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Dr. Mohd Daud Bakar is an Associate Professor in Islamic law at the Faculty of Laws, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and currently the Deputy Rector (Student Affairs and Development) at the same university. He received his first degree in Shari'ah from University of Kuwait (1988) and PhD from University of St. Andrews, United Kingdom (1993). Recently, he completed his external Bachelor of Jurisprudence at University of Malaya (2002). At the IIUM, he taught, *inter alia*, Islamic Jurisprudence, Islamic Law of Banking, Takaful and Securities and Fiqh al-Mu'amalah in Islamic Banking and Finance. He has published more than 30 articles in various academic journals and presented more than 120 papers in various conferences both local and abroad. He is now a member of the Shari'ah Advisory Council at the Central Bank of Malaysia, Securities Commission of Malaysia, (Malaysia), HSBC Takaful (Singapore) formerly know as (Keppel Takaful Singapore), Oasis Asset Management (Cape Town, South Africa), Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) (Bahrain), International Islamic Financial Market (IIFM) (Bahrain), Dow Jones Islamic Index (New York) and in other financial institutions both local and abroad.

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Korban Tsunami

full report page 10



Mrs Abes and her children stand outside their home where a fishing boat landed and consequently saved their lives and the lives of fifty neighbours. Her house is 4 km from the sea.

It has been over three months since a Tsunami devastated a third of Banda Aceh and many towns and villages in the rest of NAD (Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam). FAIR director and Project Manager for the Australian Foundation for the Children of Aceh (AFCA), Kuranda Seyit, recently returned from the disaster area after establishing a number of orphan support programs and schools projects.

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A word from the editor



Sydney Muslims... laughing stock once again!

The circus that is Sydney Muslims, goes on again after a lull in performance dates. March was relatively quiet as far as Islam in the media goes.

However, April gave our ratings a real shot in the arm, once again to record levels. The Daily Telegraph, Today Tonight and talkback was hot with talk about the Muslim Sheikh who said that women who wore revealing clothing had no-one else to blame but themselves if they were raped.

Well, he is entitled to his views. I think we need to understand exactly what Sheikh Feiz was trying to say, underneath his public statement. At first hearing it sounds utterly ridiculous and it is. But what he was alluding to was that Muslims must dress modestly. He was trying to highlight his message with a very strong and exaggerated example. In retrospect this was foolish. The Sheikh is very regretful of his statements and has qualified it to say that he did not mean that women are to blame for the actions of a rapist.

Let's be absolutely clear, Islam does not condone under any circumstances any form of sexual assault or violent behaviour. The culpability of a rapist lays solely on the perpetrator and his punishment would be severe if proven guilty.

While Muslim women are required to wear modest attire as are men, how a Muslim behaves in public is beyond the control of the Muslim community. Today in Australia, there are thousands of Muslim women who choose not to wear the veil, although they still dress relatively modestly. There are many women who will dress quite openly but we as Muslims can do little about it. It is up to the family to give advice and guidance but we cannot judge or condemn a woman for dressing in immodest attire, revealing her sensual parts and attracting people of the opposite sex, that is for Allah to judge.

But the disturbing aspect of the latest debacle was that we as a community once again showed our immaturity and impetuosity. Instead of dealing with the situation moderately we over reacted and jumped to attack another Muslim publicly playing into the hands of the media. The chatrooms were alive with debate and most worrying was the fitna that was generated. Most did not bother to verify what had been said and which context it was said in, regardless of the misguided nature of the statements and the extreme notions being put forward, it would have been more fitting to discuss the issue in private as Sheikh Feiz is firstly a fellow brother in Islam and secondly he is a learned scholar at least with the minimum of training in Islam. I think we have enough senior imams in our community to deal with this without any media influence.

Please do not misunderstand me I am not defending the Sheikh and his comments which were absolutely out of line but calling for more measured and constructive responses to the situation.

I think that once that the information had become a public issue once again we needed to clarify the situation without condemning or attacking the Sheikh.

We definitely did not need to drag the show on longer than it was worth. Frankly it was not even worth so much coverage but it only revealed the inane media and their pettiness. It was not even worth debating as we all know how ridiculous it is to even suggest that Islam would condone such ideas. The media sets traps and baits Muslims looking for anything to hang on Islam, trying to portray it as backward and misogynistic.

It's a shame but that is the present environment that we find ourselves in and we need to be more dignified than that.



GREAT RESOURCE ON Muslims in Australia: Immigration, Race Relations and Cultural History (London: Kegan Paul, 2004) By Dr Nahid Kabir

Muslims have lived in Australia for over 140 years. When and why did this religious group become a 'threat' to Australia's national security? Is this perception new or did it exist from earliest Muslim settlement, and how does it affect their self-image and relationship with the wider community? In *Muslims in Australia*, Nahid Kabir seeks to understand the basis of mainstream Australians fear by tracing Muslim history since the Afghan settlement in 1860. In social, economic and political contexts, the author compares Muslim experience with that of other racial and religious minorities in Australia. In the Colonial and 'White Australia'

periods, she evaluates their position with that of the Aborigines, Chinese, Japanese, Irish and Germans. In the 'Multicultural' period, Muslims are compared with the Buddhists and Vietnamese people to present a comprehensive picture of Australian race relations history. She explores whether race or religion has kept these people underprivileged in the past and if these factors are still operative in a period when discrimination on the basis of race, colour, culture or religion has been officially declared unacceptable.

Nahid Afrose Kabir is an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Social and Cultural Studies at the University of Western Australia. She holds a PhD in History and an MA in Historical Studies from the University of Queensland, Australia. She also holds an MA in History from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Her research interests include Australian immigration, race relations and cultural history, media and society, Islam and politics.

In profile: How will new Pope handle ties with Islam?

by Haroon Siddiqui

Joseph Ratzinger is entitled to his Catholic conservatism, his theological rigidity and his opposition to religious relativism. It is up to Catholics to internally debate his traditionalist views on a series of social issues. They already are, even before the applause has died down over his election as Pope.

It is not up to us to dictate what Catholics should believe and who they pick as leader. Otherwise, the secular idea of freedom of religion ceases to have meaning.

Rather, the relevant issue for the world is: How will Pope Benedict XVI be different from his predecessor in dealing with other faiths and nations?

It is only half correct to say he will follow John Paul II's traditions. He clearly would on conservative theology. But would he continue the papal outreach to others around the globe that we have been blessed with in the last quarter of a century?

John Paul spoke up for the poor, affected by globalization and unbridled capitalism.

He stood by the oppressed, including the Palestinians, whom he addressed in Bethlehem: "No one can ignore how much you have had to suffer in recent decades. Your torment is before the eyes of the world, and it has gone on too long ... Only with a just and lasting peace — not imposed but secured through negotiations — will legitimate Palestinian aspirations be fulfilled."

He believed in the United Nations and multilateralism, which is why he was emphatic in opposing the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Much of the commentary of the last 48 hours has been about Cardinal Ratzinger's belief in the superiority of Catholicism.

It strikes other faiths as "chauvinistic and triumphalist," in the phrase of Rabbi Michael Lerner, of the American magazine *Tikkun*. It offends Anglicans and other Protestants.

But don't most believers, regardless of religion or denomination, believe, to a degree, that they alone possess the truth?

More instructive is Ratzinger's approach to one of the bigger issues of the age: relations with Muslims and Islam. John Paul — the first pope to pray in a synagogue, visit the Wailing Wall and call anti-Semitism "a sin against God" — was also the first pontiff to enter a mosque, open a dialogue with Muslims, condemn Islamophobia and urge Catholics to join Muslims in fasting on the last Friday of Ramadan.

Ratzinger, however, has reservations not only about outreach to Muslims but Islam.

"The rebirth of Islam is due in part to the new material richness acquired by Muslim countries, but mainly to the knowledge that it is able to offer a valid spiritual foundation



Good relations: Pope John Paul II

for the life of its people, a foundation that seems to have escaped from the hands of old Europe," he wrote last year.

One can read that as a statement of admiration. But, juxtaposed with his concern regarding his flock in Europe, it may not be.

It fits the pattern of thinking of some conservatives who speak of the increasing presence of Muslims in Europe in the same breath as the decline of Christianity on the continent. That implies the two are related, which they are not.

The "culprit" is secularism, and, in the case of Catholics, the Vatican's social conservatism, which the faithful ignore.

Blaming Muslims is cheap politics.

Ratzinger has long wanted Europe to rediscover its Christianity. That's understandable. But he crossed the line last year in opposing the entry of Turkey into the European Union.

"Turkey has always represented a different continent, always in contrast with Europe," he told the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro*.

That is disturbingly close to the racist notion that Muslim Turkey cannot be a part of Christian Europe. The ignorance of that sentiment is stupefying, for several reasons: The continent is no longer Christian alone; Christian majority nations do not constitute Christian states, and opposing Turkey on religious grounds makes a mockery of Europe's self-admired secularism, even if that is of little or no concern to the Vatican.

We will have to wait and see whether Pope Benedict XVI will distance himself from Cardinal Ratzinger. One of the legacies of John Paul II was that he helped end the Cold War. Will the new Pope fan the war being waged by neo-conservatives and fundamentalist Protestants against Muslims and Islam, or will he help diffuse it?

Haroon Siddiqui is The Star's editorial page editor emeritus.

Indonesian Xchange

Four Australians were chosen to represent Australia in a Muslim Leader Exchange Program sponsored by the government.

