have proven to Israel that they will pay a high price for any attack on us.

Do you see any possibility of a dialogue with the Israeli left?

I do not believe in the Peace Now movement. Whoever colonized my land and expelled me from it is an invader even if he is a leftist. If people occupy a country which is not theirs and found a peace movement, does this change the fact that they are occupiers? ■

THE FUTURE OF PALESTINE ACCORDING TO SHARON



'TO EVERY MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES. YOU ARE MY TARGET; YOU WILL BE MADE TO SUFFER; AND YOU SHALL PAY FOR THE ORIGINAL CRIME OF BEING A PALESTINIAN - AND FOR BEING THERE.

'EVERY CAMP, VILLAGE, TOWN, AND CITY IS HEREBY DECLARED A PRISON. INSTEAD OF ARRESTING EACH INDIVIDUAL AND HAVING TO BUILD EVEN MORE INCARCERATION CENTRES AND FOOT THE BILL FOR YOUR DETENTION, I SHALL SIMPLY INSTRUCT THE ARMY TO DIG DITCHES AND BUILD BARRICADES AROUND YOUR POPULATION CENTRES, THUS WITH ONE SWEEP RENDER YOUR ISOLATION COMPLETE. WHEREVER YOU ARE, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST AT YOUR OWN EXPENSE AND IN YOUR OWN HOME...

'S chool children may not reach their schools and college students are to stay home. Some of you might try to climb over the dirt barriers or walk around the ditches. Take your chance! After hours of misery you might find a tank (or more) lying in wait for you. You might find snipers on your hilltops or armoured vehicles at your crossroads. Defy the siege at your own peril, and if you die don't blame me. In my book, you're guilty of the subversive act of seeking education. The same applies to your teachers and school administrators who are guilty of the equally heinous crime of attempting to teach. Besides, I can't close down all your educational institutions with a military order: That would tarnish my new and improved image in the West (and my new ally Shimon might not like it). This way, your institutions will collapse by themselves and ignorance will prevail.

'All patients seeking treatment (including cancer, kidney, and heart patients) are hereby forbidden to reach their hospitals and clinics. You shall suffer in silence and you shall die in silence, for you are guilty of daring to claim the same human treatment reserved for real people - not for subhuman genetic terrorists like you. All pregnant women will deliver in their own homes, or in ambulances and at

checkpoints if they dare defy the siege. Should you suffer complications leading to the death of your infants (or to your own death), you have only yourselves to blame. For you are guilty of the ultimate crime of attempting to give birth to even more Palestinian terrorists. All mothers should know that no vaccination will be allowed to reach your children, for they deserve no protection against infancy and childhood diseases. They too will grow up to be a threat to our security.

'All shopkeepers, tradesmen, industrialists, construction workers, businessmen (and women - we don't discriminate) are hereby forbidden from engaging in any kind of gainful activity. Since you cannot go anywhere anyway, you might as well stay home and watch your families starve even if your warehouses are full of products you cannot market. You too are guilty for attempting to conduct a normal life in defiance of the occupation.

'This applies even more directly to farmers and peasants and all those involved in agricultural activity. Is it not enough that we confiscated most of your land to build settlements for those brave settlers who had defied real hardships in

New York, London, Moscow, and other such hostile places to come to the Land of Milk and Honey? You had no business being there, tilling the land and feeding your children. Now, we have to confiscate even more lands for these settlers to build by-pass roads (i.e. to bypass your reality) and to connect them to Israel directly without having to witness the mere fact of your existence. You call it apartheid? We call it security by the power of the gun.

'If our brave settlers used their guns against you, uprooted your trees, destroyed your crops, and terrified your children, that's the least they could do given the hardships they endured in their drive to grab more land. We, of course, are more than happy to provide them with the full protection and support of our army while they wreak havoc amongst you, and will distort our laws to find them innocent no matter whom they kill, maim, or injure from amongst you. When will you learn that you do not count? They do, and we will make sure that in this equation you finally learn that you are the zero.

'Let me be painfully frank with you. I blame you for forcing us to besiege you, kill you, shell your homes, assassinate your activists and leaders, and perform other such distasteful tasks (even though, I must admit I have had a long and rich experience in invading Arab lands, murdering civilians and prisoners of war, and massacring Palestinians wholesale while destroying whole villages). You are truly exasperating. We made you a generous offer whereby we would annex only parts of your land (including our settlement clusters), expand settlements according to need (and will), annex Jerusalem and keep it under our sovereignty (while trying our best to render it Palestinian-free), and totally deny the Palestinian refugees their right to return. Yet, ungrateful wretches that you are, you persisted in your stubborn refusal. You claim international law and legitimacy? What nonsense! Only our law prevails, and we deem you illegal.

'Despite all our attempts at persuasion (our gun ships, tanks, sniper fire, and military checkpoints are very subtle means of persuasion), you continued to deny us our rights to your lands and rights. We have to be able to help ourselves to that which is yours - what else is occupation for? What other use of power if not to be unleashed on the weak?

'I therefore find you guilty and deserving of the utmost punishment (we may not have the death penalty in our laws, but we can carry out as many extra-judicial murders and assassinations as we please). You are guilty - for holding on to your humanity, for daring to exercise a collective (and individual) will, for refusing to succumb, for daring to claim equal rights before the law, for maintaining your dignity and a stubborn yearning for freedom.

'We, on the other hand, should be free to inflict any type of pain and brutality on you, and it should be your lot to lie down and die quietly. You must not be allowed to disturb our peace or security. We have the right to drive you to desperation, and should you protest or react, not only will you be conveniently branded as terrorists; we will also pound you into submission while calling on you to "stop the violence" and "end terrorism."

'Not only that, but we will stand up before CNN (and all the friendly Western press) to expose you for not accepting our hand stretched out to you in peace. Don't worry. They'll swallow it hook, line, and sinker. We've been feeding them our spin for years to the point where they've lost not only their critical judgment and journalistic integrity, but also their sense of sight and hearing when it comes to your image and narrative. They're guaranteed to pay attention only when you harm an Israeli or provide them with a negative proof of our stereotype. So don't count on any audience or sympathy in the world - for you are guilty and will be blamed.

'And if you suffer from any misguided notion that the UN or any other global body will come to your rescue, rest assured it's not going to happen!

'Kofi Anan has been dispatched to prevent the destruction of statues (cultural heritage) in Afghanistan; he can't be expected to deal with human reality at the same time. Besides, we might promise him a role in the peace process provided he behaves himself and looks the other way. We might have a harder time with your European friends, but they too can't afford to irk us. As for the US administration, don't hold your breath. It, too, has decided to give me time to demonstrate my peace-making skills. And I'm busy demonstrating those to the hilt, as you can see and feel. I will make peace with you if it takes everything that you have, including your land, lives, rights, and freedom.


'My colleagues (including chief-of-staff General Mofaz and defence minister General Ben Eliezer) concur with me. It is wonderful to be able to do my worst and still have Labour instruments (like Fouad) and apologists (like Peres) on my team. They certainly clean up my image! Besides, I'm not doing anything much worse than Barak did. At least I'm not shelling your homes for now (the Americans didn't like our use of their apaches for that purpose, and it didn't look good before the cameras anyway).

'So, if you know what's good for you, please behave like good little natives and kiss the hand that beats you. Say YES to peace, my way, and I guarantee you an efficient apartheid system. In the meantime, stop the violence and stop being the terrorists that you are.

As for me, I remain forever a pacifist and a humanist (my way). If only you would see it my way.'

'P.S. Note from Shimon (Peres). I really am pained at what you have to endure, but I'm truly helpless - having cast my lot with the Sharons, Liebermans and Ze'evs of this world. However, I will continue to work for my vision of new realities in the Middle East. This is only a sample of what it has in store for you. I have to rush and meet with my European colleagues and members of the press to let them know that Sharon isn't all that bad. He is a new man for a new age. Given my (and his) history and age I have a tough job selling that spin! What do you think?' ■

HANAN ASHRAWI



"Let me be painfully frank with you. I blame you for forcing us to besiege you."

A GRAND DISTORTION OF THE LAW

Assassinations carried out in the name of the war on terror are distorting international law, which prohibits all forms of extrajudicial executions - including state-sponsored assassinations - and requires that even the worst criminals are granted due process of the law.

The failure of the UN Security Council to condemn the recent killing of Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Dr Abdal Aziz al-Rantissi indicates an assumed exemption from the law by states claiming to be executing members of terrorist organizations without trial.

No such exemption, however, has been written into international law.

Israel is the most outspoken proponent of the view that members of terrorist organizations are lawful targets for execution without trial. The US does not openly support the Israeli view of assassinations, but it appears to condone such executions. The US alone vetoed a UN Security Council resolution denouncing the assassination of Sheikh Yassin - 11 voted for it, 3 abstained.

In so doing, the US was not simply posing as an ally of Israel; it was serving its own interests. Since the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration has advocated the killing of terrorists - of course, without trial.

US Special Operations snipers have killed several foreign nationals in forced encounters in Afghanistan and Iraq. A well-known US assassination took place in Yemen in 2002 when a CIA-operated drone killed six suspected terrorists speeding in a car below. US Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz called it a "very successful tactical operation."

Israel and the United States stand united in defending lawless killings. They vow not to let their soldiers and citizens be killed by terrorists. Calling it self-defense or lawful interception, they argue that international law should not preclude executing terrorists who are out to harm their nationals.

Israel promotes a much broader exception to the rule of law than does the US. Israel not only kills people poised to commit terror, but also executes their spiritual and political leaders. Israel argues that by their rhetoric, such leaders foment and favor a culture of violence that spawns suicide bombers and other perpetrators of violence. The United States argues for a far narrower exception, under which killing a terrorist leader is legally excusable when that person has actually masterminded specific acts of murder.

From the legal viewpoint, however, even narrow exceptions are fraught with problems. Extrajudicial killings, no matter how narrowly conceived, undermine fundamental human rights that are enshrined in universal treaties. In such cases, the defendant is killed without even a hearing before an impartial tribunal. He is given no opportunity to challenge the evidence or witnesses against him.

The killer state is accountable to no defense attorney, no jury, and no court. It simply says to the world: "Take our word. We executed a terrorist!"

But do we know he was a terrorist? Given that the intelligence over alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was grossly unreliable, how can the international community have complete confidence in a state that is killing alleged terrorists without a trial and irrefutable evidence linking that person to a crime? The Israeli justification for extrajudicial executions is worse and leads to widespread oppression, blurring any distinction between terrorists and insurgents fighting for self-determination.

International law recognizes the right of people under occupation to fight for their freedom. But, according to Israel, the Palestinians have no right to take up arms in their struggle for independence, no matter how oppressive their conditions under occupation may be. Moreover, in Israel's eyes, any organization that uses force as a means of liberation espouses terrorism and, as such, its entire leadership is a legitimate target for assassinations. But if international law is amended to open the door to lawless executions, states will be emboldened to go even further. Fighting crime will mimic the mantra of fighting terrorism. Already, encounter killings, precipitated through shootouts between the police and alleged criminals, are commonplace in many countries.

Indian security forces have been known to set up encounters to justify extrajudicial executions, including of minority Dalit Christians demanding fair wages. In Brazil, leaders of indigenous populations have been executed for demanding protection from illegal encroachments on their reservations.

The 11 UN Security Council members who voted 'yes' not only condemned the assassination of Sheikh Yassin, but more broadly voted 'no' to extrajudicial executions. Perhaps their vote also reflected an awareness of the potential risks embodied in the arguments for his death. ■

LIAQUAT ALI KHAN is a professor at Washburn University School of Law in Kansas, USA.

"The killer state is accountable to no defense attorney, no jury, and no court. It simply says to the world: 'Take our word. We executed a terrorist!'"

AS A GRADUATE STUDENT HUSSEIN HAMDANI'S ACADEMIC STUDY OF HAMAS TOOK HIM TO THE WEST BANK AND GAZA WHERE HE LIVED AND STUDIED UNDER ISRAELI ARMY CURFEWS AND FREQUENT SIEGES ON HIS UNIVERSITY. BUT LITTLE HAD PREPARED HIM FOR HIS UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER WITH SHAYKH AHMED YASSIN.

MY TEA WITH THE SHAYKH

For many years, Hamas was my passion. Although my dissertation work was decidedly academic, as an activist for Palestine I wanted to see the struggle for self-determination from the ground up. So when I was given the opportunity to spend a semester at Birzeit University in the Occupied West Bank to study Islamic movements in the Holy Land, I readily accepted.

Before my arrival in the West Bank, I met some Hamas members in Jordan, who assured me that my research would not be in vain. "The brothers," they said, "will find you." It was not long before Hamas members spotted me around the Birzeit campus, looking for some leads. These young men were passionate, intelligent and full of conviction.

One morning, the brothers told me that we were going to the Gaza Strip. We caught a cab from Ramallah to Gaza City. My friend refused to inform me as to why we were going. Once we arrived there, my friend instructed the driver to take us to "Shaykh Ahmed" and he knew precisely where he was going.

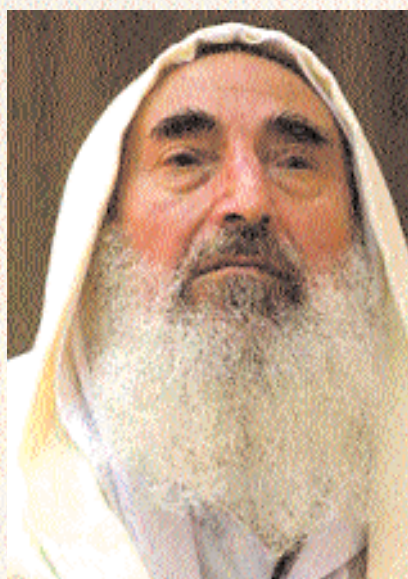
At first I was quite nervous. I was not prepared to see the Shaykh Ahmed Yassin. I imagined that in my first encounter with the leader of Hamas that I would be wearing a long white jalabiyah, wear expensive oud perfume and I would bring the Shaykh a gift as is the custom amongst Muslims. Instead, I was wearing blue jeans and a T-Shirt that read "The Property of the Toronto Maple Leafs". Several hours in the car, a dozen checkpoints and the blazing sun overhead had left me tired and sweaty. It was no way to see a Shaykh. But there was no time to wash-up or change, we were about to enter the Shaykh's house.

The house was surprisingly ordinary from the outside. It was simple and small. In comparison, Yasser Arafat's complex, on the other side of the city, was a fortress and the area for several hundred metres around it was strictly off-limits. Many Palestinians would tell me that the difference in the size of their homes paralleled the image of the two men in Gaza: Shaykh Ahmed was a humble man of the people; Chairman Arafat was seen as aloof, unconnected and, above all, corrupt.

We entered the room where many men were sitting. At the far end of the room sat Shaykh Ahmed, on a small chair, while others sat around him. I saw the bemused expressions of some the seated men. "Who's the foreign kid with the American t-shirt?!" they seemed to ask themselves.

I went directly to shake the Shaykh's hands. My friend introduced me as a Yemeni living in Canada. The Shaykh turned, smiled and said, "Why would any Yemeni leave such a beautiful land to go to such a cold country?" I laughed.

We made our way to the empty spot on the floor. On Shaykh



Yassin's request, piping hot mint tea and some biscuits were brought for us. Someone asked the Shaykh about the founding of the Hamas movement. I remember his answer distinctly. He said that the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising - the original Intifada in December 1987 forced the Ikhwan (The Muslim Brotherhood) to make a decision about its role in the national struggle. According to the Shaykh, historically the Palestinian Ikhwan focused almost exclusively on teaching and training, and stayed well away from the national liberation struggle. However, as a result of the uprising, this approach had to be revisited.