Translation of Tabloid Republika Dialog

Australian Muslims Share Stories
Through a visiting exchange program facilitated by the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, four Australian Muslim figures study about efforts to strengthen their fraternity.

The challenges and obstacles faced by the Islamic community in their daily lives are increasing, especially for those who live in a majority non-Muslim country. Therefore there is no other way [forward] apart from always strengthening fraternity so that Muslims have the strength to face various problems.

And at the moment, Muslim communities in Australia are also in the middle of attempting to strengthen fraternal ties and cooperation. This issue was raised by four Muslim guests from Australia who had the opportunity to be in Indonesia through a visiting exchange program from the Australian Embassy. They are, among others, Seyfi Seyit (the founder of Australia Islamic Relations [sic] – FAIR), Monique Toohey (a Muslim psychologist), Nedal El-Ghattis (an RMIT university student) and Afshan Mantoo (a member of the Australian Muslim Community).

As Monique says, along with the growth in the numbers of the Muslim community in Australia at the moment, concern about the importance for the Muslim community of cooperation has emerged. The reason being, with the increasingly strong ties emerging between Muslim communities, it is hoped that the aspirations of the Muslim community are heard more and have a greater impact on society.

The Muslim community in Australia consists of many ethnic groups and nationalities. They consist of immigrants and from about 70 countries. It is this that is to be united, in one coordinating organisation, for example, so that all the activities that support the growth of the Islamic religion are well-coordinated.



Sr Afshan Mantoo and Sr Monique Toohey share a smile with Muslim sisters in Jogjakarta

However, because they consist of many communities, it is certainly not easy to realise this hope. "If it was a city that wasn't too big, like Adelaide, Canberra and Brisbane, it wouldn't be too difficult. It's another matter with a big city like Sydney and Melbourne," explained Monique again.

Usually the respective [Muslim] communities have their own organisations, with a range of different activities on their agendas. For this reason, continued [Monique] the challenges faced by Australian Muslims was also how to coordinate organisations and religious social institutions from all these communities.

Meanwhile, according to Nedal El-Ghattis' explanation, these efforts are progressing in stages. Like what is happening in Melbourne, where mosques

that were run by a number of Muslim communities now intend to unite under the

come to a mosque. There they will receive an explanation about Islam and the basic



A street scene in Jogja

banner of the local Board of Ulama.

"Aside from that, the important central role played by the young generation of Australian Muslims should be noted. They are really trying to bring together the Muslim community from various backgrounds, ethnicity, nationality and language into one Australian Muslim community," said Monique.

On the other hand, as people in a multicultural country, Australian Muslims also are undertaking various activities to raise mutual understanding between religious communities. These efforts, said Seyfi, are being undertaken by Muslim groups, Islamic institutions and organisations, intellectuals and academics.

"Activities covering seminars, dialogues on religion, publications, and so on are regularly held," he said. In Sydney, for example, for some time now there has been a mosque visit program. At certain times students or religious figures are invited to

principles of its followers.

Although these efforts to build mutual bridges of understanding are continuing, considered Nedal, they have not completely eroded the suspicions of some Australians towards Islam. He himself has experienced this when he intended to apply for work with a company.

"Don't hope you'll get work if you bear a distinctive Islamic name there," he said. And because he used the name Nedal, he claims that he has been refused work several times even though he fulfilled the criteria.

Regarding this problem, Afsan Mantoo hopes that the Australian government could be more persistent in campaigning for inter-religious harmony and give a greater chance to Muslims to explain the real Islam. "But what is more important is how can we, as Muslims, together guide the fraternity until it is capable of synergising efforts to erode the negative view of Islam."



Fans! Fans! Going cheap! Friendly Javanese ladies peddle their stock

Stolen voices of Muslim women

By Joumanah El Matrah

Stolen voices of Muslim women
Western discourse on the plight of Muslim women reflects ignorance at best, and racism at worst, writes Joumanah El Matrah.

The shedding of crocodile tears over the plight of Muslim women has come to characterise many self-proclaimed feminists, journalists and government officials. The plight of Muslim women has become a paradigm of victimhood. Instead of working

with Muslim women as one disadvantaged group among many in Australia, Muslim women have been misrepresented and used under the pretence of feminist discourse and exploring multiculturalism in a way that reflects at the very least ignorance and at worst racism.

The situation of Muslim women globally is too complex and contradictory for one comprehensive critique. In some nations Muslim women experience horrendous forms of violence and oppression, often under the label of Islam. To explain the reality and suffering of women in such nations by reducing it to a simple consequence of Islam becomes impossible when, in neighbouring Muslim nations, women occupy positions of power in significant social and political institutions. Without denying the inequities and barriers women face in these countries, we can say that women in Syria and Tunisia hold 10.4 per cent and 11.5 per cent respectively of seats in parliament, compared with 12 per cent in the United States and 11.8 per cent in France. In Tunisia, 24 per cent of magistrates are women and the penal code now defines domestic violence as aggravated assault, bringing heavier penalties than assaults between unrelated individuals. In Syria, maternity leave and national child care for many professions are provided by the state. Muslim women have arrived at those positions with greater speed and impact than women in Western nations, given that significant literacy and education levels are new to many Muslim-majority countries. Perhaps concern for the oppression of Muslim women is more correctly identified as concern at the intrusion of Muslim women into Australia. Just as there are vast differences in the situation of Muslim women, there are significant differences in

how women define, understand and practise Islam. In Australia, the representation of Muslim women has been deceptively homogenised, particularly among public commentators who have taken it upon themselves to speak on behalf of Muslim women. One of the most common strategies in the attack against Muslim women is the representation of the hijab, or head scarf. There appear to be two major arguments: firstly, that most Muslim women are forced to wear the

“There is now a 1400-year history that resolutely proves that neither Muslim men nor Western societies are fundamentally interested in facilitating our rights, and it is perhaps unreasonable to expect otherwise.”

hijab and, secondly, that the hijab is by its very nature oppressive. These arguments not only misrepresent Muslim women who don't wear the hijab, but also those that do. The reality is far more complex.

In Saudi Arabia and other so-called Islamic states, Muslim women are punished for not wearing the hijab. In non-Islamic “progressive secular” states such as Turkey and France, Muslim women are punished for wearing the hijab.

Many Muslim women have resisted laws enforcing different forms of veiling. In response to the Ayatollah Khomeini's decree that all Iranian women must adopt the chador, a long scarf that completely covers women's hair and body, women staged massive demonstrations, sit-ins and work stoppages; Khomeini responded by having women tortured and murdered by law-enforcement agencies.

Nonetheless, women continued to resist and many religious women participated because they opposed the chador's violent enforcement. In 1981, in part as a result of demonstrations against enforced veiling of women, it was widely believed that more than half the political prisoners in Iran were women.

Yet even in such dire circumstances, Iranian women repeatedly stated that the chador should not be the focus of international activism or condemnation; there were far more oppressive and life-threatening

violations requiring attention. We need to relinquish this homogenising equation that veil equals oppression or, more absurdly, that veiling is the worst form of oppression. Continually ruminating on the oppressiveness of the hijab has become more than a stale obsession; it is actively preventing an understanding of the situation of Muslim women and the various meanings the hijab has for them.

The feminist tradition has always treated women's voices as sacred, so why isn't it enough when some women state that the hijab is both meaningful and empowering for them? Why must the interrogation continue, to the neglect of all else?

The focus on the hijab often conceals other, more important issues. In Afghanistan, the preoccupation with the burqa - an all-encompassing robe that covers the head, face and body down to the ankles - as evidence of Islamic excesses blinded many to what would have been obvious if Afghans had not been Muslim.

The Taliban, among other violations, excluded women from education on the grounds that it was a violation of Islamic teaching. A basic understanding of Islam shows that the Koran teaches that women have a right to education. An astute analysis, then, would have focused on the Taliban's incipient fascism rather than questions of Islam's compatibility with human rights and women's dignity.

Judging from the commentary in Australia, it would appear that Muslim women are capable neither of understanding nor of speaking on such issues as sexism, discrimination, equality or justice. In reality, Muslim women have a notable and proud tradition of activism. Why is it, then, that we hear so little of it? Perhaps the concern for the oppression of Muslim women is more correctly identified as a concern about the intrusion of Muslim women into the Australian landscape.

Instead of being understood, Muslim women have been relegated to being saved. The historical discourse on Muslim women's emancipation might be crudely summarised as follows: colonising nations were to save us from Islam's misogyny, then the socialist/nationalist movements were to save us from our imperial masters, then the Islamists were to save us from nationalist heresy and the evils of the West, and now the human rights movement offers itself as our saviour. Pardon us if we don't faint in anticipation!

Muslim women have long responded to the calling of a movement of themselves and for themselves, working against the historical tendency of Muslims and non-Muslims to speak about and for Muslim women. There is now a 1400-year history that resolutely proves that neither Muslim men nor Western societies are fundamentally interested in facilitating our rights, and it is perhaps unreasonable to expect otherwise.

In the West, and Australia in particular, a significant amount of Muslim women's time “on air” has been used to either explain the hijab or to advocate women's right to wear it. There are many consequences of this, but two urgent issues are that Muslim women increasingly appear incapable of addressing any other issue and that in restricting ourselves to this topic, an opportunity has been created for Muslim men to monopolise and define Islam. (This is one of the major issues women have with the current explosion in inter-faith dialogue meetings.) To have men as sole representatives significantly skews not only the representation of Islam and Muslims, but also what Islam and Muslims will develop into in this country.

Similarly, allowing ourselves to be co-opted by “democratic” movements in the West has also compromised the position of Muslim women, as Western powers have repeatedly demonstrated their delusion that they have a God-given right to do as they please in Arab and Muslim lands.

Joumanah El Matrah, a former psychologist born in Lebanon, is manager of the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria. Her comment is adapted from an article in Arena.



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Tsunami update

by Salam Zreika

POST-TSUNAMI IN ACEH- Its not too late to help.

By Salam Zreika

Many of our lives here in Australia have resumed to the normal living, working, sleeping standards after the brief stop it took when the Asian Tsunami occurred and there were a few weeks of solely trying to gather aid. However in Aceh and other parts of the Asian sub-continent life will never be the same again.

In February this year the Australian Foundation for the Children of Aceh organised an information seminar on the progress of relief work in Aceh, Indonesia. Four speakers with different professions yet one goal got together to provide the wider community with a report on the progress of relief work in Aceh. These are their stories:

Donny Amir is the first speaker. Born and raised in Aceh, Donny often visited his parents after moving to Jakarta, Indonesia's capital. The fourth day after the Tsunami occurred Donny headed back home to see what changes had come about to the hometown he once lived in, not surprisingly, he was shocked by its unrecognizable and disastrous condition.

"I never imagined I would see something so horrible and I still can't believe its happening in Aceh". Still clearly traumatized by the recent events, he recalls a pleasant time when fun trips were made to the city, beach and mosque. Today, despite the remainder of the mosque and beach, life is rare and a picture of surrounding helplessness is all too blatant. In Aceh, Donny tells us the soldier's don't sleep. He confronts one soldier who confesses he has not slept in five days busy helping people. His motivation is driven by the hope that someone out there, like himself, is helping his very own mother. Sadly and uncontrollably mothers are randomly grabbing and hugging young girls in the street trying desperately to recapture what used to be their own.

Donny Amir stares out at the rest of us. We look on intently holding on to his every word. He speaks out on behalf of the victims, "Every living victim of the Tsunami requires psychological counseling". One type of solution would be to set up a trauma healing centre, especially for mothers to help deal with their loss. The centre would be run in conjunction with Acehnese people. Other issues that raise concern Donny says are land title, where people are randomly claiming areas of surrounding land, presently vacant of any life.

The financial aftermath of this destruction also requires great healing. Any business person wanting to help that acquires some type of commodities are urged to go and assist. Finally Donny concludes by saying, this is an indescribable situation. Some say you have lost your past and future all at the same time.

Dr Ed Aspinall, the second speaker at this gathering is a lecturer at the University of Sydney. For the last four years he has been conducting research on Aceh. He is currently completing his book "History of conflict of Aceh". Dr Aspinall had many friends in Aceh and was also astounded by the initial media reports on Sri Lanka and Thailand. When he heard news that Aceh

was also affected, it hit his heart. The important decision was made that he would travel to Aceh to do everything he could do to help with the relief effort alongside trying to locate an old colleague. Later he unfortunately discovered his colleague died in the Tsunami along with his wife and four children. Dr Aspinall's main role in Aceh came through distributing essential supplies to the locals and acting as a translator at a private hospital which now echoed in its emptiness because most of its staff were victims of the killer wave.

Accompanied by real photos on a slideshow, Dr Aspinall talked us through the tragic story of Aceh. "HARI DUKA

26-DES-04" is the first slide, a picture of graffiti scribbled on a dingy wall translating what could only mean, Day of Mourning. The slides that followed depicted images of a devastated area that once thrived with a population of 240,000, most of them are now gone. Many buildings are stitched down to their foundations, collections of bodies are piled up on one another rotting, ready to be picked up by trucks. The prisons are empty. The hospitals are empty. The only buildings that remain are the mosques, conveniently a house of comfort, protection and worship.

Ironic and pitiful is the part where Dr Aspinall mentions men and women incarcerated got more than they probably deserved, the death penalty by drowning. In one prison however, the men were freed and told to come back when it was over, which most of them sincerely did. Taxi drivers don't want money, they do not have any family to support, therefore do not need it. On a brighter note he continues, there are teams of medical surgeons conducting operations one after the other. There are a huge number of volunteers pouring in from other parts of Indonesia and the sudden influx of foreigners was amazing to witness. We can be proud of our Australian troops cleaning and sweeping out the general public hospital and setting up water purification systems. From his experience, he is thinking of writing another book on the Tsunami, it's after affects and the politics of Aid.

Under any normal circumstances you would never expect to see a grown man hold his head in his hands and weep in front of you. Choking on his words, it is not difficult to understand why Farouk Jacobs is finding it hard to speak. It has been one week since Mr. Jacobs returned from Aceh, after going there alongside Human Appeal International. The first thing Mr. Jacobs says after taking a deep (much needed for) breath is, "I am old enough to know I will never see anything like that again".

Farouk Jacobs is still recovering from the shock and devastation of the Tsunami and prays in his heart no one ever has to see a



Silma Ihram, Dr Ed Aspinall and Donny Amir at the seminar

sight like that again. He has surely dedicated the next year of his life to changing the lives of many in Aceh, Indonesia. Like all those who spoke before him, Mr. Jacobs had a story of his own to tell. An eight-year old boy had the courage and strength to hold on to a tree branch while unfortunately witnessing his parents and siblings get swept under the viscous waves.

Mr. Jacobs passionately urges the community and general Australian public to help the children of Aceh. There are now 35,000 orphans with no stable place to be. Our dream is for each country to adopt an entire orphan village which will cater for 500 children. To sponsor one orphan costs roughly \$750.00 annually, and to sponsor a school costs \$4000.00. In our society this amount is less than the school fees of one student studying at a private school. The main concern for these victims is that they seek urgent psychological attention. To shake a cup of water in a child's face is enough to give him or her nightmares for weeks. We should give, even if we cannot afford to. These are wise words from a wise man.

Silma Ihram, the Principal of Noor Al-Houda Islamic College, became Muslim in Indonesia many years ago. Once upon a time the people of Indonesia offered their assistance to her. Today, she returns there to repay her debt. Standing out front passionately speaking, she says one sentence clearly, "Allah gave and Allah took". These are words she captured from one of the victims she met, amazed by their level of Faith.

Silma traveled to Aceh supported by PKPU, a non-government Indonesian organization which has done a great deal for the community. Its motto also serves well. "Justice caring for the community". Silma urges Muslim organizations to get their act together and work in conjunction with other organizations to share resources and communicate information. It is vital that anyone with any kind of experience that can aid a community find its feet again get in touch with a local organizer and offer their

assistance strictly working alongside an Indonesian group.

Before December 26, 2004, Aceh was a city rich in Islamic values, beauty and traditional culture. This is, until it got attacked by tidal waves traveling at 644km/h, caused by an earthquake measured as 8-9 on the Richter scale. The world bears witness to the highest death toll in human history, cholera and other diseases still to come. Years ahead are needed to recover. You do not need a person or a newspaper article to tell you when its time to help. One picture of a crying mother clinging on to her dead baby should be enough to know that it is incumbent upon us to do something. Follow your heart, follow your faith and make the world of difference.

If you would like to sponsor an orphan in Banda Aceh contact Seyfi Seyit Project Manager for the Australian Foundation for the Children of Aceh. It costs \$30 a month to cover food, clothing, medical and schooling costs per child. 100% of your donation is given to support the orphan. There are no administrative costs at all. Mr Seyit recently returned from Aceh after setting up the Orphan sponsorship program.

Call now on 0412 318 045 or 02-9708 5773 or email: fair@pacific.net.au to make a small sacrifice that will bring a smile to a young child's face.



Terror laws, ASIO, the police and you

By Agnes Chong



Just two days after Bilal Khazal was granted bail for alleged terrorism offences, the NSW Government rushed through new laws to make it much harder for suspects to get bail for such offences. This also made it easier for the prosecution to appeal against Mr Khazal's bail.

Barely four days after Zak Mallah was acquitted of charges for planning a terrorist act, there was already talk about yet again increasing police powers. The federal Attorney-General, Mr Philip Ruddock said, "If Mallah couldn't be convicted for planning a terrorist act, a further range of terrorist offences might be necessary."

Mamdouh Habib had not returned to Australia for more than a month before the Government introduced new laws that would allow it to withhold evidence on the basis of "national security". This would potentially affect any legal action Mr Habib could bring against the Government.

These are all examples of knee-jerk law-making. In all these situations, the Government felt necessary to toughen laws when they did not exactly obtain the results they wanted.

One could also argue that the anti-terror laws regime introduced since September 11 is knee-jerk law-making, fuelled by fear, propelled by opinion polls, driven by Government self-interest.

That is not to say that there is no room for reactive laws or for laws that respond to current crises. However, such laws need to be balanced and proportionate to the crime it is supposed to prevent, and the law-maker must be mindful of its human rights obligations and the civil liberties of its citizens.

So what of these anti-terror laws? Since September 11, 2001, no less than 20 separate pieces of legislation have been introduced by the Australian government in the name of combating terrorism.

These new laws ban terrorist acts, but there are also offences related to terrorist organisations that are on a government list. The myriad of offences include training, financing, and directing the terrorist acts or the activities of a terrorist organisation.