On 9 December 1987, the Shaykh held a meeting at his house of the prominent leaders of the Islamic Centre in the Gaza Strip. In addition to Shaykh Yassin, six others were present including the recently murdered, Abdal Aziz al-Rantissi. This group decided that an organisation

committed to armed struggle must be established and must partake in the Intifada. Shaykh Yassin mentioned that it was his idea to use the moniker Hamas.

I knew this story. Most people do. But hearing Shaykh Yassin tell it brought the narrative to life. It was like sitting at the feet of history. And for the Palestinians around me it represented the hope that the occupying forces could be defeated.

The Shaykh was small in size, paralyzed and weak, with a surprisingly high pitched voice. He smiled constantly and had a gentle regard for all his guests. He asked the people what their opinions were on the matters being discussed. He listened attentively and seemed to care genuinely for what they had to say. His humble home framed a man who seemed to have little arrogance and love of power and in turn was shown great deference and respect. His house was constantly filled with visitors and his family and students spent the day serving his guests. I know from the months I stayed in Palestine that he commanded incredible loyalty in the streets. Yet, sitting in his house he made me feel like we were just brothers in faith.

He asked me how the Muslims in Canada were doing. He was surprised and fascinated to hear that there were many mosques and Islamic centres in the country. He asked me to tell the Muslims there to keep Islam firm in their hearts and to always seek repentance from God.

After more discussion and several rounds of tea and fruit, the Shaykh lead all of us to the local mosque for Maghrib prayers. The mosque was a short walk from the Shaykh's house. It was the first and last time I had an opportunity to meet Shaykh Ahmed Yassin - the people's Shaykh. It was on the way back from this very mosque that he was murdered. ■

EYE TO EYE

GIHAD ALI



Look into my eyes and tell me what you see
You don't see a damn thing,
'cause you can't possibly relate to me.
You're blinded by our differences.
My life makes no sense to you.
I'm the persecuted Palestinian.
You are the American red, white and blue.
Each day you wake in tranquillity.
No fears to cross your eyes.
Each day I wake in gratitude.
Thanking God he let me rise.
You worry about your education and the
bills you have to pay.
I worry about my vulnerable life and if I'll
survive another day.
Your biggest fear is getting ticketed as you
cruise your Cadillac.

My fear is the tank that just left,
Will turn around and come back.
America, do you realize,
That the taxes that you pay
Feed the forces that traumatize,
My every living day?
The bulldozers and the tanks,
The gases and the guns,
The bombs that fall outside my door,
All due to American funds.

Yet do you know the truth
Of where your money goes?
Do you let your media deceive your mind?
Is this a truth that no one knows?
You blame me for defending myself
Against the ways of Zionists
I'm terrorized in my own land
And I'm the terrorist?

You think you know all about terrorism
But you don't know it the way I do.
So let me define the term for you.
And teach you what you thought you knew.
I've known terrorism for quite some time,
Fifty-four years and more.

It's the fruitless garden uprooted
in my yard.
It's the bulldozer in front of my door.
Terrorism breathes the air I breathe.
It's the checkpoint on my way to school.
It's the curfew that jails me in my
own home,
And the penalties of breaking that
curfew rule.
Terrorism is the robbery of my land.
And the torture of my mother.
The imprisonment of my innocent father.
The bullet in my baby brother.

So America, don't tell me you know about
The things I feel and see.
I'm terrorized in my own land
And the blame is put on me.
But I will not rest,
I shall never settle
For the injustice my people endure.

Palestine is *our* land
and here we'll remain
Until the day *our* homeland is secure.

And if that time shall never come,
Then they will never see a day of peace.

I will not be thrown from my own home,
Nor will fight for justice cease.

And if I am killed, it will be for Falasteen.
It's written on my breath.

So in your own patriotic words,
Give me liberty or give me death.

*"Whoever fears Allah, Allah will find a
way out for him (from every difficulty)
and He will provide for him from sources
that he could never have imagined."
The Holy Quran 65:2-3*

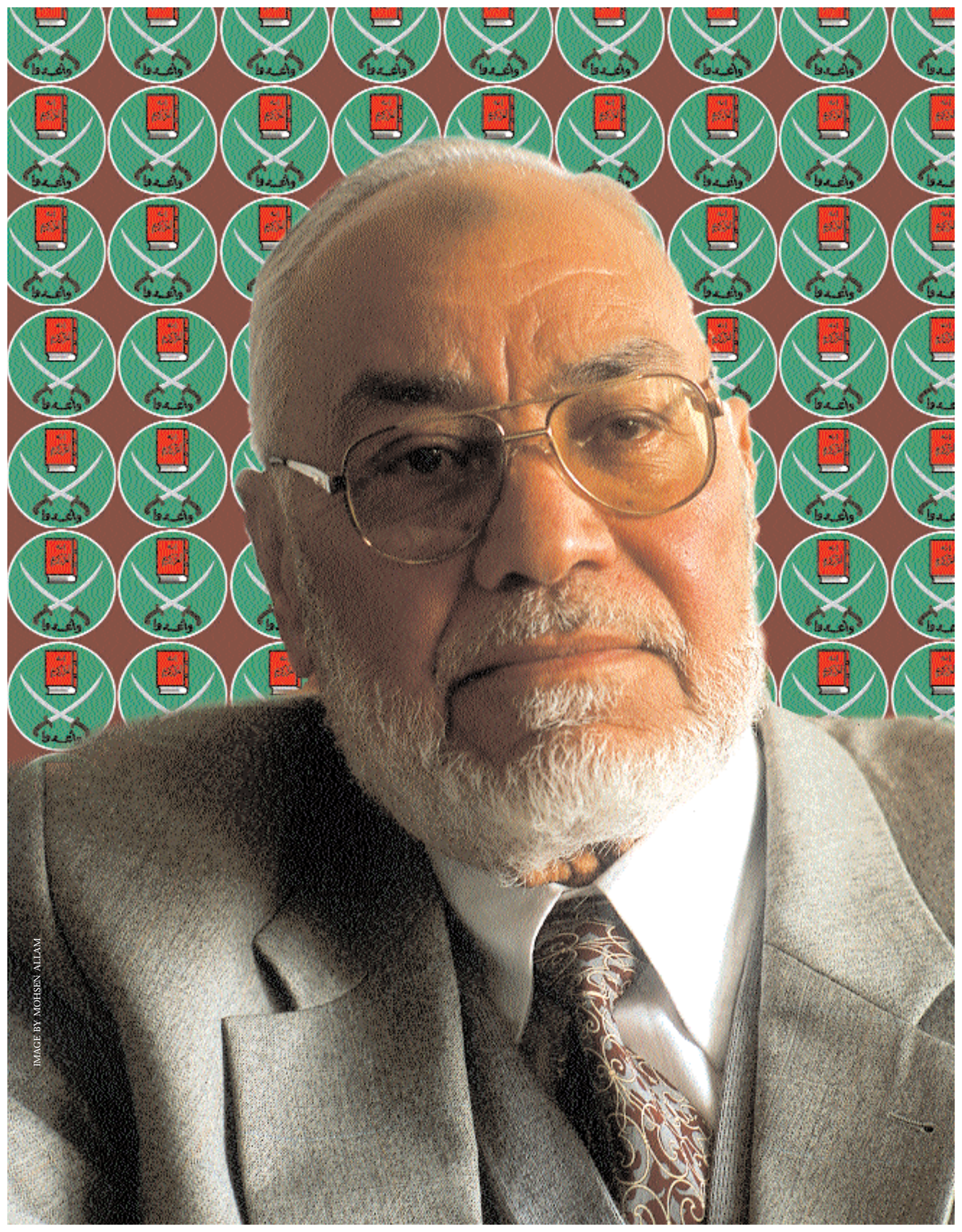


IMAGE BY MOHSEN ALLAM

MOHAMED MAHDI AKEF

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD'S NEW SUPREME GUIDE SPEAKS OUT ON POLITICS, FAITH, FREEDOM - AND HIS LIFE IN SPORTS. BY AZZA KHATTAB.

Everyone has to take off their shoes when they visit the Muslim Brotherhood's headquarters, and if you're a woman, you're going to wear the veil. Thrown slightly off your game by protocol, it's easy to forget the complex questions you've prepared and instead obsess over whether your socks smell and/or if it's appropriate to shake hands with Mohamed Mahdi Akef, the Brotherhood's new Supreme Guide.

Quietly picking up on the fact that I had no idea what to do with my hands, Akef makes the decision for me.

"Oh, give me your hand. I'll shake yours as long as you don't mind shaking mine," he says, a gentle smile lightening his face.

But don't get him wrong: Akef is a Brother to the core, sharing even his June 1928 birthday with the group he now leads - and for which he has suffered, having spent most of his life deprived of his freedom. Put on death row in 1954 for allegedly plotting against Nasser, a charge the Ikhwan denies, Akef's death sentence was later commuted to life in prison with hard labor. Although released after two decades behind bars, Akef was back in prison by 1996 on charges stemming from his role heading the Muslim Brotherhood's international organization.

His second stint, he'll tell you, was decidedly more comfortable than the first.

As a man who considers himself poor before God, the successor to Mr Justice Mam'oun El-Hodeibi can hardly complain he's short of followers

Why? Oh, God! How could one turn down the privilege when God has chosen you for such a noble mission? You know, I used to say, "I love Al-Azhar, but I don't want to be an Azharite." And I love the army, but I don't want to be an army officer. But this? All I can do is ask Him for the strength and guidance to live up to the task. I never expected it - and how would I, when I did nothing so grand to deserve it?

I call it the untouchable: The Ikhwan [Brotherhood] has a definite philosophy, value system and principles that don't change with the changing of the Guide. We're here to help implement that philosophy.

Guides come and go, but the Ikhwan is here to stay. It's a complex, sophisticated organization. We have shura councils, the Guide's Office and committees to carry out our tasks. Everyone has a mission, and mine is to manage and oversee these committees, to help them achieve our primary goal: "The call for the worship of Allah and the spread of His message."

Sister! These days, human beings have made other humans divine. They've walked away from worshipping their Creator and started worshipping their own personal interests and those who help them attain them. If only people would accept that everything they do, no matter how

small, should be dedicated to God and obeying His Qur'an and *sunnah*.

My priorities? I have many, but most important is the file of freedoms. You're mistaken if you think I won my freedom when I was released from jail. I'm as constrained and threatened as always. I'm forbidden from traveling. Even when I want to go to on *umrah* (lesser pilgrimage), I have to make several trips to get a permit from the authorities. Why? On what basis? Is this legal or just? Believe me, I've stopped asking. I've given in to the fact that I'll be in this relatively larger prison for a while.

Life isn't worth living without freedom. Without it, there's no development, no education, no economy, no culture. Freedom pushes you to be creative, to do hard work. As long as there's an emergency law, as long as the constitution and the law can be put temporarily out of service, there will be no real progress. We have to fight for freedom.

I know freedom is taken, not given. But tell me, how do we take it in today's climate, when we're under foreign and domestic pressure, when we have people who rule single-handedly? What should we do? Clash with them? No, we won't. We call for dialogue, for the building of bridges, not burning them. We don't want to intimidate people or stir up tension. We pray that maybe in the future - and with what's going on around the world - that mentalities will change and rulers will know that they're worth nothing without their people's consent to their rule.

It's a cute question: Do you seek power? We hear it a lot. What do they mean by "seeking power?" Change through violence? No. Running in elections? Yes. We'll keep nominating candidates in elections of every kind. If we win, good for us; if we lose, so what? All we want are free and fair elections. Let the people choose - and respect their choice, whether it's us or others. How can we have fair elections under the umbrella of an emergency law? It's a big joke. It's like when the government noticed we were very active in the syndicates: it wanted to limit our presence, so it came up with a law to make sure syndicates are under its thumb - even though we offer services that take some responsibilities off the state's shoulders.

Sister! I'm sitting here with you right now, but I can't tell you whether I'll be in jail in the next hour or two - with or without a reason. We're powerless. Ghandi organized civil disobedience, but we can't. We can do little, as you can see. The Islamic and Arab Ummah is in danger. Sadly, we just make it worse.

Go ask the Powers That Be why we were excluded from the nation-

It's fine to focus only on teaching Muslims the basics of Islamic behavior. That's what Mr. Bush wants. He doesn't want Islam to have anything to do with politics, economics or education.

come to leave us if you want to serve Islam in a manner you think is better.

al dialogue. We're ready and willing to be partners, to open our hearts and minds for constructive talks. Friends and enemies alike agree that the Ikhwan is a respectable group that has an undeniably strong presence in Egypt and abroad. We are the strongest group on the scene. But as they say, "Some people have one ear of mud, and another of dough." No worries: We will endure all the difficulties for the sake of our message. Only God can provide our reward.

Sister! We're ready to be a party. We have educational, economic and political platforms - even one for sports. If we didn't have policy platforms, the youth wouldn't follow us. We want to help raise them properly. There's a plan to corrupt them, and we'll stand against it no matter what it takes

I myself am a sportsman. I'm not a graduate of Al-Azhar, but of the sports faculty. Still, I memorized the Qur'an.

The economy is a disaster. When I was in the People's Assembly, the domestic debt was LE 90 billion - and they were screaming. Now, it has hit an all-time high, but we're in no place to talk about it. We come up with recommendations, but no one listens. A member of our economic affairs committee, for example, proposed a paper on economic reform. It went nowhere. We want the government to wake up and help us out of this long, dark tunnel.

They brag about being the majority party? What majority? Anyway, we ask God to give them guidance. Believe me, Egypt needs everyone's efforts regardless of their beliefs and opinions. Sit everyone down at the table and ask them what they think and what they want, and you'll find they agree on the major issues more than they disagree. It would be a big victory if we could only cooperate where we agree.

A truce? Reconciliation? There's nothing of the sort. Harassment from security organs is still a reality. Our professors and mentors are still in prison even though they've served their sentences.

Some people are scared to call us. There are parties that are uncomfortable keeping in touch with us. We don't want to embarrass anyone. We used to have a pact with Hizb Al-Aamal (the Labor Party). But as you may have figured out, there's no such party anymore. The government closed it. Why? One of its explanations was Al-Aamal's connection to the Muslim Brotherhood.

No, we don't coordinate with other Islamist groups in Egypt. The Gama'a Islamiyya preferred violence as a means of change, so we didn't really develop ties with them - and they took a stand against us. I keep in touch with all the Islamist groups around the world as long as they believe that Islam is an international religion, that shura is one of its principles - and provided they don't embrace violence.

God ordered us to spread His message. Islam is an international religion. We don't get our words from Mr. Bush, but from God. I serve humanity and fight for nobility and justice, not corruption and tyranny. Why should I hush this noble voice? I never will, even if it costs me my life.

When Jews around the world communicate, or Communists from around the world convene for a meeting, do we put them on trial? No. So, why would we hide our *dawah* (message)?

We've never had members renouncing their beliefs and declaring their "repentance." And just like you're welcome to join us, you're wel-

Organized Islam is about much more than Azharites, al-tabligh (missionaries) and other strictly religious groups. It's fine if you're focused only on teaching Muslims to pray and the basics of Islamic behavior. That's what Mr. Bush wants. He doesn't want Islam to have anything to do with politics, economics or education.

No, we've never asked Saadeddin Ibrahim to open channels for us with the US. There were conversations between some of our brothers and him - just as prison inmates. You can say it was an informal chat, not something to which we were officially committed.