Not only that, it goes leaps and bounds further by making it an offence to be a member of any part of a banned organisation, regardless of whether any actual terrorism is involved. It is also an offence to be an informal member, to have taken steps to become member, and even merely to associate with someone who is a member of a banned organisation with the intention of providing support for its continued existence. And the offence that gets the prize? To possess a "thing" that is connected with preparing a terrorist act.

In addition, the laws give ASIO and the federal police extraordinary and unprecedented powers to question and detain people for up to 7 days in order to collect information. The person does not even have to be suspected of having committed any of the offences referred to above. When being questioned, there is no right to silence, and the person only has limited access to a lawyer.

There is no sign that the Government is stopping. As Mr Ruddock analogised, Australia's anti-terror regime is an "unfinished canvas". The fact of the matter is, this catch-up game is not likely to stop.

And what is the effect of these laws? It seems that the Muslim community has borne the brunt of these laws. So far, all of Australia's 18 proscribed terrorist organisations have some link to Muslim groups, when the sad reality is that it isn't just people who claim to be Muslim who are involved in terrorism. Even in the United States, barely 22 of the 40 organisations on the Foreign Terrorist Organisation list have some Islamic connection.

Even if this was not an indicator of a problem, the effect of the laws on the Muslim community itself cannot be dismissed. While the law is of equal application, the general perception in the Muslim community is quite different. So far, only Muslim homes have

reported to have been raided by ASIO, and only Muslims have been arrested and charged.

Whether the perception is justified or not, it needs to be addressed. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in its consultations for the Isma report found that the Muslim community in Australia felt they had been unfairly targeted in investigations by ASIO officers and Australian Federal Police officers following the Bali bombings in October 2002. Many participants believed that their human rights were at risk of violation under these new laws.

During HREOC's consultation with Muslims in Adelaide, some of the participants reported being questioned by ASIO in the wake of the January 2002 national security publicity campaign. They believed this was done solely on the basis that they were Muslim. Another Muslim woman said, "There is a fear in the community that one day you will wake up and your husband will be taken away under the new ASIO laws. The way the government treated people who underwent the raids was shocking."

The report also documented participants' concerns of surveillance by neighbours and colleagues following the federal Government's national security campaign launched in



early 2003, where neighbours reported routine domestic activities and family gatherings of Muslims.

If injustice reigns, we have a duty to stand up and be counted. Yet what we see instead is non-Muslims standing up for us. When Izhar Ul-Haque, a Muslim medical student from UNSW, was arrested, only a handful in the Muslim community publicly defended him, while scores of Izhar's non-Muslim university friends and old school mates inundated the media with stories of Izhar's kindness and compassion.

To be silent in the face of adversity is to no longer an acceptable response from the Muslim community. As Australians, we must ensure that our governments do not compete with one another in moving towards this injustice. It is not proper for them to fill the anti-terrorism canvas with further laws that undermine our rights. We all know the Hadith that tells us that if one of us sees something evil (munkar) they should change it with their hand, and if not, they should change it with their tongue, and if not, they should hate it in their heart, and that is the weakest of faith.

We can all do something about it with our hands, and the first place to start is to have knowledge. It is the responsibility of everyone to understand these laws. It is meaningless to be free from the fear of terrorism, if we live in fear of governments and laws that are meant to protect us. The complexity of these laws should not deplete our resolve to fight for our remaining rights.

Over the next few issues, we will look in a little more detail about the laws and how they work in practice.

Agnes Chong (achong@amcran.org), Co-convenor of the Australian Muslim Civil Rights Advocacy Network (AMCRAN) was production coordinator of *Terrorism Laws: ASIO, the Police and You*, a booklet that explains people's rights as well as responsibilities under Australia's anti-terrorism laws. To download a copy of the booklet, please visit <http://amcran.org>.

The sheikh who shakes the sheikhs

Salaam,
Once again, masha Allah, the Arabs of Sydney have succeeded in making Islam the laughing stock of Australian society, bringing Muslims together to condemn Islam in their usual naïve and sycophantic manner.

When John Howard and Peter Costello laughingly endorse ignorant Arab and Muslim leadership as Court Jesters of the United Kingdom and its allies, then these

Muslims must hang their heads in shame and should begin to fear Allah.

Muslims must know that Allah decrees a matter before it comes to pass.

The Australian media and the public question the sincerity of Muslims who condemn the Sheikh for preaching out of their own belief.

What the media and the public and the Muslims do not want to know or to admit is that the Muslims have rejected the Quran for

their own brand of the King James Biblical Version of Religion.

Muslims have cast aside the protection that Allah has given to women against exploitation in a male dominated society when charges of adultery and infidelity arise, and Allah never fails in His Promise and Allah is not a Court Jester.

Sheikh Faiz Mohomad expresses the normally confused thoughts that are created by a collision of Quran with the innovation

of corrupt revelation called Hadith that directly oppose Allah.

Muslims must now produce One Honest Translation of the Quran, and let Allah be The Guide.

Muslim males must drop their worship of the Hijab as the ultimate sacrifice and extent of their faith while they oppress the very same women with their rejection of faith that calls for the anger of Allah.

By Muhammad Abdur Raheem

Sheikh Feiz makes statement

SHEIKH FEIZ REJECTS MEDIA INTERPRETATIONS OF HIS LECTURE

Following reports by Australian media sources concerning a lecture given by Sheikh Feiz Mohammad last month in a Bankstown lecture theatre which accused the Sheikh of holding raped women responsible of their attack, Sheikh Feiz Mohammad denied that he, or any Muslim, holds this belief saying "Muslims are extremely far from this kind of thinking". He further added that, "under no circumstances is it allowed for us to say that a woman is responsible for being raped, whether she is Muslim or non-Muslim".

"Islam reveres and respects women and condemns the act of rape to the extent that a rapist convicted under Islamic law faces capital punishment."

In a radio interview held with Sheikh Feiz on The Voice of Islam 87.6FM, the Sheikh emphasized that his lecture was aimed at Muslims and intended to encourage them to adhere by Islamic rulings such as wearing the Hijab (head covering).

He further added that "...we live in a free, democratic society and it is not my place to dictate a dress-code. I was providing guidance to Muslim women about the way they dress. In illustrating that point I chose the possibility of rape, and I now realised that I should have used another example. It was a mistake as it has left people to conclude that I promote the view that women deserve to be raped. If that is how I have been understood, then I apologise for this."

Time to speakout

By Irfan Yusuf

It is with great reluctance that I enter the debate raging over comments made by a certain Muslim "cleric" in south western Sydney some weeks back. I have never met Shaykh Feiz. I have never attended his lectures. The first time I saw him was on TV after the September 11 terrorist attacks. I consciously refuse to follow his 'salafi' brand of Islam. I prefer the wisdom of Turkish sufis to the fires of hate that al-Qaida types like to fuel. I am rarely involved in Muslim community activities. I am not Lebanese. I did not grow up in south western Sydney. Yet I know that I will be judged by what Shaykh Feiz is reported to have said. I am your typical Aussie Muslim. I was brought up in a metropolitan city. I went to school here. In fact, I attended Australia's only Anglican Cathedral School and represented the school in debating and rugby. I went to university, studied accounting and law, played cricket for the university and was elected to the student council. I even joined a political party and ran twice for election. You might read this and think: "Look, it isn't about you". The problem is that it is about me. Whether I like it or not, I and 300,000-odd other Australian Muslims will be judged because of what one man has said. Including a senior executive of a major Australian bank. Including the managing director of a major sponsor of numerous AFL and ARL football teams. Including the Turkish veterans who marched with their digger mates on ANZAC Day. Including Bosnian refugees who were themselves the victims of gang-rape. Just as al-Qaida love to stir

up anti-Western hatred among Muslims, some Australian journalists, shock-jocks and public figures will behave like al-Qaida and will stir up hatred of Australians against their fellow country men and women. And Muslim community leadership will sit back and do next to nothing. Or worse still, they might actually try and defend the indefensible comments attributed to Shaykh Feiz. Meanwhile, your average Aussie Muslim will be too busy organising his or her business or legal practice or career. Most Muslims are too busy being Australians to worry about what some crackpot is saying. I mean, how many Christians listen to Hon. Fred Nile MLC? And for a secular equivalent, how many Liberals listen to Hon. David Clarke MLC? For that reason, an average anonymous Aussie Mossie (a popular term local Muslims use to describe themselves) such as myself has to speak out. Because if we don't speak out, people pretending to speak on our behalf will continue to say stupid things. And we will be the ones who will have to hear the abuse from fellow Australians on 2GB on the way to work (or 2UE if we are running late). So let me state for the record what I believe most Muslims are thinking. Rape is a crime. Rapists should and must be punished. Women and men are subject to sexual assault regardless of what they wear. And sadly, idiots of all denominations often claim that women could have avoided being

raped by dressing more modestly. Yet I am yet to read a scripture or learn of a religion that justifies rape. Muslims are not the only faith community suffering a crisis of leadership. I am yet to meet a Sydney Anglican who is completely happy with his or her church. Many Catholics are not exactly jumping for joy at the election of a new pope. Jewish community leaders were criticised by their community members over their responses to the visit by Dr Hanan Ashrawi some 2 years ago. However, at least most (if not all) cardinals and archbishops and rabbis speak English and don't need interpreters everywhere they go. In the case of Muslims, it seems, language ability and understanding of local cultures are the last criteria one needs to satisfy to become a community leader. In New South Wales, we have 3 competing Islamic councils. Each of them has spent thousands of dollars fighting each other in the Supreme Court for governance of the NSW Muslim turf. Over 90% of programs broadcast on Sydney Muslim radio stations are in Arabic, not English. Yet I doubt any of them will say a word about Shaykh Feiz. Muslims have to speak out. We can no longer afford to rely on our non-English speaking imams and feuding leaders to make incoherent noises while we are too busy getting on with our lives. In the current crazy environment, where shock-jocks and poison-penned columnists are quoting our incompetent leadership, our silence will be treated as an admission of guilt.