I make sure I have good relations with everyone, even those who insult me. Like [El-Tagamoh Party chief] Refaat El-Saeed. Like [El-Wafd president] Noaman Gomma. I wonder why we're fighting each other? Like our Ummah isn't facing enough trouble! But I hold no grudge. I don't have the right to try and force them to believe something. Let them attack me as they wish - their insults won't smear my reputation, because only my actions make me who I am.

At the end of the day, we work for the sake of God, even as the government puts obstacles in our path. We can't reach youth through mosques, universities or conferences.

I write a lot of books, but who reads?

Palestine is for the Palestinians, and the Israelis are occupiers - we don't have to accept them. Many have a twisted view of the facts: The Jews are the landowners, not criminals who expelled the Palestinians. Not us. We'll never believe in Israel or acknowledge its right to exist. The fact that some do doesn't change a thing.

If only we could go on jihad there, we could have solved the problem. But we're deprived of a role. Still, we're patient, because in God's world, good always wins over evil.

Islam is undergoing a renaissance. I have faith we'll regain our power as Muslims, maybe not in my lifetime, but in my sons' or grandsons'. Bush wants to make Muslims more submissive, but that's impossible. We take our orders from God, not the White House.

As a preacher, you should be strong in build, manners and intellect. And modernization isn't a problem: You should be in touch with all the trends in society - and appeal to them.

Yeah, I've always been sporty! I did it all. Swimming, gymnastics, you name it. I've traveled the world, spreading the *dawah*.

Age is knocking on my door, and you can't say, "Sorry, no one's home!" I can't play sports anymore, but don't underestimate my strength. The old man spares no effort or energy in spreading the Islamic message - not even prison or death will deter me.

One of the things I've kept from my prison years in Qena is a proverb my Upper Egyptian cell mates taught me: la'ou kan adawek namla ma tenamleh (keep your eyes open, even if your enemy is an ant). Sister, we're dealing with more than ants here, wouldn't you agree? ■

THE DILEMMA OF MUSLIM DADS

Here's a scenario for current (and future) dads: you and your son are walking along Oxford Street on a busy Saturday afternoon, enjoying the sunshine and window shopping. After all it's your wife's birthday tomorrow, and you and your little bachu have decided to get her something really special. As you walk past the Ann Summers store, your eye catches the titillating display in the window. You lower your gaze and decide that such gifts are left for another day. You look down at your son - not quite a boy, not yet a man - and his eyes are glued to the offending window. Taken aback by his bold interest in that stuff, you:

- a) Decide to give him a stern, "*Oi! Lower your gaze you foul young man... is that what they are teaching you at school!*" and promise a serious licking when you get home, accompanied by a trip to the mosque and immediate enrolment in the local madrassah;
- b) Pat him on the back and smile broadly. "*That's my boy,*" you say proudly to anyone who'll listen. "*The apple doesn't fall from the tree, he's got the mojo just like his dad!*"
- c) Hurry past the store, but take it up with him over halal chicken and chips later. Let him know that he can talk to you about growing up and that Muslims aren't ashamed to talk about love and sex. The last thing you want is him learning about the birds and the bees from Sex in the City or Maxim.

Being a Muslim dad has never really been easy. Being a Muslim dad today is almost heroic. It about navigating through our children's increasingly complicated lives, balancing work and family and making ends meet in ways our fathers never imagined. Today's Muslim dad is expected to be a superman - loving and firm, empathetic and decisive, a democrat and an authoritarian. Given the importance of fatherhood in the Islamic tradition, it is surprising so little is written or said about it these days. This month's national conference of *Fathers Direct*, the UK's leading fatherhood organisation, for the first time included a specialist forum on Fatherhood in Islam sponsored by *The Muslim College*, *An-Nisa Society* and *Q-News*. It is a small, but significant step in giving Muslims dads hope that they can pull off the impossible and be the kind of fathers that the Prophet wanted them to be. ■

FATHERLES

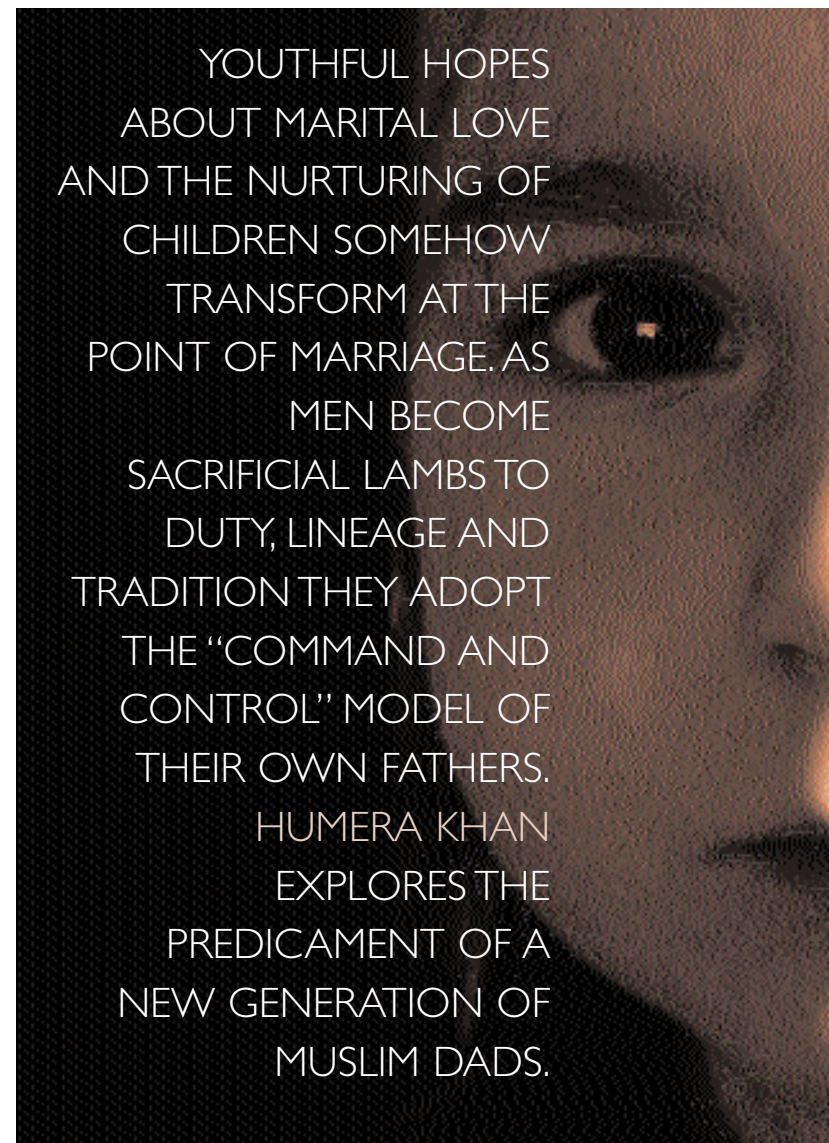
In his youth Jamal used to dream of how many children he would have, the names he would give them and what games he would play with them. He was the ideal uncle - indulgent, generous and good for a laugh. Then one day he married the girl his family expected him to marry. Jamal's bride was a good sort of girl but they had nothing in common. Not long into the marriage it was obvious that the couple were not compatible - a combination of differing life experiences and expectations created cracks in their relationship that only grew as time went on. Jamal eventually spent less and less time at home though he did spend enough time during the next six years to produce four children. But, rather than bringing him the joy he expected he found it all too daunting as the difficulties he faced with his wife spilled over into his relationships with his children. Frustrated, he increasingly stayed away from home and became an absent father.

Khalid on the other hand was very particular when he chose his bride. He studied scrupulously the Islamic references to the 'the ideal wife and mother' and diligently chose a wife who he felt could meet all these virtues. Having made all this effort, Khalid felt his job was done - as far as he was concerned, he had safeguarded the upbringing of his children by providing a *Stepford* mother, absolving him of any other paternal responsibility. He was now free to work by day and indulge in *dawah* activities during his leisure hours. As was to be expected in such circumstances, his poor wife fell short of his expectations and began to feel unworthy and suffer from depression. Since Khalid was not around much he could not see what was happening to his wife and the impact it was having on their children. By the time he realised it was already too late. His children had all gone their separate ways and were not too keen to have the interference of a father they didn't know and couldn't communicate with.

While the experiences of Jamal and Khalid are perhaps extreme cases, aspects of their stories are mirrored in an increasingly large number of Muslim families. For decades the burden of family life and nurturing of children has been seen by Muslims as being the sole domain of the mother. Choosing a bride for most prospective families and husbands alike has become an ever-increasing shopping list of what is expected from the woman. The expectations of the man are limited - as long as he provides the income and some strict counsel he is released from all other parental duties.

The irony of this cultural impasse is that it is not really what most Muslim men want. Brought up to be responsible for the welfare of their "tribe", there is a tussle to transfer this admirable trait to the family they are building through marriage. Children continue to be seen by many as part of the material status of the family. Education and training are focused on getting the good job, earning the big bucks and making the strategic marital alliances. The *Stepford* wife produces *Stepford* children with the father playing a distant, authoritarian function.

With such expectations of parenting, the emotional and nurturing aspect of family life becomes a distant memory. It is not for any reason that the Holy Quran describes the essence of the marital relationship as being based on 'love and mercy'. When this ingredient is put on the top of the list, the possibilities of dysfunctional family life



YOUTHFUL HOPES ABOUT MARITAL LOVE AND THE NURTURING OF CHILDREN SOMEHOW TRANSFORM AT THE POINT OF MARRIAGE. AS MEN BECOME SACRIFICIAL LAMBS TO DUTY, LINEAGE AND TRADITION THEY ADOPT THE "COMMAND AND CONTROL" MODEL OF THEIR OWN FATHERS. HUMERA KHAN EXPLORES THE PREDICAMENT OF A NEW GENERATION OF MUSLIM DADS.

are greatly reduced and the home is no longer the set for competing demands and conflicts. Children born to parents who love each other naturally pass on this love to their children. A father who is happy to come home to his family is more able to harmonise the compassionate 'maleness' with the nurturing 'femininity' essential to balanced child rearing.

This predicament within Muslim fatherhood, seldom acknowledged, has been slowly creeping upon us. There are many reasons for this decline. Wars, changing economic infrastructures and the impact of large-scale migrations have all played their role. Muslims, dealing with their dishevelled lives by imagining themselves in some past Islamic 'Golden Age' have failed to recognise and act upon our dis-

SS UMMMAH



integrating social systems.

Our current condition places the undisputed 'provider' role of Muslim fathers under threat and the very essence of Muslim manhood under siege. Traditional Muslim economic structures facilitated a framework where Muslim men were usually in control of their own small businesses, often being family farmers, travellers, artisans, writers and traders. Modernity has pushed the Muslim man into an altogether different kind of economic environment - factories, offices and, not surprisingly, unemployment as multinationals control and unchecked globalisation have taken control of both the agricultural and commercial markets in most Muslim countries leaving a trail of wrecked economies, fiscal pressures and widespread poverty.

We too must take a fair share of the blame. We have allowed unjust patriarchal systems to suffocate the ability of Muslim men to play a more hands-on fathering role. A dominant norm within many Muslim cultures is of the father being expected to be a tough, distant, disciplinarian with children living under the threat of 'Wait till your father gets home!' Expected by custom to put children in their place as soon as they first step into the house, the Muslim father has found this role can be advantageous as it enables a stress free, quiet life. If the children are scared off, then he can sit in his favourite chair, read the paper and not be interrupted before dinner. That is until they rebel, break away and choose to live their lives distant from their parents. Then there is hand-wringing, tears and the lament of how dad did "too little, too late."

It will certainly take time for us to get rid of our festering patriarchal cobwebs but there is some hope. A new generation of enlightened Muslim men have painfully acknowledged the cycle of paternal neglect and the psychological damage it can wreak. Deprived themselves of fatherly warmth, conversation and shared male experiences, these young men have realised that they do not have the skills necessary to engage in meaningful relationships. When re-evaluating Islam they have found that there is a tremendous amount of scope for developing themselves into more pro-active husbands and fathers, without compromising on the expected role of 'provider' and 'protector'. These men are prepared to break the mould and challenge cultural expectations of family life. They are seeking life partners rather than future mothers and wish to be part of their children's life journey.

Hafez is one such a man. His relationship with his own father was difficult and consisted of continuously being put down and criticised both in private and in public. Despite this, Hafez loved his father and continued to try and please him but in vain. It was not until Hafez bordered on the brink of emotional breakdown that he found that the only way he could survive was to dramatically change his own life. Not really sure what he should do, he went through a long and traumatic period of failed relationships and lost opportunities.

Eventually, he came across insights into Islam that were new to him. In particular, he came to understand the Prophet in a way that had not previously been explained to him - the loving husband, the nurturing father, the tolerant grandfather - an image so removed from his own experience with dad. Armed with the compassionate and fatherly aspects of the Sunnah he was over a period of time able to convince his family that change doesn't need to be traumatic. He has come to believe that the best example he can give his children is to be a good example himself. Hafez has been deeply moved by much of the Prophetic way, but one hadith has challenged him more than any. Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, when asked what the Blessed Prophet did when at home replied 'The Prophet used to mend his shoes, sew his clothes and work in his household just as one works in one's own house.'

If fathers really want to come home, there is no better example to follow. ■

BOYS TO MEN

WHEN HOMER SIMPSON BECOMES THE QUINTESSENTIAL ICON OF FATHERHOOD, SOMETHING'S GONE VERY WRONG. NAZIM BAKSH EXPLORES THE DILEMMA OF RAISING TEENAGED SONS IN A TIME WHEN DAD IS JUST THE BRUNT OF ANOTHER SITCOM JOKE.

The choice of Zayd, son to Harithah of the Arabian tribe of Kalb and whose mother was from the great tribe of Tayy, is legendary in Islamic history. Zayd was taken into captivity and acquired at the great fair of `Ukaz by Hakim, the nephew of Lady Khadijah. As a token of his appreciation to his aunt, Hakim asked her to choose one from among his newly acquired slaves. She picked Zayd and on the day she was married to the Blessed Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, Khadijah presented him with Zayd. And that's how 15-year-old Zayd entered the household of the Messenger of Allah.

Not long thereafter his father and uncle caught up with him in Mecca and approaching the Prophet they offered to pay whatever was required to secure his release. The response of the Messenger: "Let Zayd choose; if he chooses you, he is yours without ransom; and if he chooses me, I am not the man to set any other above him who prefers me."

Zayd was called to identify his father and uncle and he did. "Choose between me and them," the Prophet said to him. Zayd's response: "I would not choose any man in preference to thee. Thou art unto me as my father and my mother." Outraged at his answer, his father reminded him what his choice entailed, "Will you choose slavery over freedom?" Zayd's response, "I have seen from this man such things that I could never choose another above him." And so from that day onwards until revelation came to clarify the matter, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, dubbed Zayd his son before an assembly at the Kaaba.

Zayd's choice of the Prophet over his biological parents and the Prophet's public embrace of Zayd as his son speaks volume. Their mutual embrace defines the precise relationship between fathers and sons in Islam and becomes the model which repeats itself with every male companion that came into the presence of the Messenger.


Sons, like Zayd, ought to see in their fathers everything they want to be when they grow up and fathers likewise should see in their sons righteous and strong men who will honor their wisdom. Unfortunately, we live in a culture where fathers are failing their sons and sons in turn have reduced their fathers to figures of ridicule and rejection.

Being a father today is an uphill battle but being a father to boys in particular is a live minefield. Fathers are often regarded as "Mr. Sperm and Paycheck Donor." Young fathers raised in homes where their own fathers have been absent, turn to Bill Cosby on the *Cosby Show* to learn appropriate paternal behavior. If the Cosby scenario doesn't work there is a range of others to choose from such as Tim Allen in *Home Improvement* or Damon Wayans in *My Wife and Kids*. When dad tries to apply techniques learned from watching sitcoms, his son responds with one standard he has learned from being raised on a daily diet of *The Simpsons* - my dad, and by extension all fathers, are as dumb as Homer.

For Muslim fathers living in Canada, the United States and the UK, the problem of fathering boys is much more challenging.

First generation Muslim dads are immigrants who in almost all cases suffer from the symptoms that accompany social dislocation. To make ends meet they are forced into dead-end jobs working long hours. Stressed out of their minds, they suffer silently in a state of mild depression longing for a past that's impossible to recover. Fathers in these conditions return home in the evening tired, irritable, touchy or remote. He is numb with hate for his job; ashamed to tell his children what he does in that little cubicle in the tall glass building downtown. With his foul mood he can't teach nor can he impart wisdom to his children. He imparts instead his temperament.

In the few hours he'll spend at home he grunts and shouts inaudible orders staring at a television screen or from behind crumpled



newspapers. Not surprisingly when his sons become fathers the troubled pattern is repeated. Better educated and perhaps making more money while doing the same meaningless job at a bigger corporation, the new generation of fathers soon become gol-faholics making lame excuses to spend time away from home. Much like his own dad, the young father becomes a self-absorbed man who insists on sitting at the head of the table but has done nothing as yet to earn the right to do so.

Muslim fathers rarely spend quality time at home to put their children to bed, read them books or play games with them. Fathers are often shocked at how little they actually know of what's going on in the lives of their sons. They fail to realize that being involved in their sons lives means paying attention to the small details, relevant or not. That way, when the son gets to be a teenager he will feel comfortable telling his father things that he might otherwise hold as deep dark secrets.

Muslim boys today are raised in a climate where their sense of manhood is wrapped in a cloth of ineptitude from a young age. If they are in their twenties men would remember the genocide of Muslims in Bosnia, Chechnya, and Kosovo and the

ongoing crimes in Palestine. If they are older, they are most certainly going to recall 10 years of Russian occupation and destruction of Afghanistan, a majority Muslim country. To make matters worst, his Muslim sisters are banned in France from wearing the hijab in public schools and now the United States of America has occupied Iraq, once the seat of Muslim global power.

As a man coming of age the question of what to do under these circumstances rings loud. Unable to do anything tangible to alleviate the suffering of his people some men will accept defeat, sink low and drop out of sight. Others however will soar to great heights becoming doctors, lawyers and engineers as so many sons of immigrant parents are doing today. But sooner or later the kite must land and the young man is going to want heroes and when he can't find any he will invent them. In his early teens the son will first look to his father as the hero but if his father is off playing cricket with his friends, the son, if the family is religious, will turn to the Imam at the mosque, the Shaykh everyone admires, or the, sometimes foolhardy, mufti from his father's village who gives strident khutbahs and issues brave fatwas. If he is weak of faith he will hold on to an older man who gives him a good turn or a beautiful woman he will marry and obey her every wish and command. All of these may or may not offer temporary solutions in a time when men are required to be men, but none will or can replace the role of the father in teaching boys how to be men.

I am the father of five children, two girls and three boys now all in their teens. My parents raised two boys and two girls and in dealing with my sons I often find myself

turning to my relationship with my father for lessons in what to do and not do in raising my boys.

For example, my 13-year-old son recently decided he could drive. His experiment didn't go well. He caused five thousand dollars in damage to our van and the garage door. Had I done something like that when I was his age I would have been guaranteed a sound trashing and that certainly wouldn't have been the last of it. I didn't scold my son but threatened a spanking if he didn't give me a clear explanation for his motivation to get behind the wheels at least four years before he is legally entitled to.

I used to spend long hours with my father carrying his tools as he mended the fence and replaced the old with the new. My father is the quiet efficient type who does a lot without saying much. I learned by observing him. From time to time he would let me hammer the nails in place or saw pieces of wood. Just as I came to know my mother's rhythm when I was a child, the hours I spent with my dad helped me to learn his rhythm as well.

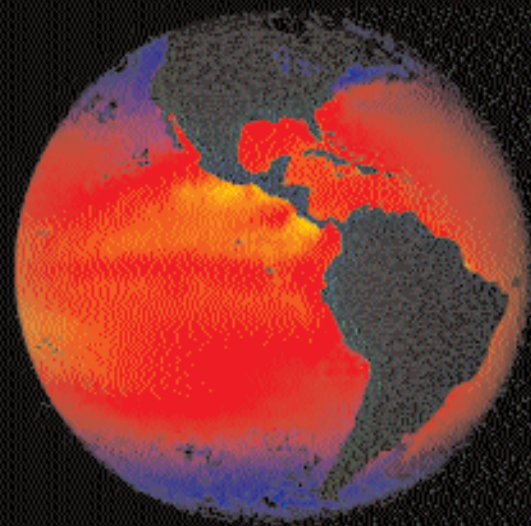
My father took me to his place of work often on Saturdays. Off from work by midday we strolled over to his barber shop where I too would get a haircut. I knew well what he did for a living and I knew the people he worked with. I still remember with pride the respect the owner used to show him because he was a reliable employee. How much money he made was never relevant to me but more important was the fact that he was a living presence in our home and in my life.

I am not deluded into thinking that everything in my relationship with my father was all positive. I could spend days focusing on the negatives in my father's life or on the many apparently unjustified spankings I received from him when I was growing up, but I know that even though he scolded me my father never shamed nor insulted me. As I became older I would sometimes get glimpses into dark areas in my father's life but because my positive experience with him outweighed the negative I refused to dwell on the negatives, the Darth Vader or the "Dark Father." And I know now that it is because of my overwhelmingly positive relationship with my father that as an adult I have never desired another father figure.

In my relationship with my three sons I try to open windows and doors for the kings inside of them to emerge and gain self-recognition. This process is arduous and it requires showing patience while learning to inhale - the good - and exhale - accept the bad - and all the while teach my sons to do the same. I understand that everything can't be positive all the time and neither can they be negative all the time. I teach my sons, like my father had taught me, not to barter their independence to anyone, man or woman. I do this because I believe it is the best way to ensure, like Zayd, that in life's many unexpected twists and turns, they will endeavor to make the right choices. ■

Being a father to boys is a live minefield. Often regarded as Mr. Sperm and Paycheck Donor, when dad tries to apply techniques learned from sitcoms, his son responds with one standard he has learned from *The Simpsons* - my dad, and by extension all fathers, are as dumb as Homer.

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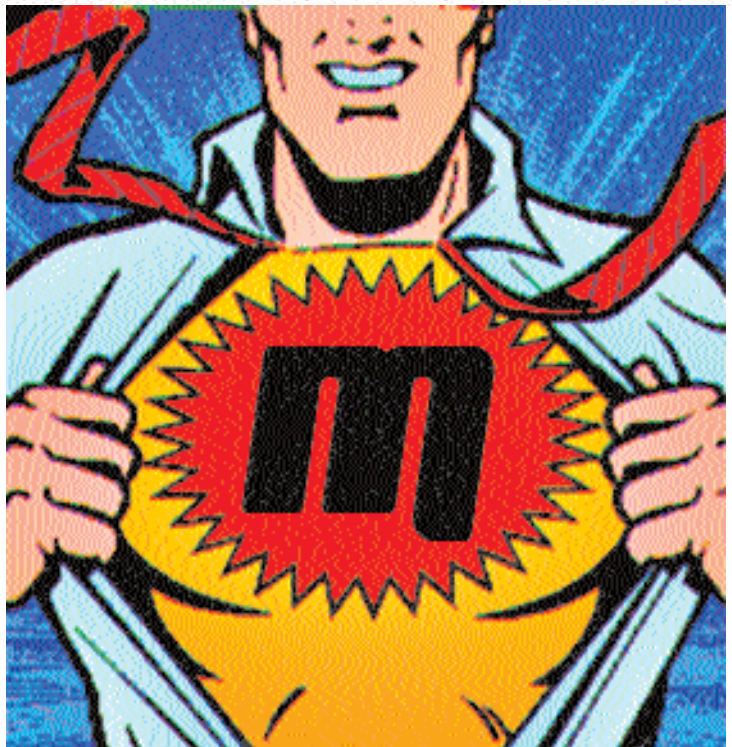


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IN DEFENCE OF THE MUSLIM MALE

ARE MUSLIM MEN BAD PARENTS? MANY BEMOAN THE STATE OF MUSLIM FATHERHOOD, BUT **MOHAMED BAKARI** DISMISSES THE JEREMIADS. HE THINKS THE MUSLIM MAN IS, AS SHAKESPEARE WOULD HAVE PUT IT, A MAN MORE SINNED AGAINST THAN SINNING. MUSLIM MEN ARE NO MORE BAD FATHERS THAN ARE MEN OF OTHER FAITHS CAUGHT IN UP IN THE TRIALS AND STRUGGLES OF MODERN LIFE.

It is the culture that actually maketh the man and there is something common to all cultures: work. Virtually all cultures and societies that I know of valorise work and in response, utopian idealists of past ages have sought, rather disastrously, to banish work from our lives by promising that by working very hard to create a socialist utopia in some nebulous future we can live lives of unadulterated hedonism. Utopian fiction is replete with these unrealistic projects going back to classical Greek times. Plato's Republic is considered by many to be the proto-blueprint for these quixotic Jannahs. And lest we forget, it was the same man who mooted the idea of eugenics in his advocacy of the creation of a self-perpetuat-



ing class of Philosopher-kings, the managers of the affairs of men. This class was to be willed into existence by abolishing the family and mating the most intelligent men with the most beautiful and intelligent women. The offspring were to be handed over to the government for upbringing and education. In recent history Adolf Hitler tried to put this theory into practice in his mad attempts to create the chimera of the Aryan, the putative 'pure' race. The victims of this horrendous experiment are still with us, and they are far from happy. In our own time there are ceaseless attempts to find 'quality time' by finding the best ways of maximizing leisure by downsizing work itself.

As Muslims, the exemplar is of course our Prophet, peace be upon him. In a famous hadith he is reported to have kissed the callous hands of a companion who had come from the hard physical labour of felling a tree for firewood, while his brother claimed to be at the mosque engaged in worship. The Prophet knew the spiritual value of a day's honest toil. His life was dedicated to devoted service and work for his family and community.

Everyone deserves a decent living. Yet working to impress, achieve status and gain the right to conspicuous consumption goes against the ethos of our faith. Don't get me wrong, I'm not advocating a life completely devoid of modern conveniences, for it is part of our way of life to celebrate our blessings by a modest indulgence as a way of showing our gratitude to our Creator. There is absolutely nothing condemnable about living in a decent house, wearing good and well-made clothes and eating nourishing, even delicious, food. We have to constantly strike a balance between overindulgence and miserliness both to ourselves, and those that we are morally bound to care for.

At the centre of this balancing act is the head of the household, who, in most societies is still the man. He is expected to be the embodiment of all the virtues - a man of superhuman qualities at once an ideal husband and a loving father, a ceaseless

provider and a flawless role model. He does not help himself by creating the impression that he can handle all situations, and that it is only miracles that take a little longer with him. When the pressure to deliver on these promises grows to match the fantasy that he has created about himself, super-dad breaks down!

A general impatience now pervades our world. Everything has to be had now whether it is a good job or a large house or a nice car. A leading American essayist and social commentator recently turned his sharp wit to this issue and predicated it to the reluctance on the part of a lot of people to let go their adolescence. Joseph Epstein presciently notes that, "In the 1950s, people commonly married in their twenties, which may not have been a good thing, but marriage did prove a forcing house into adulthood, for men and women, especially where children issued from the marriage, which they usually did fairly quickly. I had two sons by the time I was 26, which among other things, made it impossible, either physically or spiritually, for me to join the general youth movement of the 1960s, even though I still qualified by age. It also required me to find a vocation. By 30, one was supposed to be settled in life: wife, children, house, and job - 'the full catastrophe,' as Zorba the Greek liked to say. But it was also a useful catastrophe. Today most people feel that they can wait to get serious about life. Until then one is feeling one's way, still deciding, shopping around, contributing to the formation of a new psychological type: the passive non-aggressive. Not everywhere is non-aggression the psychological mode of choice. One hears about the young men and women working the 14-hour days at low six-figure jobs in front-line law firms; others sacrificing to get into MBA programs, for the single purpose of an early financial score. But even here one senses an adolescent spirit to the proceedings. The old model for ambition was solid hard work that paid off over time. One began at a low wage, worked one's way up through genuine accomplishment, grew wealthier as one grew older, and, with luck, retired with a sense of financial security and pleasure in one's achievement. But the new American ambition model features the kid multimillionaire-the young man or woman who breaks the bank not long out of college. An element of adolescent impatience enters in here-I want, now! - and also an element of continued youthfulness. The model of the type may be the professional athlete. [Look at] Shaquille O'Neal, the 32 year old centre for the Los Angeles Lakers, who earns, with endorsements, 30-odd million dollars a year and lives the life of the most privileged possible junior high school boy: enjoying food fights, go-carts, motorcycles, the run of high rides at amusement parks."

We have become too enamoured of the ostentatious life of the

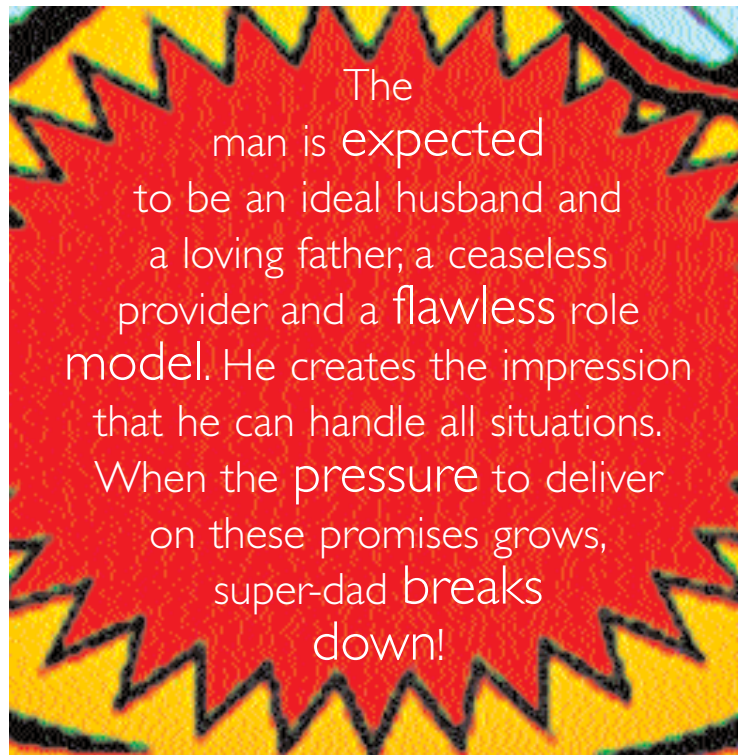
new globalised man epitomised by the rapper and the megabuck sports celebrity. We have set the bar too high for our hardworking Ahmad, Ali or Hussein. He is dreaming his way up to the top, but failing to reach the target; he retreats into drugs, indolence and the general culture of irresponsibility. He no longer can captain his domestic ship through the tempestuous sea of contemporary life.