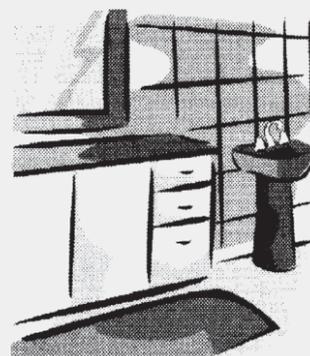
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Gallipoli- a lasting friendship baptised in blood

By Irfan Yusuf

By the time this article is published, the ANZAC Day holiday will be a faint memory for most of us. I will remember sitting in a Panania backyard stuffing myself with barbecued kifte meat and drinking it down with Indian tea cooked on the smouldering coals. We will recall watching TV images of old veterans marching on the streets, of dawn services in Turkey and of the usual speeches by politicians seeking to generate political capital from the whole affair.

And although the phrase of ANZAC day is "Lest We Forget", the sad reality is that most of us will have forgotten it all. Even if the traces of that amazing failure of British intelligence continue to live with us.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the landing by allied forces on the coast of Gallipoli. Over 100,000 young men died in the entire campaign. Amongst them were Australians and New Zealanders.

But the largest number of dead came from the Ottoman side. These valiant fighters defended what was left of the frontier of the Ottoman Empire. They defeated the allies, but not without enormous sacrifice.

Who was their commander? He was the young general of the 19th Division of the Ottoman Fifth Army. His parents had named him after the Beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace & blessings of God



Anzac Cove 1915

be upon him). General Mustafa Kemal was without a doubt one of the heroes of Ottoman military folklore.

Ironically, Mustafa Kemal (today more commonly known by the title of Atatürk, father of the Turks) was the man who dealt the final political blow to the Ottoman caliphate. And for this, many Muslims refuse to recognise him as anything but a traitor.

Most Turks, on the other hand, love Atatürk. They also share with Australians a deep respect for the ANZAC's. The largest Turkish congregation in Sydney has named their mosque the "Auburn Gallipoli Mosque", largely in recognition of the deep friendship between Turkey and Australia. This friendship was baptised in the blood shed on the beaches and cliffs of Gallipoli.

The broader Muslim communities have every right to commemorate ANZAC Day. Among the dead on the allied side were Indian troops, a fair proportion of whom may have been Muslim. We also salute those fallen Ottoman troops led by one of the Ottoman Empire's greatest military strategists.

But more importantly, we have every reason to commemorate the sacrifices of the tens of thousands of young Australian men who fell in battle. We are Australians also. And by all accounts, these Australian troops held no malice for the Turkish foe. When the allies finally evacuated, the Ottomans found letters and messages left by the Australian troops. One such letter said: "Johnny The Turk, goodbye. We left lots of food for you, enjoy them".

Half-witted journalists might try to find Islamist conspiracies in Turkish road workers building a road over the Cannakale coast (at the request of the Australian government!). But most Australians, regardless of their ethnicity or faith, will maintain enormous goodwill toward Turkey. And Australian Turks, by their generally exemplary behaviour and continuing contributions to Australian life, will further that goodwill.

Next time you go to an AFL or ARL game and see "Crazy John" adverts across the ground, remember that Crazy John would not have existed if the ancestors of a young entrepreneur had not migrated from Turkey to Australia. I am sure the fallen diggers would have been happy to see a Young Turk at the heart of Australian life.

Turkish women gain expanded religious authority

In Turkey, Muslim women gain expanded religious authority

A new class of educated women are demanding more rights. Some now monitor the work of imams in local mosques.

ISTANBUL - Covered in a pink and gray head scarf that tightly frames her round face, and adorned in a long, dark-blue overcoat, Zuleyha Seker hardly seems like a rebel. But as one of 400 women preachers, known as vaizes, currently working in several of Turkey's state-run mosques, Ms. Seker is making waves.

"The vaizes like me are seen as revolutionaries in religious circles - we are always pushing for change," she says with a gentle smile.

Indeed, women have brought significant change to Turkey's Muslim order in recent years. Two years ago, women were appointed for the first time to lead groups of Turks making the pilgrimage to Mecca. And last year, Diyanet, a government body that oversees the country's mosques and trains religious leaders, added 150 women preachers across Turkey.

Now, Diyanet is selecting a group of women who will serve as deputies to muftis, or expounders of religious law. From this post, they'll monitor the work being done by imams in local mosques, particularly as it relates to women.

While these changes come in response to what Diyanet officials describe as a growing demand from women for more and better religious education, academics and Islamic intellectuals say these developments are also being forced by the rise of a new class of educated religious women who are demanding more rights within the country's Islamic milieu.

"Now, women are more educated, they participate more in social life, and they are mixing more with men, so they are



demanding more," says Nevin Meric, a women's education expert at the Istanbul mufti's office. "Today they are aware of their rights and they are learning by reading and asking," she says.

Buket Turkmen, a sociologist at Istanbul's Galatasaray University who has studied the role of women in Turkish Islam, says that for many women who come from traditional homes where they would normally be limited in what they are allowed to do, religious education becomes a path to a certain kind of independence.

"It's very paradoxical, but by choosing Islam, they can gain their individuality and their emancipation. In this context, Islam means modernization," Ms. Turkmen says.

It's a path that more women seem to be exploring. In Istanbul, for example, the mufti's office has 583 women teaching courses on the Koran to women across the city. Women now also make up the majority of students in the theology departments of several Turkish universities.

Mehmet Gormez, Diyanet's deputy head, says the growing demand from women has forced Turkey's religious institutions to act. "In Islamic doctrine, men and women are equal. This should also be applied in practice," Mr. Gormez adds.

The changes begun by Diyanet appear to put Turkey in a leading position within the Islamic world on women's issues. "Turkey has been more open to [theological] change," says Yurdegul Mehmetoglu, a vice dean in the theology faculty at Istanbul's Marmara University.

While there are signs of loosening in Turkey, Muslim orthodoxy remains clear that women cannot lead prayers, particularly in the Arab Muslim heartland.

When Amina Wadud, an American Muslim and professor, announced that she would lead Friday prayers at an annex of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City last month, condemnation rang from orthodox circles. Sunni preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi of Qatar issued a fatwa, or religious ruling, saying "that leadership in prayer in Islam is reserved for men only," and warning that a women leading prayers might arouse men.

In early Islam, there were a number of female religious scholars. But women were eventually excluded from taking part in theological debates.

Gormez says Diyanet is hoping the vaizes and deputy muftis will act as advocates for women's issues in mosques, making them friendlier environments for other women.

As one of 18 vaizes in Istanbul, Seker, a university graduate in theology, doesn't actually lead prayers or give sermons in mosques. Instead, she helps organize seminars and teaches religious classes for women.

"In the past, [women] believed anything told to them by their older brother, father, or teacher. But as they are becoming more educated, they are coming up with more questions," she says. "We need new answers for new questions."

On a recent afternoon, though, Seker deals with the timeworn topics of tradition and prayer. Teaching in a community center in an Istanbul neighborhood, Seker tells the seven head-scarfed women that not all of the traditions they have been taught are necessarily part of Islam.

She brings up so-called honor killings - the murder of young women considered to have damaged a family's honor - that still take place in Turkey.

"There is no such thing in Islam, and to kill someone is considered to be the biggest sin," she tells the women, who sit motionless throughout her talk. She also encourages them to read the Koran more.

Seker acknowledges that her work might not sit well with the husbands of the women she teaches. "They feel like their throne is being shaken," she says.

By Yigal Schleifer | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

• Staff writer Dan Murphy contributed to this report from Cairo.

Reflections on inter faith relations

By Dr Jamal Badawi

Qur'anic Foundations of Muslim/Non-Muslim Relations

It should be noted from the beginning that the very term Islam implies that peace is the basis and the norm of Muslim/non-Muslim relations. Islam is derived from the Arabic root S-L-M, whose generic meaning includes the concepts of peace and submission. From a spiritual perspective, Islam may be defined as attaining peace through submission to Allah or the state of peace in submission to Allah. Ample references in the Qur'an and Hadith reveal that this concept of peace embraces peace with God, inner peace as a result of that relationship with God, peace with humans, peace with the animal world, peace with vegetation, and peace with the ecological order.