Chances are that our Joe Muslim might not have been tutored in the ways of household leadership through religious teaching, education and an awareness of the modern world in which we are living. He is virtually lost without even knowing it. Muslim men are not alone in this struggle to find balance. This is a modern global archetype to be found in many societies and communities. The trouble is that Joe Muslim is often detached from the wider community. When he begins to get more involved in civil society, he might be able to mitigate his problems. Muslims have to learn to network and reach out to others. There are very few Muslims with public spiritedness to involve themselves in community affairs, and I do not here only mean Muslim community affairs. It is always other people who are concerned with larger issues that transcend their little religious or ethnic ghettos. There is strength in male solidarity, which the Muslim man must rediscover.

Joe Muslim is capable reinventing himself given the right conditions. But the starting point is education. The Japanese realised this not long ago. Japanese society devised the strategy of complementary roles, where Dad would go to the Nany-Company and Mom would stay at home and supervise the education of little Kawabata. This was the genesis of the famously loyal Japanese 'salary man.' I am not

advocating the wholesale adoption of the Japanese model, which in any case might now sound hopelessly anachronistic. What I do advocate is hard thinking on the part of Muslims on how to come out of this social bind, or as some have alleged, this disease. If we strongly feel that this is a widespread disease, then we have to find a cure, and as the famous hadith of the Prophet has it, every disease has a cure lurking somewhere, if only we looked hard enough.

Sometimes, the grass seems greener on the other side, but it's not. Did you know that Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Mahatma Gandhi, despite being great thinkers, were irresponsible fathers? The former, in spite of writing a great book, Emile, on how to bring up children, abandoned his own and led a life of sheer hedonism, being constantly supported by wealthy European aristocratic women who were his serial lovers. As for the latter, his eldest son was a confirmed drunkard who staggered to his father's funeral in a state of inebriation and got there when Gandhi had already been cremated. Perhaps Joe Muslim doesn't have it so bad. ■





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ON THE NECESSITY OF LOVING THE

Allah says; “Say: if it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, your kindred; the wealth that you have gained: the commerce in which you fear a decline; or the dwellings in which you delight - are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and the struggle in His way, then wait until Allah brings His command; and God guides not the rebellious.” (9:24)

This is enough encouragement, advice, proof and indication of the necessity of loving him and is sufficient to show that this duty is an immensely important obligation which is the Prophet’s right. Allah censures those whose property, families and children are dearer to them than Allah and His Messenger. He threatens them by adding: “Wait until Allah brings His command.” At the end of the verse He considers such people as having done wrong and informs them they are among those who are astray and not guided by Allah.

Anas reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “None of you will believe until I am more beloved to him than his children, his father and all people.” There is something similar from Abu Hurayrah.

Anas reported that the Prophet said, “There are three things which cause anyone who takes refuge in them to experience the sweetness of belief - that Allah and His Messenger are more beloved to him than anything else; that he loves a man only for Allah; and that he dislikes the thought of reverting to disbelief as much as he would dislike being cast into the Fire.”

Umar ibn al-Khattab said to the Prophet: “I love you more than anything except my soul which is between my two sides.” The Prophet replied: “None of you will believe until I am dearer to him than his own soul.” Umar said: “By the One who sent down the Book on you, I love you more than my soul which is between my two sides.” The Prophet said: “Umar, now you have it!”

Sahl said: “Whoever does not think that the Messenger is his master in all states or think that he is under the dominion of the Prophet does not taste the sweetness of his sunnah because the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “None of you will believe until I am dearer to him than himself.”

ON THE REWARD FOR LOVING THE PROPHET

Anas said that a man came to the Prophet and asked. “When will

the Last Hour come, Messenger of Allah?” He said: “What have you prepared for it?” He said: “I have not prepared a lot of prayer or fasting or charity for it, but I love Allah and His Messenger.” The prophet said: “You will be with the one you love.”

Safwan ibn Qudamah said: “I did hijrah [emigration] to the Prophet and went to him and said: ‘Messenger of Allah, give me your hand.’ So he gave me his hand. I said: ‘Messenger of God, I love you.’ He said: ‘A man is with the one he loves.’” Abdullah ibn Mas’ud, Abu Musa al-Ash’ari and Anas related this statement from the Prophet; and Abu Dharr also has something to the same effect.

Ali said that the Prophet took Hasan and Husayn by the hand and said. “Whoever loves me and loves these two and their father and mother will have the same degree as me on the Day of Rising.”

It is related that a man came to the Prophet and said: “Messenger of Allah, I love you more than my family and my possessions. I remember you and I cannot wait until I can come and look at you. I will die and you will die and I know that when you enter the Garden, you will be raised up with the Prophets. When I enter it, I will not see you.” Allah then revealed, “Whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, they are with those whom Allah has blessed: among the Prophets, the true ones, the martyrs and the righteous (who do good). Ah! What a beautiful fellowship!” [4:69] The Prophet called the man and recited the verses to him.

In another tradition we find: “A man was with the Prophet, looking at him without turning away. The Prophet asked: ‘What is wrong with you?’ He replied: ‘My father and mother be your ransom! I enjoy looking at you. On the Day of Rising, Allah will raise you up because of His high estimation of you!’ Allah then sent down the ayah mentioned above.

In the tradition of Anas, the Prophet said: “Whoever loves me will be with me in the Garden.”

THE SIGNS OF LOVE OF THE PROPHET, MAY ALLAH BLESS HIM AND GRANT HIM PEACE

Know that someone who loves a person prefers them and prefers what they like. Otherwise, he is a pretender, insincere in his love. Someone who has true love of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, will manifest the following signs.



THE PROPHET

1) The first sign is that he will emulate him, apply his sunnah, follow his words and deeds, obey his commands and avoid his prohibitions and take on his adab in ease and hardship, joy and despair: Allah testifies to that, Say: if you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you your sin. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. [3:31]

2) He will prefer what the Prophet has laid down as law and encouraged, over his own passions and appetites. Allah said, "And those who, before them, had their abode in this realm and in faith - [those] who love all that come to them in search of refuge, and who harbour in their hearts no grudge for whatever the others may have been given, but rather give them preference over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot." [59:9]

3) His anger against people will only be for the sake of the pleasure of Allah. Anas ibn Malik said: "The Messenger of Allah said to me, "My son, if you can be without any grudge in your heart against anyone in the morning and evening, be like that." Then he added: "My son, that is part of my sunnah. Whoever gives life to my sunnah has loved me and whoever loves me is with me in the Garden." Anyone who possesses this particular quality has perfect love for Allah and His Messenger. Anyone slightly lacking in it is imperfect in his love while not entirely devoid of it. The proof of this is in what the Prophet said about the man who was given the hadd-punishment for drinking. A man there cursed him and the Prophet said: "Do not curse him. He loves Allah and His Messenger."

4) Another of the signs of love for the Prophet is to mention him often. Whoever loves something mentions it a lot.

5) Another is great yearning to meet him. Lovers yearn for their beloved. When the Ash'arite clan came to Madinah, they chanted: "Tomorrow we will meet those we love, Muhammad and his companions!"

6) One of its signs is that as well as mentioning him often, someone who loves him will exalt and respect him when he mentions him and display humility and abasement when he hears his name. Ishaq at-Tujibi said: "Whenever the companions of the Prophet heard his name after he died, they were humble, their skins trembled and they wept. It was the same with many of the Followers. Some of them act like that out of love and yearning for him, others out of respect and esteem."

7) Another sign is love for those who love the Prophet and the people of his house and his Companions, both of the Muhajirun and Ansar, for his sake. Such a person will also be hostile to those who hate and curse them. Whoever loves anyone, loves those he loves.

The Prophet said about al-Hasan and al-Husayn: "O Allah, I love them, so love them." In al-Hasan's variant: "O Allah, I love him, so love the one who loves him." He also said: "Whoever loves them loves me. Whoever loves me loves Allah. Whoever hates them hates me. Whoever hates me hates Allah."

He said: "Allah! Allah! My Companions! Do not make them targets after me! Whoever loves them loves them by loving me. Whoever hates them, hates them by hating me. Whoever does something hurtful to them does something hurtful to me. Whoever does something hurtful to me does something hurtful to Allah. Whoever does something hurtful to Allah is about to be seized."

He said about Fatimah: "She is a part of me. Whoever hates her hates me".

He said to Aisha about Usamah ibn Zayd: "Love him for I love him." He said: "The Sign of true faith is love for the Ansar and the sign of hypocrisy is hatred for them."

In the hadith of Ibn 'Umar we find: "Whoever loves the Arabs, loves them because he loves me. Whoever hates them hates them because he hates me." In reality, whoever loves someone loves everything he loves. This was certainly the case with the *Salaf*, even regarding permitted things and the appetites of the self.

Anas once saw the Prophet following the pumpkin around the plate. He said, "I have loved pumpkin from that day."

Al-Hasan ibn 'Ali, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas and Ibn Ja'far came to Salmah and asked her to prepare some food for them which the Messenger of Allah liked. Ibn 'Umar used to wear tanned sandals dyed yellow when he saw the Prophet wearing ones like that.

8) Another sign is hatred for anyone who hates Allah and His Messenger, having enmity towards all who have enmity towards him, avoidance of all those oppose his sunnah and introduce innovations into his *deen*, and finding every matter contrary to his *shari'ah* burdensome. Allah says, "You will not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day and [at the same time] love anyone who opposes Allah and His Messenger, even though they be their fathers,



'Ali, describing the Prophet, said, "Whoever saw him suddenly was in awe of him. Whoever mixed with him loved him." We mentioned that one of the Companions could not turn his eyes away because of his love for him.

or their sons, or their brothers, or [others of] of their kindred." [58:22]

His companions killed their loved ones and fought their fathers and

sons to gain the pleasure of the Prophet. 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Ubay said to him, "If you had wanted, I would have brought you his head (his father's)."

9) Another sign of it is love for the Qur'an which the Prophet brought by which he guided and was guided, and whose character he took on so that A'ishah said, "His character was the Qur'an." Part of love for the Qur'an is its recitation and acting by it and understanding it, and loving his sunnah and keeping within its limits.

Sahl ibn 'Abdullah said, "The sign of the love of Allah is the love of the Qur'an. The sign of the love of the Qur'an is the love of the Prophet. The sign of love of the Prophet is love of the Sunnah. The sign of love of the Next World is hatred for this world. The sign of hatred for this world is that you do not store up any of it except for provision and what you need to arrive safely in the Next World."

Ibn Mas'ud said, "No one need to ask himself about anything except the Qur'an. If he loves the Qur'an, he loves Allah and His Messenger.

10) One of the signs of love for the Prophet is having compassion for his community, giving them good counsel, striving for their best interests and removing what is harmful from them just as the Prophet was "compassionate, merciful to the believers." [9:128]

11) One of the signs of perfect love is that the one who aspires to it does without in this world and prefers poverty.

The Prophet said to Abu Sa'id al-Khudri: "Poverty for those among you who love me comes quicker than a flood from the top of the mountain to the bottom."

In a hadith from 'Abdullah bin Mughaffal, a man said to the Prophet, "O Messenger of Allah, I love you." He said, "Take care what you say!" He said, "By Allah, I love you" three times. He said, "If you love me, then prepare for poverty quickly." There is a similar hadith from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri.

ON THE MEANING AND REALITY OF LOVE FOR THE PROPHET

People disagree about what constitutes love of Allah and the Prophet. They have many things to say about it, but in reality, they are referring to different states.

Sufyan said, "Love consists of following the Messenger of Allah." It was as if he were thinking of the words of Allah, "Say: if you love Allah, then follow me." (3:31)

One of the scholars said, "Love of the Messenger is to believe in his victory, protect his Sunnah, obey it and to fear being in opposition to him." One of the scholars said, "Love is constant remembrance of the beloved."

Another said, "It is preferring the beloved."

Another said, "Love is yearning for the beloved."

One of the scholars said, "Love is the heart following the will of its master, loving what he loves and hating what he hates."

Another said, "Love is the heart's inclination to be in harmony with the beloved."

Most of these statements indicate the fruits of love rather than its reality. The reality of love is to incline to what one finds agreeable and harmonious, either:

(1) By the pleasure of its perfection - like love of beautiful forms, melodious sounds, delicious foods and drink to which one naturally

inclines because they are agreeable.

(2) Or by pleasure in the perfection of its noble inner qualities which is sensed by the intellect and heart - like love for the sal-

ihun, the ulama and people of correctness whose marvellous lives and good actions have been related. Man's nature inclines to passionate love for these sorts of things to the point of fanaticism. Such partisanship for one group against another and sectarianism within a nation can result in homelands being abandoned, inviolable things being dishonoured, and lives lost;

(3) Or someone can love something because he finds it agreeable by reason of gaining benefit and blessing from it. The self is naturally disposed to love that which is good to it.

When you have understood this well, then look at these three causes of love in respect of the Prophet and you will find that all three things which inspire love apply to him.

The beauty of his form and outward appearance and the perfection of his character have already been mentioned, so there is no need to say any more about them. As regards the benefit and blessing his community gain from him, we have already mentioned the qualities of Allah he possessed - his compassion for them, his mercy for them, his guiding them, his tenderness for them and his striving to save them from the Fire. He is "merciful, compassionate to the believers," [9:128] and 'a mercy to the worlds,' [21:107] and "a bringer of good news, a warner and a caller to Allah by His permission" [33:45-46], "He recites His signs to them and purifies them and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom" [62:2], and "guides them to a straight path" [5:16].

What goodness could be worthier or of greater importance than his goodness to all the believers! What favour could be more universally beneficial and of greater use than his blessing to all the Muslims since he is their means to guidance, the one who rescues them from blind error, and the one who summons them to success and honour? He is their means to their Lord and their intercessor. He speaks up on their behalf and bears witness for them and brings them to eternal life and everlasting bliss.

So it should be clear to you that love of the Prophet must be an obligation in *Shari'ah* because of the sound traditions we have related and the nature of his overflowing goodness and universal beauty we have just mentioned.

If a man can love someone who is generous to him just once or twice in this world as is well known to be the case, or someone who saves him from destruction or harm even once, when that damage and harm are only of a temporary nature, then the one gives him undying bliss and protects him from the eternal punishment of al-jahim should be loved more. A king is loved when his behaviour is good and a ruler is loved for his upright conduct. Someone who lives far away is loved for their knowledge or noble character. Whoever possesses all these qualities in total perfection is more entitled to be loved and more deserving of attachment.

'Ali, describing the Prophet, said, "Whoever saw him suddenly was in awe of him. Whoever mixed with him loved him." We mentioned that one of the Companions could not turn his eyes away because of his love for him. ■

QADI IYAD IBN MUSA AL-YAHSUBI *excerpted from* Ash-Shifa of Qadi Iyad *translated by Aisha Bewley (Madinah Press, Inverness).*

GUIDANCE FOR ALL MANKIND

THE NEED TO REDISCOVER AND RECLAIM THE TEACHINGS FROM THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD IS NOW MORE CRITICAL THAN EVER,
ARGUES KHALED AL MAEENA.

The Holy Prophet of Islam and Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) was born on Rabiul Awwal 12. His birth took place in Makkah on a Monday in the house known as *Dar Al-Mawlid*, in the year of the Elephant, which corresponds to 571 C.E. Both his father, Abdullah Ibn Abdul Muttalib, and mother, Amina Bint Wahab, were well-known individuals. The Holy Prophet never knew his father, who had died in the months before his birth. It was left to his grandfather to name him *Muhammad*.

It is incumbent upon Muslims to know the importance of this noble Prophet, upon whom be peace and blessings, and to abide by the Quran, which was revealed to him. They should also emulate his behaviour and attach importance to the call of *tawhid* with which he began his message, as shown in Allah's direction in the Quran: "Say (Muhammad), I pray unto Allah only, and I ascribe to Him no partner."

Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be blessings and peace, is the role model for every Muslim. We should follow his guidance in all things large and small. Almighty Allah has blessed this *ummah* by preserving the *Sunnah* and *Sirah* of His Messenger, upon whom be blessings and peace. In spite of the passage of time, both remain as though you were seeing and hearing them today. They provide a living example of the life of the Prophet, upon whom be blessings and peace. They also instill love and respect for him in the hearts of Muslims. Allah says in the Quran: "Indeed in the Messenger of Allah, you have a good example to follow."

It is important that as Muslims face the many challenges in today's world, we search and seek guidance from the Holy Book and follow the teachings of the Prophet. The world is passing through a very dangerous period. Wars, famine, hunger and disease are ravaging parts of the globe. Even in the so-called advanced societies, life is far from trouble-free. We find violence in schools and on the streets, depression, poverty, dysfunctional families and a host of other problems that appear to be increasing instead of dissipating, no matter what measures are used to try to stem the tide of misery.

In the Muslim world there is also a crisis of identity. While social problems are few thanks to our strong family values, there is a growing indifference to other challenges that confront us. Intolerance is a rising menace. There is a breeding of extremism, obscurantism and

a growing habit of blaming others for our ills. As a people we are not given to soul-searching or introspection. We have failed to question why are we in this position.

What have we done to alleviate our own suffering? We grovel in mortification and we wallow in self-pity, yet we cannot muster the courage to call a spade a spade and find solutions to our own problems. We don't have to copy others. The life of Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be blessings and peace, is itself a beacon of light - a light of guidance that, if only we were to avail it, would lead us to safety. Those of us who have position in society should lead by example, for it will be disastrous if we ourselves lack true awareness and piety.

If we love the Prophet, upon whom be blessings and peace, and believe in his message, then we have to follow him in everything we do. We must leave anything that is abominable - all that is indecent, whether in speech or in action. If an injustice is done to you, respond with a kind act by forgiving the one who wronged you. Do not take revenge. Free yourself by forgiving others and working to strengthen relationships.

Avoid blaming or being harsh to your colleagues, children, students and spouse(s) when they do not perform their duties to the required standard. Do not hesitate to help the weak, the needy and women; and walk in their midst without arrogance or superiority. Work hard and participate with other workers, even if it be digging in the ground or removing rubble; and be happy in carrying out the tasks you are performing to show your humility. Do not use abusive or rude language, even in jest. Do not direct evil deeds at any of your brothers or sisters. Let politeness and propriety in speech be your way of life. Be merciful to people and to animals, so that Allah may have mercy upon you. Be unafraid to speak the truth, even if it is against you.

We must have role models. Let us seek them from people around us but never forget the one who God has sent as a Messenger, upon whom be blessings and peace.


Of all the prophets, there is none whose life has been as open to scrutiny as that of Prophet Muhammad. Therefore we owe it to our-

selves to research his life and study his character, his dealings with people, his manners and his code of life. That itself would be an ennobling experience - something that would enrich us and make our lives rewarding. ■

What have we done to alleviate our own suffering? We grovel in mortification and we wallow in self-pity, yet we cannot muster the courage to call a spade a spade and find solutions to our own problems.



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FIQH TODAY

MUSLIMS AS MINORITIES

THE PRACTICE OF FIQH HAS ALWAYS BEEN CHARACTERISED BY DYNAMISM AND FLEXIBILITY. UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERLYING VALUES OF THE SACRED LAW AND HOW IT IS DERIVED ENABLES MUSLIM COMMUNITIES TO CONTINUOUSLY MAKE ISLAM RELEVANT TO THEIR UNIQUE CONTEXTS, REPORTS ABDUL-REHMAN MALIK.

The growing Muslim presence in Europe and North America and the rising discourse on the nature of citizenship and identity makes the question of relevance significant. Will Muslims in the West, given the challenges of discrimination and systemic disadvantage, be able to find an expression of Islam that is both connected to their rich heritage, yet addresses the exigencies of their contemporary circumstances in a meaningful and applicable way? Drawing on the classical heritage and corpus, the minority fiqh project is at once an intellectual and spiritual challenge. It was in this spirit that the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS UK) with the International Institute of Islamic Thought, The Muslim College and Q-News convened “Fiqh Today: Muslims as Minorities” its 5th annual conference at the University of Westminster in London from 21st - 22nd February 2004.

Anas Al-Shaikh-Ali, AMSS (UK) Executive Committee Chair, set out the vision in his opening remarks: A genuine fiqh for minority Muslims requires a collective engagement between social scientists and Shari’ah scholars “in the wider public arena.” He challenged participants to work for a “comprehensive methodology of minority fiqh” drawing on the past, but not being afraid to be innovative. The AMSS (UK) 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award was awarded posthumously to Edward Said and the 2003 Building Bridges Award was presented to Karen Armstrong for her work in promoting inter-faith dialogue and understanding.

Keynote speaker Dr Mustafa Cerić, Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose speech was published in the March edition of *Q-News*, posited a vision of Muslims in Europe that recognized their unique historic position and contribution to Europe, which he sees as a place of interaction rather than confrontation.

The conference opened with presentations from Louay Safi (Visiting Professor, George Washington University; president, AMSS [USA]) and Dr. Mohamed Mestiri (professor of Usul and Contemporary Islamic Thought, Institut des Sciences Islamiques, Paris). Safi’s paper, “The Creative Mission of Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and Modernity,” explored how minority fiqh can help Muslims deal with the West’s ethos by applying the maqasid al-Shari’ah, which develops a normative order capable of enhancing the human condition by keeping legislation in the hands of civil society instead of the majority. Mestiri drew on the experience of Muslims in France to present “From the Fiqh of Minorities to the Fiqh of Citizenship.” Classical fiqh saw minorities as fully associated members of a citizenship charter. We must see minority fiqh in light of these new civic realities.

Dr Zaki Badawi discussed “General Principles of Fiqh,” emphasizing that the moral maxims governing the fiqhi rulings are more important than the rulings. Taha Jabir al-Alwani (president, Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences; president, Fiqh Council of North America) sent a videotaped presentation of his paper “Minority Fiqh: Between Macro- and Micro-Fiqh,” in which he called for the new realities of minority Muslim communities not to be compared with the past.

Addressing the “Islamic Juristic Views on the Political and Legal Status of Muslims in non-Muslim Countries,” Bustami Khir

(Birmingham University) explored the Hanafi, Shafi’i, and Maliki understandings of wilayat al-‘ulama’ as a way of providing leadership, legal and spiritual guidance to Muslim minority communities. Dr. Tahir Mahdi (Université de Valenciennes) focused on “Minorities and Maqasid al-Shari’ah.” Muslims should use ijthad, cease to see themselves as disadvantaged or allow themselves to be minoritised, and must accept that they are Muslim citizens of Europe. Classical Islamic jurisprudence is a source of inspiration, not always of application. Revisiting exclusionary legal and community processes, pertaining namely to women, is a critical first step to recapturing legal creativity.

On the second day, Soumaya Pernilla Ouis (The Swedish Islamic Academy) used her “Marriage Strategies among Young Muslims in Europe” to argue that young Muslims have increasingly complex conceptions of marriage that require more focus on individual choice and less emphasis on children and extended families. Political theorist Ahmad Al-Katib addressed the “Problem of Sexual Relations among Muslim Youth,” with special emphasis on early marriage, marriage with the intention to divorce, and temporary marriage.

Charles Le Gai Eaton, speaking on minority fiqh in the context of shifting and contested identities, called for developing a relevant framework for Islamic expression that is consistent with Islamic civilization’s ethos and fiqh’s protective framework. He noted that expression must reflect the context without rejecting the system that has sustained, preserved, and developed the sacred law, and warned of the dangers of relativism and secularism.

Asmat Ali, (Ph.D. Candidate, Birkbek College, University of London) analyzed “Pluralism: Islamic and Non-Islamic Laws - A Problem of Definitions” while Dilwar Hussein (Research Fellow, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester) argued that the impact of globalisation and the question of how distinct one geographic frame is from another needs to be answered if the minority fiqh project is to remain legitimate.

The final session examined directly relevant models of Islamic law. Barrister Ahmad Thomson (member, Gray’s Inn; deputy-chairman, Association of Muslim Lawyers) presented “Incorporating Muslim Personal Law into UK Domestic Law.” He sees the growth of such a system as organic and based on precedents utilising the legally binding mechanisms of arbitration. Ihsan Yilmaz expressed concern over the growth of “Micro-Mujtahids and the Fiqh al-Aqalliyat” and the subsequent fragmentation of Muslim legal discourse as individuals undertake takhayyur (choosing/combining schools of thought and rulings). Understanding that laws, their derivation and interpretation, belong in the civic realm, means that any legal chaos also must be managed in that realm.

Given the dizzying scope of the conference, the AMSS (UK) must be congratulated for creating an academic environment for the exchange of ideas, networking and hopefully laying the groundwork for a future synthesis of minority fiqh for minority Muslim communities in the West. Fiqh is after all a process, not a goal. By maintaining a relevant approach to jurisprudence, the European Muslim discourse can lead the way in innovative approaches to sacred law that seek to build on its capacity to be relevant in post-modernity. ■

SHARIAH TV CLARITY OR CONTROVERSY?

Calling all British Muslims for a quick fix! Before you protest, think Shariah TV, a show for young adult Muslims to voice dilemmas faced in a secular society and receive instant expert advice in accordance with Islamic law. The five-part CVTC production commissioned by Channel 4 covers five areas: Perceptions of Islam by non-Muslims, Family and Relationships, Consumerism, Citizenship and Islam's Encounters with other Faiths.

Amongst the panel of Muslim scholars and experts are Dr Zaki Badawi (chair of the Council of Imams and Mosques), Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, Karen Armstrong (scholar and writer), Mohammed Paracha (associate of Norton Rose and member of the Bank of England Working Group), Maulana Shahid Raza (lead imam of Leicester Central Mosque) and Ibrahim Mogra (imam from Leicester), but to name a few. Not

Muslims but this one provides young British Muslims a unique chance to discuss their problems," says Ajmal Masroor, a specialist researcher in project management, involved in creating Shariah TV. Indeed, and there is well a need for it. However, it would be an understatement to say that discussing contemporary issues in the light of the shariah is no an easy feat. So were audience members provided with the answers they were looking for?

Well, in answer to whether or not alcohol was permissible in moderation, the panellists gave a unanimous "no." No confusion there. What did confuse matters was the aye given to going to pubs if there was a "perceived need" such as socialising with work colleagues as long as you didn't consume alcohol. Yet what about when it's your turn to pay for the round? Surely purchasing is almost as forbidden as consumption. This issue however was not raised. Clubbing of course was deemed to be an unacceptable activity by Ms Maqsood. Fair enough - apparently "perceived need" isn't applicable here. Besides, how facile is it to decide what is a "need" and what isn't? As a doctor in the audience rightly said, "We can't use the classic example of eating pork if in dire need, and apply it to all areas of life."

Paracha's advice with regard to Islamic finance and the options now open for halal mortgages will certainly be welcomed by many Muslim who worry about riba. Not many are likely to take the advice of Imam Mogra: opt out of mortgages altogether and go for council housing as "we live in a welfare state." No doubt that will raise many Muslim and non-Muslim eyebrows alike.

Perhaps Maulana Raza provided the most striking comment, when he stated that according to the consensus of around 200 scholars, organ donation was permissible. It's unlikely that large hoards of Muslims will run out to get a donor card on hearing that one, though it's certain to provoke some controversy.

It was interesting to see that permissibility of abortion due to "great foetal abnormalities" was not readily accepted. As an audience member said, "Perhaps that's the test, and a child with disabilities is a test both for the child and the people around." The doctors of the audience weren't so convinced either. Yet one of the most amusing moments was seeing a sassy, hijab-wearing teenager challenging Maulana Raza on the fact that it was "perfectly ok" for her to join Christian festivals celebrated by her relatives as that was her way of "performing dawah" and positively representing Islam to her non-Muslim relatives.

Shariah TV discusses a number of important questions and issues that as Muslims, and more specifically as British Muslims, we need to address to ensure we are not at odds with the secular society we find ourselves in. Perhaps more significantly, the show raises questions as to how well we really know our religion and its application in our daily lives. It will be interesting to see the ensuing reactions.

The first part of Shariah TV will be aired on Tuesday 27th April on Channel 4. ■

SANJANA DEEN

really a case of the 'Elders' dishing out their wisdom to the young and naïve, given Paracha at 27 and Mogra at 30 would be contemporaries of most audience members. The audience is composed of a wide-cross section of society such as professionals, students and full-time parents of diverse ethnicities and adhering to varying levels of Islamic religiosity. Note also the presence of non-Muslims who want to have a better understanding of Islam. So Rahman, best known for presenting various programmes with Granada Television, plays host.

"There have been a lot of documentaries made about

In the Name of Allah, Most Merciful and Compassionate. May His abundant blessing and most perfect of peace be on His Beloved Prophet, the best of creation, and his family, companions and followers.

REPAYING A COMPANY DEBT

MUFTI MUHAMMAD IBN ADAM AL-KAWTHARI

A man owes money to a now bankrupt company. He has tried e-mailing them but the e-mail bounced. What should he do?

Firstly, one should try his best to find and contact them. This must be by exercising all possible mediums of contact, such as: by phone, email, post, personally visiting them if the creditor is in one's town or city.

If the one whom one owes the money is nowhere to be found to the point that one is unaware whether he is dead or alive, then one is not obliged to look for him in different towns and cities.

It is stated: "An individual owes money to another and the creditor disappears in a way that the debtor is unaware of his whereabouts and whether he is dead or alive, it will not be necessary upon the debtor to look for him in other towns and cities." (*al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya*, 5/366)

If one is not able to find and get in touch with the creditor despite employing all possible means, then one should give the amount which one owes in charity to the poor and needy, along with repentance from Allah Most High, and the intention of repaying the loan if the creditor was found. (*al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya*, 5/367)

Thus, in your case, you should try your best to contact the owners of the company that went broke.

If you are unable to do so, you should give that money in charity to the poor, and later if you do find them, you will have to re-pay the debt to them.

INHERITANCE OR ESTRANGEMENT?

FARAZ RABBANI

A woman and her brother are both heir to a piece of land. However, her brother demands that she hand over half of her land or else he will cut off his ties with her. Are family ties or the acquisition of inheritance more important?

Her brother is a wrongdoer (*dhalim*). She is under no expectation to give up her half: it would be proper to refuse such pressure, but without doing anything from her part to break ties. Then, if the brother breaks ties, it would be his sin, not hers.

WHAT YOU OUGHT TO KNOW



UNWANTED LITERATURE

FARAZ RABBANI

I follow a madhhab but have in my possession many salafi books. Should I give them away to those who are salafi or should I destroy them?

It is not necessary to get rid of such literature unless one fears that it will (now or in the future) harm one's understanding of the religion. If one does have this fear, then it would be improper to give the Salafi literature to others, except people of knowledge who may have sound uses for it. Instead, if one does decide to get rid of it, the right thing would be as follows:

Imam Haskafi said, "Those books that are no longer benefited from: One should wipe away the names of Allah, His Angels, and Messengers, and burn the rest. There is nothing wrong with casting them into a flowing river as they are [f: i.e. without wiping away those names]. Alternatively, they can be buried [f: Ibn Abidin mentions from *al-Dhakhira* that is it best that they be wrapped in something pure first]. This is best..." [*Durr al-Mukhtar ma'a Radd al-Muhtar*, 5.271, Bulaq ed.]