For Muslims, this "generic Islam" has been the core of all prophetic teachings throughout human history. Key theological and eschatological Qur'anic terms are derived from the same Arabic root, S-L-M. One of God's names or attributes is As-Salam, meaning "the peace" or "the source of peace." Paradise is called the home or abode of peace. As they enter Paradise, angels greet believers with the greeting "peace be with you," the same greeting that will be exchanged between the dwellers of Paradise. It is also the standard greeting among Muslims worldwide. Peace also lies at the heart of the universally accepted five major objectives (maqasid) of Shari'ah (Islamic jurisprudence), to safeguard faith, life, mind, honor and property. Peaceful relationships among human beings include various circles such as family, community, society, and humanity at large. It includes relationships with fellow believers in Islam and with humanity at large. The focus of this section, however, is on the universal concepts and values underlying the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. They include the following:

Faith in the One Universal God (Allah in Arabic): Islam is founded on the belief that there is only one God, Who is the universal Creator, Sustainer, and Cherisher of all. Being the sole creator of all humankind precludes any notion of multiple, competing creators, each marshalling his creation against the other "gods" and their creation. Allah is One and is impartial toward His creation. He provides for all, including those who reject faith in Him or even those who defy Him. He cares for the well-being of all and gives them ample opportunity to repent to Him and end the state of separateness suffered by those who reject Him or are unmindful of Him. This belief implies that all humans are equal before Allah in terms of their humanity, irrespective of their particular beliefs. Only Allah is the ultimate judge of any person's "theological correctness." No human should be oppressed or mistreated by other fellow humans because of a perceived "theological incorrectness."

Unity and universality of the core teachings of all prophets: That core message is peace in submission to Allah, literally Islam. According to the Qur'an, a Muslim must accept, revere, and believe in all the prophets of Allah, without discrimination. They all represent one brotherhood of faith extending vertically to include many



generations and horizontally to embrace all humanity. In the Qur'an we read [we (Muslims) make no distinction between any of His messengers (God's messengers)] (Al-Baqarah 2:285). We read also [Behold, We have revealed to you (O Muhammad) as We revealed to Noah and all the prophets after him] (Al-Nisaa' 4:163). Still in another verse we read [In matters of faith, He (God) has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: steadfastly uphold the (true) faith and make no divisions therein] (Ash-Shura 42:13). These Qur'anic texts preclude the notion of narrow partisanship that may lead to hatred or even violence against communities who perceive themselves as followers of other prophets.

Universal human dignity: The Qur'an gives various reasons why each human being must be honored and dignified on account of being human and irrespective of his or her chosen beliefs. Such honor is symbolized by the way the Qur'an describes Allah's creation of the human in the best of molds and commanding the angels to bow down in respect to Adam.

The Qur'an describes the human as the trustee of Allah on earth. Allah created everything on earth and in the heavens for the benefit of the human race. Sanctity of human life is affirmed in the Qur'an [Nor take life, which God has made sacred, except for just cause] (Al-Israa' 17:33). The Qur'an confirms God's revelation to previous prophets that [If anyone slays a human being, unless it be (punishment) for murder, or for spreading mischief on earth, it shall be as though he had slain all humankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all humankind] (Al-Ma'idah 5:32). Beyond sanctity of life, in the Qur'an we read [Indeed, We (God) have conferred dignity on the children of Adam] (Al-Israa' 17:70). It is noted that this verse is inclusive of all humans, irrespective of their religion or even their belief in God.

Rejection of belief in God will surely have consequences in the afterlife. However, it is up to God to determine these consequences. Such future determination has no bearing on the respect of the humanity of every person in this life. After all, the human is a free agent, and as such, each is individually responsible before God for his or her beliefs and moral choices. A person can be held

accountable in this life only if such a moral choice infringes on the rights of individuals or society, such as the commission of crimes or acts of aggression. In other words, no human is entitled to dehumanize or punish another on the sole ground that the later is following a different religion or no religion at all. This value implies that peaceful co-existence among followers of all religions and respecting their humanity is not

only possible, but also mandated in the Qur'an.

Universal justice: The Arabic term for justice is adl, meaning "to be in a state of equilibrium, to be balanced." That balance is inherent in the cosmic order and ecology as much as it is inherent in spiritual and ethical values. The Qur'an warns against disturbing that balance. Within that broad context, we can examine the concept of justice as it relates to human relationships based on Islam's primary sources. Briefly, that concept has the following characteristics:

Justice is not mere "political correctness" or something to be pursued exclusively, for worldly gain. For the believer, it is a divine command.

Justice is at the heart of prophetic teachings.

Justice is a universal concept that should be observed without nepotism, even with the "enemy":

[O you who believe! Stand out for justice, as witnesses to Allah, and even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor.] (An-Nisaa' 4:134)

[O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety and fear Allah, for Allah is well acquainted with all that you do.] (Al-Ma'idah 5:8)

The above concept of universal justice relates to peace in at least two ways:

1. It is inconceivable to secure genuine lasting peace without justice. In fact, doing justice is a prerequisite to peace.

2. To harm, persecute, or fight against any person on account of his or her religious convictions is one of the worst forms of injustice, which is condemned in the primary sources of Islam.

Universal human brotherhood: Addressing the entire human race, the Qur'an states,

[O humankind! We (Allah) have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you may come to know one another. Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous (or Allah-conscious) of you. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.] (Al-Hujurat 49:13)

It must be noted that this verse does not address Muslims exclusively, but begins with the inclusive address "O humankind," an address that embraces all. It reminds humanity that they belong to one family with the same set of parents, albeit a diverse family. This is a reminder that diversity in unity and unity within diversity are possible. Humanity is like a bouquet of flowers in which each flower is beautiful in its own right, yet, the combination of all flowers and the rich diversity of their colors is more beautiful. This sweeping statement in the Qur'an about broad human brotherhood is a profound basis for peace for and among all.

Acceptance of plurality in human societies: While the notion of plurality may appear to be a relatively new concept, it is not new to those who are familiar with the Qur'an. The Qur'an is quite explicit in reminding all that if God willed, He would have made of all mankind one nation (Al-Ma'idah 5:48; Hud 11:118). Likewise, the Qur'an states that had it been God's will, He would have made all people believers (Yunus 10:99).

This means that forcing people to believe in God runs against His decree of free will, which includes the fact that some will reject Him. The ultimate reward or punishment for accepting or rejecting belief in God is deferred until the Day of Judgment. This value inculcates the attitude of being non-judgmental and accepting of people as they are, human beings entitled to choose

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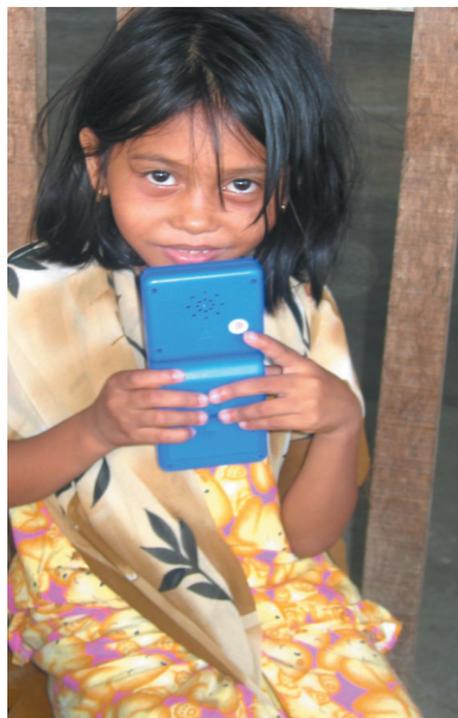
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Korban Tsunami

by Kuranda Seyit

The road to recovery has begun in Aceh. People are trying to regain some sense of normality writes Kuranda Seyit from Aceh.



A fruit vendor shouts out, "Korban Tsunami" as he indicates four fingers. He repeats the words to me and then my friend tells me he has lost his wife and three children to the Tsunami of December 26th 2004. In Aceh if you died in the Tsunami you are referred to as Korban or a sacrifice. This term you will hear hundreds of times if you stay long enough in Aceh. Almost everyone was affected by the killer tidal wave. A family member, an uncle or an aunt, a cousin or a grandparent, a friend or a colleague. There is no escaping it. The Tsunami has left a psychological scar on many, the sadness is evident in the eyes. But remarkably the resilience and ability of the Acehnese to deal with the tragedy is astounding.

Many people speak casually about their losses, about their loved ones and some are quite comfortable about talking about it. I did some further investigation into this asked many people about this phenomenon. I discovered from imams and locals alike that the Tsunami was a blessing from Allah. People as sad as they are in their hearts know that this is a great test of character for the Acehnese people.

They know that those who perished were martyred. Many saw that their survival meant that Allah had chosen them to serve and worship Allah, to raise their children with Allah consciousness and piety. But I also found that the Acehnese are a very unique race of people. They are devoutly Muslim and for them their religion is the best form of counselling and trauma management. Most turn to their faith and to Allah for guidance and patience to deal with their losses. Some have lost their entire family, their home, their belongings, their photo albums, their cell phones, their favourite books, yet they have strength in their faith. I did not meet anyone who was grieving or showing their grief at least. Most spoke openly about it, candidly talking about the dead bodies and the thousands of sick and dying friends and family.

Personally, I found this astonishing. It took me some days to get used to it and then after that I was talking to everyone about the Tsunami, recording their stories on video.

Everybody had a story to tell and they were eager to do so.

One man explained that he was working on his farm on a coastal village when he looked at to the sea and saw a large wave which he judged to be about 30 meters high. He then rushed to gather his children and only managed to find three of them. He then made his way to a hill behind the village with others but there was little time to react as many perished. He said that he saw three waves approaching. Then he heard three large explosions and then the waves hit different parts of the coastline. He lost his wife and child. The village was totally destroyed.