It is not permitted, however, to burn copies of the Quran, even if they are no longer being used. [*al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya* 5.323, quoting *al-Dhakhira*, which based its ruling on what Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, the great student of Imam Abu Hanifa stated in his *Siyar al-Kabir*]

If one needs to dispose of them, they should be respectfully buried, as explained above. [ibid.] It is not blameworthy to have

extra copies of the Quran, as one still benefits from them through their baraka, as the texts explain.

DESPERATE TO SEEK KNOWLEDGE

FARAZ RABBANI

I want to travel to seek knowledge, but I can't. I'm distraught. How else can I become a really good Muslim?

Seek the counsel of scholars about the best course in your life. Remember, though, that knowledge is only one means on the path to Allah. It is a means, and not an end.

The point of life is not seeking knowledge, but seeking Allah - seeking closeness to Allah, experiential knowledge of Him, true love, thankfulness, and true slavehood. This can be done anywhere, if one is sincere and seeks the right means.

PUNISHING SERVANTS FOR NEGLIGENCE

FARAZ RABBANI

Is it permissible to ask one's domestic servant to pay for damage caused by negligence during ironing if this happens repeatedly?

The default is that an employee is entrusted, and not liable for any damages that occur in the normal course of their work, unless it is established that this is from undue negligence, such as: acting against the clear instructions of the employer, or by such actions or errors that are considered inexcusable. [Ibn Abidin, *Radd al-Muhtar*; *Majalla* (607-611)]

Caution is needed in such matters, because the default assumption—that the error was a normal mistake that happens during the course of the work is akin to our operational certainty. This cannot be left unless we certainly establish otherwise through admission of the employee or undeniable evidence.

It is also from the proper manners and excellence of dealings to overlook even undue negligence that is not from ill-intent or repeated heedlessness. Such overlooking is rewarded by Allah, for He is in the aide of His servant as long as His servant is in the aide of his brethren, as the Beloved of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) told us.

The fiqh of this is detailed in the Ottoman Hanafi commercial law code, *Majallat al-Ahkam al-Adliyya*. ■

FARAZ RABBANI answers questions and teaches through *Sunni Path*
www.sunnipath.com

HIDALGO

A FILMMAKING JOURNEY

“This kind of story, and this character - they set a good example.” There is a noticeable passion in the voice of actor Viggo Mortensen as he discusses his latest project *Hidalgo*. “To have an American protagonist, who is more or less welcomed...He’s not trying to educate people about the American way, and he’s not conquering and pillaging.”

Even before its release, *Hidalgo* was dogged by charges of fostering an anti-Arab, Islamophobic message and accusations questioning its veracity. However, when one hears Mortensen, as well as director Joe Johnston and writer John Fusco talk about the film, one thing becomes clear. *Hidalgo* was a labor of love from start to finish that led them on an amazing journey of discovery, not only of the world they were chronicling, but also ultimately of themselves.

For John Fusco, the journey to *Hidalgo* began 12 years ago while visiting the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. It was there that an elder tribesman told him the story of a Mustang ridden by a half-breed cowboy. His curiosity as a screenwriter piqued, he began to research further and learned of long-distance rider Frank Hopkins, who, according to the traditions of the Lakota and the Blackfeet Tribe, traveled to Arabia where he competed in and won a race spanning thousands of miles.

For the writer, this provided a unique opportunity to expand the horizons of filmgoers. “All Americans know about the beauty of the Native American Horse Culture, but few know about the equally beautiful Bedouin horse culture and proud history.”

The story of the American stranger coming to the Middle East and embarking on his own spiritual journey provided the perfect backdrop to serve this end. “I not only wanted to depict the Middle Eastern characters fairly,” says Joe Johnston, “I wanted the audience to be as fascinated as I was with the culture, the costumes, the way of life of these characters.”

From the outset, writer Fusco researched extensively to ensure his story had an authenticity that was heretofore unheard of in a major Hollywood production. “I drew from a vast library of Arabian travel narratives from the 1800’s such as the writings of Sir Richard Burton, Lady Blunt, Addison and so on. I also worked with an Iraqi consultant, enlisting him to cross-reference cultural details at every turn.”

“I wanted *Hidalgo* to be regarded almost as a time capsule of life in Saudi Arabia in 1890,” says Johnston. “We studied details of everyday life including clothing, food, customs, even the designs of various types of Bedouin tents. There are over sixteen different cultures represented in the main tent camp and all of them are as accurate as we could make them. There are countless details that an audience will never see, but it was important for all of us involved that we never took the easy way out by genericising the visual components of the various cultures.”

“This is really very subversive coming out of Hollywood,” says Mortensen, pointing out how rare it is to see an active effort made to

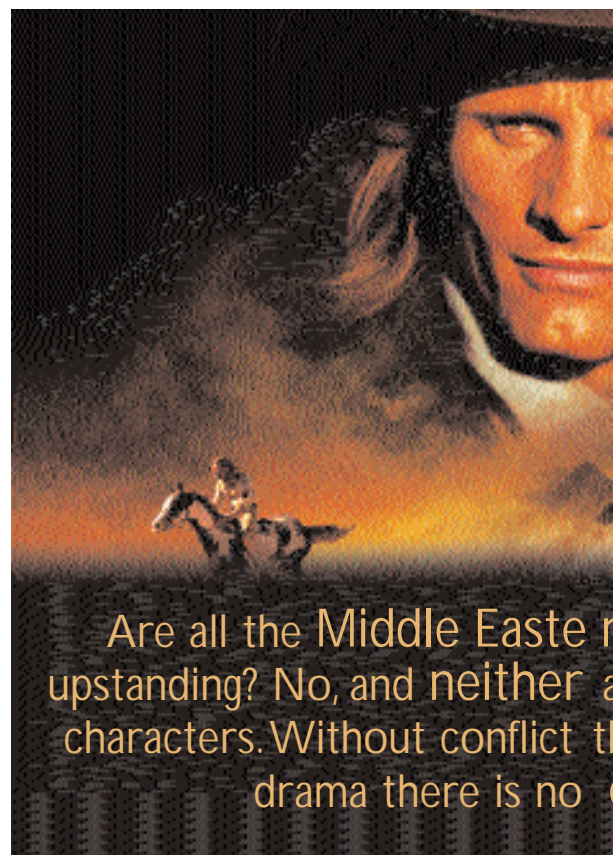
fairly portray Arab culture in mainstream films. “We made a movie that’s entertaining, it moves along, it’s beautiful, it looks right, it’s well cast - yet it contains so many more things in it, and it’s done in a subtle way.”

Filming in Morocco for the majority of the film’s *Ocean of Fire* race scenes, the cast and crew had the opportunity to interact with the indigenous population on a daily basis. “I gained a tremendous affection for the Muslim people,” the actor continues.

“When I was in Morocco, they didn’t reject us out of hand as Americans because of what our government is up to. The people were open-minded.”

Johnston was offered a personal bodyguard of three soldiers from the Moroccan army, but quickly dismissed them. “I can’t imagine the impression it would give the citizens of Morocco to see an American walking down the street surrounded by an armed guard. I would be saying that I had something to fear. It would have had the effect of separating me from the population in a very negative way. In truth, I never felt any animosity from any Moroccan, or sensed that I was ever in any danger whatsoever.”

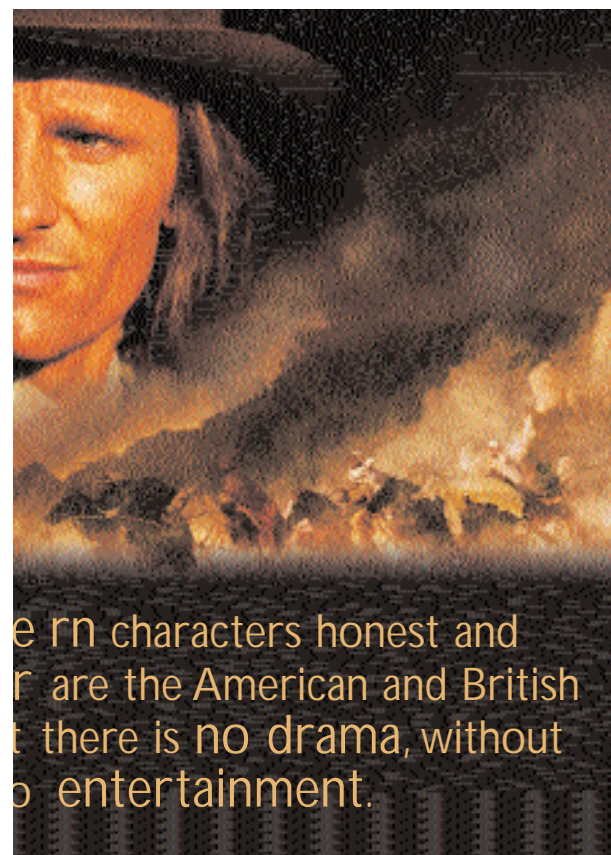
A drive into the desert to explore and get away provided Johnston with an encounter that would prove one of the most memorable and joyful experiences of his Moroccan visit. More than a hundred miles from his hotel, a young man on a bicycle approached him. Though neither spoke the others’ language, they were still able to communicate with each other through nods and gestures. Johnston, noticing the rider had no canteen or water bottle, offered him one of his own unopened



Are all the Middle Eastern characters upstanding? No, and neither are all American characters. Without conflict there is no drama there is no

HIDALGO

Y TO THE MIDDLE EAST



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bottles before the two parted ways.

“I felt a deep respect, even a measure of envy for this man. It occurred to me that he had achieved a balance, a fitting level of cultural evolution that westerners cannot understand. I felt out of place, and somewhat weaker in comparison, with my internal combustion engine and the waiting comforts of my hotel room.”

While in Morocco, further authenticity was provided by the predominantly Arab cast, including legendary actor Omar Sharif as Sheikh Riyadh.

“The Sheikh is an example of violating stereotypes,” says Fusco. “He is a man who loves and respects his daughter and provides a freedom for her despite the cultural mores.”

Johnston continues, “Omar gave a deep sense of legitimacy not only to his own character but to the story’s placement in the Middle East. He also was an excellent sounding board on issues regarding realism and believability. Omar suggested a few changes in dialogue and nuances of the portrayals of some of the Middle Eastern characters.”

Addressing concerns that the film portrays its Arabian characters in a negative light, Johnston is forthright. “Are all the Middle Eastern characters honest and upstanding? No, and neither are the American and British characters. Without conflict there is no drama, without drama there is no entertainment. It was more important to me to give depth to the characters of Sheikh Riyadh and his daughter Jazira, to Prince Bin al Reeh, Yusuf the goat herder, Sakr the Falcon man and Jaffa, Jazira’s guardian. All of these characters are sympathetic and ultimately noble. Other than Frank Hopkins, I’d argue that the Sheikh is

the most sympathetic character in the film.”

“I wasn’t going to make an Islamophobic movie,” says Mortensen. “If you know me, you know I’m not someone who has anything against Arabs or anyone else.”

Johnston continues, “I think that Frank Hopkins as portrayed by Viggo Mortensen undertakes his ordeal with humility and grace. He is a guest in a foreign country. He doesn’t come with an attitude of superiority or even pride. He appreciates and accepts the viewpoints of his hosts. He is understanding and even forgiving at times. He accepts things at face value.”

“It doesn’t always have to be the American going in and showing people how to do things,” says Mortensen. “The stereotyping of the American cowboy has made it so that around the world those images have negative connotations.” He feels the characteristic that most defines true cowboys is curiosity. “That’s the first step toward learning something you didn’t know.”

The actor immediately dismisses claims that the story is an outright fiction, feeling that such charges merely serve to undermine a film whose ultimate message is that “people are people.”

“How much more enmity is necessary between East and West?” he asks. “Especially over something that is well-intended?”

“The story of Frank Hopkins, *Hidalgo*, and the *Arabian Race* has been written about for 72 years in equestrian history,” says John Fusco. “Perhaps there are aspects of legend to the story of this long-ago race, but it has been proven beyond a doubt that Frank Hopkins was an experienced and gifted long distance horseman, that his philosophy on natural horsemanship training was fifty years ahead of its time, and that he was one of the earliest proponents of saving the Mustang horse from slaughter.”

“It’s not a documentary,” says Mortensen simply. “It’s a story.”

Reflecting on *Hidalgo* and its place in an increasingly tumultuous world, director Joe Johnston is thoughtful. “I am not in agreement with the current administration’s policies in the Middle East...or anywhere else on the planet, for that matter. I think understanding is the key, on both sides. The problem is that information and truth are withheld when they don’t promote the goals of those in power. There is a lot of ignorance in this country about the people of the Middle East and probably vice versa. My own experience was one of friendship and caring, and a desire to work together.”

It is clear that for Viggo Mortensen, his experience in the Middle East while filming *Hidalgo* holds a special place in his heart. “There’s so much violence happening in the world right now, it’s harder for people to reach out and understand...I personally think common ground exists between all of us all the time. It’s there.”

The actor pauses, “You’re not obligated to find out what you have in common with others, but it’s worth it.” ■

ZAKI HASAN

PRAYER AT DEATH

When death came to Muadh (may God be pleased with him) he said, "O Lord God! I used to fear You, but today in You have I set my hopes. O Lord God! Truly You know that never have I harboured love for this world or for a long sojourn therein; neither for the flowing of streams or the planting of trees; rather have I loved thirsting in the midday heat, enduring the hours, and joining the crowds around the Divines on my knees in the circles of remembrance."

Extract from an exposition of the sayings of a number of the most righteous men among the companions, the Followers, and the Sufis who came after them, in The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife, Book XL of the Revival of the Religious Sciences by Imam Ghazali translated by T.J. Winter.

A NATION OF MERCY

Wahb ibn Munabbih, may God show him His mercy, said: When Moses, upon whom be peace, read the Tablets, he found mentioned in them the merits of the nation of Muhammad, may blessings and peace be upon him, and he said: ‘O Lord! Which is this mercy-given nation that I find in the Tablets?’ God answered: ‘It is the nation of Ahmad, whose people are content with whatever little provision I give them, and I am content with whatever little good works they do. I make each one of them enter the garden by his testimony that *La ilaha illa’ Llah.*’

‘And then Moses said: ‘I find in the Tablets a nation of people who shall be resurrected and assembled on the Day of Rising with their faces like full moons. Let them be my nation!’ But God replied: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad; I shall gather them resurrected on the Day of Rising, when their foreheads and limbs shall be blazing white from the effects of their ablutions and their prostrations.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the Tablets a nation of people whose clothes are on their backs and whose swords are on their shoulders, people of certitude and dependence; they glorify God from minaret-tops, and they continue to seek to fight for every righteous cause, until they do battle against the *Dajjal*. Let them be my nation!’ But He said: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad!’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the tablets a nation of people who pray five times each day and night, at five hours of the day, for whom the gates of Heaven are opened and upon whom mercy descends; let them be my nation!’ But He replied: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the Tablets a nation for whom the [whole] earth is a place of worship and ritually pure, and for whom booty is lawful; let them be my nation!’ But He replied: ‘They are the nation of Ahmed.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the Tablets a nation of people who fast the month of Ramadan for You, and whom You then forgive all they had done before; let them be my nation!’ But He replied: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the Tablets a nation of people who go on pilgrimage to the Inviolable House for Your sake, whose longing for it is never exhausted, whose weeping is loud and tumultuous, whose talbiya is clamorous; let them be my nation!’ But He said: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad.’