I spoke to a girl whose family was visiting their father's grave site near the coast. Afterwards the family went to the seaside for some leisure when the tide suddenly vanished two kilometres out to sea. Many started to make their way onto the sand in astonishment. The earthquake had happened only minutes before. Then a man in a car drove down to the family and called them to quickly get in and he drove them up towards a mountain road. Many drove along the coastal road and were feared lost when the giant wave hit. They stopped once to look back and saw what they described as smoke which was

water continued to rise. Then someone saw the boat and called out to climb onto it. Somehow all 54 people climbed on board as the water submerged the house and the people were safe on the boat. Four hours after the water subsided and the people climbed down and walked into the town centre where they found many disoriented people and many corpses littered the streets.

The owner Mrs Abes wants to leave the house as it is with the fishing boat on the roof as a monument and museum for visitors to see.

And finally in Durru village I met an old man who walked with a heavy limp. He was caught in the raging torrent of the wave as it hit his coastal village. He lost his children and his wife. As the water carried him along he tumbled in the water and managed to hold onto a branch of tree and when the waters subsided



Mrs Abes outside her battered home with the reminder of the Tsunami on top of it.

establish an orphan aid project in banda Aceh which I did alhamdulillah. The Australian Foundation for the Children of Aceh has employed a project co-ordinator named Kiki. She will be responsible to oversee that the funds are being used to assist the orphans and to report back to the Foundation.

We have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Committee for Humanitarian Relief in Aceh (KKIA) to support 52 orphans in a village called Desa Pagarayir. These children are living in a rented house and have two carers living with them. These carers have become like their parents. The boys and girls live in separate premises. There are 22 girls and 28 boys.

We have also entered into arrangements with five boarding schools and one kindergarten to assist with the education of 348 orphans.

The average cost per orphan is \$75 per month which includes medical, food, clothing and educational material. However, it is possible to stipulate where you want your donation to go and therefore donate less than this amount. For example giving \$35 per month just towards education is also possible. That's about a dollar day.

AFCA would like to invite you to help these orphans and allow them to rebuild their shattered lives. They have only those willing to care for them and noone else. When I met them and promised them that Australian Muslims, your brothers and sisters in Islam, will help you, they were so pleased. Many people were moved that Muslims in Australia were willing to help. They asked me to thank the people of Australia.

Alhamdulillah, terimah kasih.



Mr Suardi and his children. "Please say thankyou from the people of aceh."

probably the spray of the wave. There were many people who were washed away calling for help in vain.

Another story was from a 45 year old Agricultural scientist, Mr Suardi, who lost his wife and four children. On the day of the earthquake, which was a Sunday morning, many people were outside of their houses, inspecting for damage. Suddenly people were shouting, "Water, water! Run for your lives." Mr Suardi gathered his wife and 8 children. A neighbour came with his car and said that he was going to drive to a safe place and so he placed his wife and four children in the car and they drove off. Then the water rapidly came and began to rise. He helped his remaining four children onto the roof of the house and he climbed up himself. They survived but his wife and four children did not.

An extraordinary story of survival involved a large fishing boat which was wedged on top of a house as the Tsunami ripped through the village. The family and 48 other neighbours crowded into the top floor of the house as the

he found himself almost 20 metres above the ground. His leg was broken and it has not healed three months after the Tsunami.

All these people are in destitute situations. Most are struggling to make ends meet and to find enough money to pay for their basic needs. Some are living in refugee camps where they receive aid from international and national NGO's. They live in squalid conditions in tents with little sanitation and clean water. Most of the water is trucked in. The children are suffering from skin disorders, eye infections or intestinal viruses. Some attend schools but some cannot as their local school has been destroyed and the closest school is too far away.

But they are all happy and can still afford a laugh. Maashallah.

My visit to Aceh was not just to see the damage first hand, neither was it just to distribute zakat monies given to me by caring people in Australia. May Allah reward them. But my mission was to



AVP Interfaith conflict resolution workshops Register on-line now!

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The Hdaybiyya treaty

By Stuart R Clark

In 628 Prophet Muhammad, as leader of the Medinans, agreed to a 'cease-fire' with the Meccans, not to perform Hajj that year (to return next year for 'Umrah only), and to return any Meccan Muslims (of minor status, i.e. under the age of forty) fleeing to Medinah back to Mecca. Many of the Companions questioned the rightfulness of the Prophet's decision – should the Muslims of Medina make peace with the unbelievers especially when the Medinans seemed to have the upper hand?

As Australian Muslims, it is our duty to consider our treaty we have with this country. The Prophet returned a number of *Muslim* youth to the *non-Muslim* Meccans under the Hdaybiyya treaty! We have made a similar treaty to Australia, either defacto by being born here, or by word in our citizenship ceremonies. This understanding means that although we are part of the *Ummah*, our word as Muslims to be loyal to this country must take precedence over general concerns for the *Ummah*, where the two are in conflict.

As Australian Muslims we have given up all rights to fight against this country, either secretly or openly. This means that the best way for us to change this country (apart from waiting for a miracle), is to actively participate and engage it in dialogue. Whether it be through being part of the political process, peaceful demonstrations, or just by being an example to our fellow Australians.

We have to move beyond inter-faith dialogue, and into the realm of dialogue as citizens *qua* citizens. In other words, as Muslim citizens we should try and engage the entire community of citizens of this country in some aspect or another, whether secular or religious. Further, we should not represent ourselves (or our group) as being completely representative of Islam, but rather as one way of seeing Islam, since each of us have our different cultures and priorities within the boundaries (we hope) of the religion.

Therefore, as much as we make dislike the politics of certain parties or fear being

hated by the rest of the community, we must engage that community – in fact this is the only way we can follow our mission of spreading Islam. Why did the Prophet spend so many years struggling to gain only a few followers in Mecca? He tried his best, like Moses with Pharaoh, to convey the Message. Although his mission might have failed in the short-term, he only left when the lives of the Muslims were in severe danger. We cannot know the chance of success or failure of our mission here, we can only do our best to engage the entire community, to make them aware of Islam.

"Call with Wisdom" says the Qur'an, in a community founded on democracy and dialogue, this order *must* involve engaging in the same manner. In fact, Muslims are encouraged to be exemplary in all that we do, so we must be better-than-average citizens of this country of ours that we have chosen to be our home.

Yelling and screaming about how we should mistrust this system, that

Australians are against us, and that everyone else is to blame, shows (evidently) our weakness. The strong person does not blame anyone else, but asks herself – could I do better? By yelling about our distrust of Australia, or the West or whatever, we are showing that we do not place our trust in Allah alone. The one who has complete trust (of God) is not in need of distrust.

Unfortunately, Muslims seem to have a reputation for being uncouth, loudmouthed, unclean, etc. etc. Let us then be extra careful not to encourage these ideas about ourselves, but call to Islam with wisdom, by making ourselves attractive (attractive – pulling towards i.e. the action associated with calling effectively) to others, so that Muslims gain a reputation of excellence, as once we did! May Allah grant us patience, wisdom, and a good character to achieve the purpose he has gathered us here in Australia. *Amin*.

Hundred days of Abu mazen

By Uri Avnery

Arab News

It has been 100 days since Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) assumed the office of President of the Palestinian National Authority, Jews will celebrate Passover, in memory of the Exodus from Egypt - one of the great stories in human annals. According to the story (Exodus 5), Pharaoh ordered the Children of Israel to produce bricks from straw, but did not provide the straw. "And the Children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying: 'Wherefore dealest thou with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us: Make brick!'"

Abu Mazen might voice the same complaint. He is being asked to fulfill the task he has taken upon himself, without getting the minimum necessary to do so. After 100 days, what does Abu Mazen's balance sheet look like? In the positive column, there appear some impressive achievements. First of all, the very existence of his regime. That is a striking achievement by itself, which is being ignored because people have become so used to it. The sudden (and still unexplained) death of Yasser Arafat could have caused chaos. Instead, there was an astonishingly smooth transition to the new regime and democratic elections took place without violent incidents. Very few people have managed to do that after the death of the Father of the Nation. The entire Palestinian public must be given credit for this. It understood the gravity of the hour and united behind the successor. Second, the cease-fire. That is an impressive achievement, too. The armed Palestinian organizations ("resistance groups" or "terrorist organizations",

according to taste) agreed to a cease-fire vis-a-vis Israel, in spite of the fact that Israel did not declare an official cease-fire vis-a-vis them. True, the informal agreement is being violated here and there, sometimes by the Israelis, sometimes by the Palestinians, but all in all it is honored much more than could have been expected. This is not the result of the weakness of the armed factions. On the contrary, it is possible only because the Palestinians have recovered their self-respect. In the four years of the second Intifada, they have shown they have hundreds and thousands of fighters ready to sacrifice their lives. They have improvised arms, like the mortars and Qassam missiles, to which the Israeli Army has not yet found an answer. In these circumstances, the cease-fire is not seen as humiliating.

(The Israeli side accuses the organizations of using the cease-fire for rearming. Of course. That is the nature of any temporary cease-fire: Both sides use it to prepare for the resumption of the fighting.) Third, unification. The agreement of Hamas to join the Palestinian Authority (and perhaps also the PLO) and take part in the elections is a very important achievement. The birth of a national contract augurs well for the future Palestinian state - especially as it happens in an intense national liberation struggle.