‘Moses said: ‘What will You give them for that?’ And God said: ‘I shall grant them more forgiveness, and shall allow them to intercede for those who come after them.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the Tablets a nation of people who ask forgiveness for their sins; when they raise their food to their mouths it does not reach their stomachs before they are forgiven; they start [eating] with Your Name and end with Your praise; let them be my nation!’ But He said: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the Tablets a nation whose members will be the foremost on the Day of Rising, but are the last to be created; let them be my nation!’ But He replied: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the Tablets a nation of people whose gospels are held within their breasts and they recite them; let them be my nation!’ But He answered: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the Tablets a nation of people among whom, when one of them intends a good deed but does not perform it, it is written as ten to seven hundred times its worth; let them be my nation!’ But God said: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the Tablets a nation among whom, when one of them intends a sin but does not commit it, it is not recorded against him, while if he does commit it, it is written as a single sin; let them be my nation!’ But He replied: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the tablets a nation who are the best of people who exhort to good and forbid evil; let them be my nation!’ But He said: ‘They are the nation Ahmad.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! I find in the Tablets a nation of people who will be resurrected and brought on the Day of Rising as three groups. One group shall enter the Garden without reckoning, another’s reckoning will be easy, and another will be rigorously judged, then made to enter the Garden; let them be my nation!’ But He said: ‘They are the nation of Ahmad.’

‘Moses said: ‘O Lord! You have spread out all this goodness for Ahmad and his nation; let me be a member of his nation!’ But God told him: ‘O Moses! I have chosen and preferred you over other people with My Message and My Speech; take what I have given you, and be one of the thankful.’

Ibn Abbas, God be pleased with him, said: ‘The Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, said one day to his Companions: ‘What do you say of this verse: And you were not beside the Mountain when We called?’ [28:46] They said: ‘God and His Messenger know best.’ And he told them, ‘When God spoke to Moses, upon whom be peace, he asked Him: ‘O Lord! Have You created any creature dearer to You than myself? For You have chosen and preferred me over mankind, and did speak to me on Mount Sinai.’ And God answered him, saying: ‘O Moses! Did you not know that Muhammad is dearer to me than the rest of My creation? And that I looked into the hearts of My slaves, and, finding no heart humbler than yours, therefore chose and preferred you, with My Message and My Speech, over other men. Make sure, therefore, that you die in Tawhid and the love of Muhammad!’

‘Moses asked again: ‘O Lord! Is there any nation dearer to you than mine? For You have shaded them with the cloud, and sent down to them honeydew [manna] and quails.’ [2:57] And God replied: ‘O Moses! Did you not know that the eminence of the nation of Muhammad over other nations is like My eminence over the whole of My creation?’ Moses asked: ‘O Lord! Will I see them? And He replied: ‘You will not see them, but if you wish, you can hear their speech.’ Moses said: ‘I do so wish.’ And thus God the Exalted called: ‘O nation of Muhammad!’ And they all answered with one voice, from within the loins of their ancestors: ‘Labbayk Allahumma, Labbayk! [Here we are, O God! Here we are!].’ And God the Exalted said: ‘My blessings and peace are upon you; My Mercy has outstripped My Wrath; My Forgiveness has outstripped My Punishment; I answered you before you called upon Me; I gave to you before you called upon Me; I gave to you before you asked of Me! Those of you who will meet me bearing witness that there is no god save God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, I will forgive them their sins.’

‘And the Prophet, upon whom be blessings and peace, continued, and said: ‘And God wished to favour me with this, so He said (Exalted is He!): And you were not beside the Mountain when We called; i.e. [when We called] your nation to let Moses hear them speak.’ ■

Excerpted from The Lives of Man by Imam Abdullah ibn Alawi Al-Haddad (Quilliam Press, 1991).



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DILEMMAS

In the December 2003 edition of *Q-News*, Kamran Bokhari wrote about *Islam and Democracy*. Firstly, by referring to Muslims as radical extremists, he is giving support to the west in its fight against Islam. Secondly, he writes about an idealistic kind of democracy which does not exist in the real world. Let's get one thing clear: Islam is complete. Whatever terminology is used, in Islam and our Messenger, peace be upon him, we have a role model for everything - even politics. There is clear evidence in the Quran and in hadith that describes the Islamic political system and its structure. For example, we can only have one leader with two assistants and a shura. The majority of scholars will agree to this kind of structure. There is no room for interpretation on these hadith. Also, what right does the west have to sell us democracy and why should we buy anything they say? Doesn't Bokhari know how deceptive they are? The point he makes about *fiqh* and *ijtihad* is valid but is he himself qualified? The path to a political system in Islam is up for discussion but what is not up for discussion are rules that have no basis in the *shariah*.

Rizwan Hisham
United Kingdom

COHESION

I am not Muslim nor have I ever wanted to really understand this faith. That aside, I wish you all the very best of luck and support in your endeavors to bring the Muslim youths back into the general fold and allow the whole of Britain to move forward as a real working and understanding diverse culture. Britain will lose all the more if we allow any form of extremism to flourish. This includes Christian,

Jewish and any other, not just Islam.

I am Christian but not practicing. I see a dichotomy, which we must all come to terms with. I have seen all of the post September 11th publicity, including that which appears to be anti-Muslim, but real people like myself are quite comfortable to have anyone of any faith live next door to me provided they respect my ability to live there as well.

What hurts real people is that they see other cultures come in and move next door and then expand their influence so that people nearby of different faiths (or none), are impacted. This is the real cause of racism, not what the papers or Government say. Being able to live next door to anyone and still be who you are is what life is really about.

Peter Lindley
United Kingdom

THE MODERATES

I would like to express gratitude to all who are involved with *Q-News*. Like many westerners, I have been confused and sometimes disheartened by the turmoil and adversarial positions that some have taken up since September 11th.

Although following no particular religion, I am a believer, and have, in fact, some knowledge of Islam. From the understanding that I do have, I know it to be about attempting to understand reality, rather than staying with our opinions of it.

Accordingly, having this respect for Islam, I have often been disappointed that so much of Muslim comment that is presented through national and international media has only been of the strident variety.

I admit that I took this to be indicative of Muslims generally, and was sad that this was the

case. Now I realise that this was a misconception, and this realisation came about from perusing *Q-News*. Here, I hear voices of reason, understanding, compassion, investigation and moderation. (Moderation is not a weak thing - it comes from the strength of self-restraint following honest introspection). So thank you, and continue. There will come a time, and not long in the future, when this present combative situation is over.

Graham Falvey
Scotland

BATTLES

I am a university student and spent my entire life residing in England. I used to tell my parents that, "You do not know what it is like out there, what society is like and what people get up to. It's very dangerous and you have to be very cautious and prudent."

After reading *Q-News* I realised something: our eyes are open just to what our eyes are open to, i.e. the public we see day in and day out.

Q-News has helped me realise that there is more sophisticated and intellectual battles going on beneath the general public which the normal eye never sees. It may not always be great to be involved in politics but by being involved with acquiring specific knowledge, without which we are in no man's land literally, we can reach stations we never imagined we could.

Q-News, I sincerely believe is a gem and an essential stepping stone in this amazing journey. If you try to leap to the next stone having avoided the issues *Q-News* is making everyone aware about, we will only just slip and back tumbling down to square one.

All Praise is due to God alone. Peace and blessing upon God's

PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN

LETTER OF THE MONTH

I don't understand Mr. Siddiqui's objection to democracy, and I don't understand what it means to formulate political and social institutions according to Islamic values and principles. Mr. Siddiqui effortlessly dismisses democracy, apparently because it is loaded with certain connotations of western modernity, and perhaps because America in itself is rounding up people in Guantanamo Bay, among other undemocratic transgressions.

Am I right in understanding Mr. Siddiqui's key point - that democracy should be dismissed because it is far from perfect in western countries, and because it is far too intertwined with other liberal ideas?

And on formulating political and social institutions according to Islamic values and principles, just what are Islamic values and principles? Is it possible to draw up some kind of new system based on Islamic values and principles in a kind of knowledge vacuum, where strictly Islamic values and principles are used?

Can some thinkers sit around a table and ignore everything they know except for Islamic knowledge and come up with some perfect system?

Is it possible to ignore some great ideas that have come up in the last 50 years like rights of children, human rights like the right to education and health?

Why is it so important to focus on creating new systems, when there is no single perfect system?

Does Mr. Siddiqui believe that there can be no dialogue or sharing of information between Muslims and non-Muslim democrats? Does Mr. Siddiqui imply that new ideas can't be used, simply because certain western leaders make a mockery of democracy? Is there a perfect system out there?

Is there wisdom in trying to draw lines between civilizations, saying democracy belongs to one civilization, but can't be called upon to think about political and social institutions in Muslim countries?

Muntasir Sattar
Pakistan

Beloved, peace and blessings be upon him.

Muhammad Qasim
West Yorkshire

SOLUTION?

Not being from the UK, I cannot really validate or oppose the picture you have drawn about Muslim society and leadership

in the UK. However, I do think that while the leadership may be at fault, a much greater fault lies with the Muslim community at large, for failing to take a more pro-active role in issues confronting Muslims in the UK. In general, even in the US, what I have seen is a general apathy in the community when it comes to

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tackling issues that face them as a community.

Here is my assessment of the situation: Most of us are engaged in the rat-race of daily life, trying to either make ends meet or trying to keep up with the Jones and have little time or energy left at the end of the day to do anything constructive or contribute to the community.

The one way I see things changing is, if those of us who already earning enough that they can lead a comfortable life, decide to scale down their list of Must-Haves and devote more time and energy to tackling the problems faced by the community. Let's face it, the reason the current leadership exists, is because there are not enough people who are willing to devote the time and energy that is required to run our institutions. If there were, they would have definitely found enough opportunities to participate and slowly weed out the bad apples. I hope that at some point we will realize as an ummah, we were raised by Allah Most High

not for our own selves but for others. Today we are not even willing to live for our own ummah let alone the rest of mankind. May Allah Most High guide us to that which is the best.

Yusuf Dadani
USA

USE YOUR VOICE!

WRITE

Q

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ALL CREATURES ARE ALLAH'S CHILDREN

"YOU REPRESENT IHSAN - THE ISLAMIC HUMANE SOCIETY FOR ANIMALS? FOR ANIMALS?!"S IN A TIME WHEN MUSLIMS ARE SUFFERING THE WORLD OVER, YVONNE ROGERS EXPECTS MANY OF US TO ASKING WHETHER THERE IS A NEED FOR SUCH AN ORGANISATION. HER RESPONSE TO THE SCEPTICS IS ALWAYS THE SAME: WE CANNOT ALLOW THE FACT THAT HUMAN BEINGS ARE SUFFERING TO JUSTIFY THE NEGLECT AND ABANDONMENT OF DIVINELY-ORDAINED ANIMAL RIGHTS.

In a so-called civilised world, why are we tolerating brutality to animals? We are supposed to be vicegerents on earth, and we don't have the licentious freedom to treat animals in any way we see fit. Our human pre-eminence in creation is not unconditional as Allah, The Most High, says, "He who disavows, the burden of disavowal will be on them."

I therefore ask Muslims to have a "tender conscience" towards animals. If not, all we leave behind for posterity is the wanton destruction of the natural world. Calculated violence to animals will have to be accounted for in the hereafter.

All creatures are sacrosanct, even those we use for food. We do not eat sacrilegious meat where animals haven't had their rights acknowledged, before and during, ritual slaughter. It follows that we should extend rights and courtesies as directed by our faith to all creatures.

Think back to the last time you were unwell or in pain. Then imagine what it must be like to be unable to communicate your suffering to anyone, because you cannot speak, only to discover, there is no pain relief anyway.

Well, that is what it is like for animals that depend entirely upon us to recognise their symptoms of pain, discomfort and suffering. Animals get the same illnesses as human beings, so why are there no facilities for treating them? Muslims should be leading the way in animal welfare. Sadly, this is not the case.

IHSAN is calling for the global Ummah to take on its responsibilities to animals. We have developed a plan of action to begin remedying the current situation. We want to:

"To raise funds for Mobile Veterinary Units for sick animals in all Islamic countries.

"To gently remind those who may have forgotten, of the special rights granted to animals in Islam, and the many Prophetic narrations relating to them.

"To encourage more young Muslims to become Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Nurses.

"To get the gentle message across, that if we treat animals with kindness and compassion, they serve us better anyway. Remember, all creatures are sentient - knowing, feeling, conscious, aware. We have to rid ourselves of the double stan-

dard in our morals, ethics and values. Almost anything that is unlawful to do to a human being, should also be unlawful to an animal, bearing in mind the fact that animals have been blessed with a special "psychic endowment", which amounts to more than just instinct and intuition.

Yet today the bodies of beautiful creatures are being hacked and lacerated in futile laboratory experiments and we as a community have little to say about it. We have to learn to treat all life on earth as equally valuable without privilege and selective standards.

The biggest obstacles I am facing in the field of animal welfare are from the Muslim community itself. I was so saddened to be sent away from my local Mosque, without any help. I had asked if a collection could be made. I was told this was not possible. "It has to go to the committee." I tried to explain that while we were wasting time talking, animals were actually suffering and dying in most Muslim countries. It did not make any difference. A collection was not allowed. The few pounds that I would have collected were to help pay for advertising via the Islamic media.

It has taken me 18-months of writing, phoning, and pestering the Muslim media, just to get two articles published! Therefore, if you would like to "come on board", and join this Islamic Suffragette for Animals, I welcome you with open arms. Become a "pioneer", like me, and champion the rights of animals. It is their world too, and we must not forget that.

"All creatures are Allah's children, and Allah loves best, those who treat his children well."

"There is reward for every act done towards every heart fresh with life." That includes animals.

Finally, I would just like to ask that you take a few seconds out of your busy schedules, to commemorate the special rights given to animals and the many Hadiths pertaining to them. This is a chance to remember and celebrate how animals serve us, and a reminder of how we should serve them. May the peace and blessings of Allah be on all His creations. ■

YVONNE ROGERS *is founder of IHSAN
ana a volunteer Auxiliary Animal Nurse*



Islam in Higher Education Conference

1-2 SEPTEMBER 2004
SELLY OAK COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF
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Organised by

- The Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) UK
- Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations (CSIC)
- Learning and Teaching Support Network – Philosophical and Religious Studies (PRS-LTSN)

THIS CONFERENCE SETS OUT TO BRING together a diverse cross section of individuals and organisations concerned with the challenges facing Islam in higher education. It seeks to make a positive contribution to discourse and policies on Islam in higher education (IHE) in the UK, through a critical analysis and dialogue on broad ranging issues including: the status of the study of Islam in higher education; access, employability, recruitment and participation; academic standard and pedagogy; the depiction of Islam and Muslims in higher education; comparative international approaches to Islam in higher education.

Format: Workshops, keynote speakers and papers.

Participation: Open to all those interested in discussing teaching and learning issues relating to the study of Islam, including academics, policy makers, Muslim community organisations, educationalists (in school, further education and higher education context), and postgraduate students.

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- **More than 30% of Palestinians depend upon food handouts** from NGOs and **50%** of all Palestinians require external food assistance to help meet their minimum daily caloric intake. The UN's World Food Programme says the situation is alarming and hunger and malnutrition is increasing.

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(UN Special Rapporteur of Commission on Human Rights).

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