Fourth: The change in the American attitude towards the Palestinian people. This should, perhaps, be put on top of the list. Up to now, the American attitude towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was at least 100 percent in favor of the government of Israel; now there is a shift in favor of the Palestinians. American support for the Israeli

government has sunk to only 90 percent, or perhaps as low as 80 percent. Abu Mazen's personality must be credited for a considerable part of these achievements. Yasser Arafat, the leader of the fight for liberation, was a forceful, colorful, theatrical personality, who attracted blind admiration and burning hatred. Nearly everyone around the world knew the man in khaki with the keffiyeh headdress. Abu Mazen is almost the exact opposite: An introverted, moderate person without colorful mannerisms. When I got to know him first, some 22 years ago in Tunis, he was already wearing a business suit and tie. He does not arouse opposition. He fights for his convictions without much ado. Perhaps the negative column for Abu Mazen derives also from these traits. Arafat was a commander. Abu Mazen is an educator. Abu Mazen is expected to consolidate the armed organizations into three services. That is easy to do on paper, but difficult to carry out. There are many commanders, most of them with subordinates who are fiercely loyal to them. None of them is looking for an opportunity to resign. In any case, it is difficult to carry out the reforms asked for. In every Arab society, and especially in Palestinian society, the extended family is hugely important. Any attempt to ignore it in the implementation of reforms will meet with stiff resistance. Abu Mazen must move cautiously, slowly, trying to build consensus. That is a prolonged process, which aims for durable rather than quick results.

But the most serious failure of Abu Mazen, in the eyes of his people, is on the national level: In the first 100 days he has not obtained one single significant concession, neither from Israel nor from the US. Bush does really want to help him. He

praises him publicly, rejects Sharon's efforts to belittle him, sends him respected emissaries. But nothing has changed on the ground: The Israeli occupation has not been eased, the daily humiliations at the checkpoints go on, and so does the building of the wall. Not one single "outpost" has been removed, the settlements are being expanded. The Israeli Army carries on in the West Bank as if nothing has happened, killing here and arresting there. There is no significant movement towards the release of prisoners. Israelis continue addressing the Palestinians in the same overbearing, humiliating tone used by military governors towards their subjects. When Bush talks about a "Palestinian state with temporary borders", every Palestinian understands that this means the permanent occupation of most of the West Bank. Sharon's "redeployment" looks to them like a plan to turn the Gaza Strip into one huge prison, cut off from the world and the West Bank. Sooner or later, the Palestinian public is going to ask Abu Mazen: Are these the fruits of the cease-fire? Is this the value of American promissory notes? There must be no illusion about it. This is exactly what Sharon is hoping for. For him, the sympathy Bush holds for Abu Mazen presents a great danger. It is very uncomfortable for him to share American favors with a Palestinian leader. Any wavering in Washington's position of total support for the Israeli government turns on a red light in Jerusalem. Sharon is too shrewd to attack Abu Mazen frontally. That would infuriate Bush. Therefore, the pitch is: Abu Mazen is a good person, but weak. His regime is collapsing. He is lost. For the time being, it has not succeeded. Bush needs Abu Mazen no less than Abu Mazen needs Bush.

Islamic history till Spanish conquest

"Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that you may be witnesses upon mankind." (Quran, Surah [2:143])

General Characteristics of Islamic Civilization

Islam was destined to become a world religion and to create a civilization which stretched from one end of the globe to the other. Already during the early Muslim caliphates, first the Arabs, then the Persians and later the Turks set about to create classical Islamic civilization. Later, in the 13th century, both Africa and India became great centers of Islamic civilization and soon thereafter Muslim kingdoms were established in the Malay-Indonesian world while Chinese Muslims flourished throughout China.

Global religion

Islam is a religion for all people from whatever race or background they might be. That is why Islamic civilization is based on a unity which stands completely against any racial or ethnic discrimination. Such major racial and ethnic groups as the Arabs, Persians, Turks, Africans, Indians, Chinese and Malays in addition to numerous smaller units embraced Islam and contributed to the building of Islamic civilization. Moreover, Islam was not opposed to learning from the earlier civilizations and incorporating their science, learning, and culture into its own world view, as long as they did not oppose the principles of Islam. Each ethnic and racial group which embraced Islam made its contribution to the one Islamic civilization to which everyone belonged. The sense of brotherhood and sisterhood was so much emphasized that it overcame all local attachments to a particular tribe, race, or language--all of which became subservient to the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of Islam. The global civilization thus created by Islam permitted people of diverse ethnic backgrounds to work together in cultivating various arts and sciences. Although the civilization was profoundly Islamic, even non-Muslim "people of the book" participated in the intellectual activity whose fruits belonged to everyone. The scientific climate was reminiscent of the present situation in America where scientists and men and women of learning from all over the world are active in the advancement of knowledge which belongs to everyone. The global civilization created



by Islam also succeeded in activating the mind and thought of the people who entered its fold. As a result of Islam, the nomadic Arabs became torch-bearers of science and learning. The Persians who had created a great civilization before the rise of Islam nevertheless produced much more science and learning in the Islamic period than before. The same can be said of the Turks and other peoples who embraced Islam. The religion of Islam was itself responsible not only for the creation of a world civilization in which people of many different ethnic backgrounds participated, but it played a central role in developing intellectual and cultural life on a scale not seen before. For some eight hundred years Arabic remained the major intellectual and scientific language of the world. During the centuries following the rise of Islam, Muslim dynasties ruling in various parts of the Islamic world bore witness to the flowering of Islamic culture and thought. In fact this tradition of intellectual activity was eclipsed only at the beginning of modern times as a result of the weakening of faith among Muslims combined with external domination. And today this activity has begun anew in many parts of the Islamic world now that the Muslims have regained their political independence.

A Brief History of Islam, The Rightly Guided Caliphs

Upon the death of the Prophet, Abu Bakr, the friend of the Prophet and the first adult male to embrace Islam, became caliph. Abu Bakr ruled for two years to be succeeded by 'Umar who was caliph for a decade and

during whose rule Islam spread extensively east and west conquering the Persian empire, Syria and Egypt. It was 'Umar who marched on foot at the end of the Muslim army into Jerusalem and ordered the protection of Christian sites. 'Umar also established the first public treasury and a sophisticated financial administration. He established many of the basic practices of Islamic government. 'Umar was succeeded by 'Uthman who ruled for some twelve years during which time the Islamic expansion continued. He is also known as the caliph who had the definitive text of the Noble Quran copied and sent to the four corners of the Islamic world. He was in turn succeeded by 'Ali who is known to this day for his eloquent sermons and letters, and also for his bravery. With his death the rule of the "rightly guided" caliphs, who hold a special place of respect in the hearts of Muslims, came to an end.

The Caliphates Umayyad

The Umayyad caliphate established in 661 was to last for about a century. During this time Damascus became the capital of an Islamic world which stretched from the western borders of China to southern France. Not only did the Islamic conquests continue during this period through North Africa to Spain and France in the West and to Sind, Central Asia and Transoxiana in the East, but the basic social and legal institutions of the newly founded Islamic world were established.

Abbasids

The Abbasids, who succeeded the

Umayyads, shifted the capital to Baghdad which soon developed into an incomparable center of learning and culture as well as the administrative and political heart of a vast world. They ruled for over 500 years but gradually their power waned and they remained only symbolic rulers bestowing legitimacy upon various sultans and princes who wielded actual military power. The Abbasid caliphate was finally abolished when Hulagu, the Mongol ruler, captured Baghdad in 1258, destroying much of the city including its incomparable libraries. While the Abbasids ruled in Baghdad, a number of powerful dynasties such as the Fatimids, Ayyubids and Mamluks held power in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. The most important event in this area as far as the relation between Islam and the Western world was concerned was the series of Crusades declared by the Pope and espoused by various European kings. The purpose, although political, was outwardly to recapture the Holy Land and especially Jerusalem for Christianity. Although there was at the beginning some success and local European rule was set up in parts of Syria and Palestine, Muslims finally prevailed and in 1187 Saladin, the great Muslim leader, recaptured Jerusalem and defeated the Crusaders.

North Africa and Spain

When the Abbasids captured Damascus, one of the Umayyad princes escaped and made the long journey from there to Spain to found Umayyad rule there, thus beginning the golden age of Islam in Spain. Cordoba was established as the capital and soon became Europe's greatest city not only in population but from the point of view of its cultural and intellectual life. The Umayyads ruled over two centuries until they weakened and were replaced by local rulers. Meanwhile in North Africa, various local dynasties held sway until two powerful Berber dynasties succeeded in uniting much of North Africa and also Spain in the 12th and 13th centuries. After them this area was ruled once again by local dynasties such as the Sharifids of Morocco who still rule in that country. As for Spain itself, Muslim power continued to wane until the last Muslim dynasty was defeated in Granada in 1492 thus bringing nearly eight hundred years of Muslim rule in Spain to an end.

Massacres on both sides

Turkey Says 523,000 Were Killed by Armenians Between 1910 and 1922 By SEBNEM ARSU

IZMIR, Turkey, April 17 - The Turkish State Archive issued today a list of more than 523,000 Turks whom it said were killed by Armenians in Turkey between 1910 and 1922.

The move appeared intended to counter longstanding Armenian contentions that Turkish Ottoman officials committed genocide during a period of mass deportations of Armenians that began in 1915. Turkey fears that the 90th anniversary of the start of the violence, which Armenians and their supporters plan to mark on April 24, will cause

widespread anti-Turkish feeling. It is also concerned that the issue could interfere with its plans to start talks with the European Union in October for possible membership. There have been growing calls from other countries for Turkey to acknowledge its role with regard to the Armenians. Last week, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and the Turkish Parliament called for an international study of the events of that period, but senior Armenia officials turned down the proposal. Turkey flatly denies that there was any systematic effort at killing or forcing the Armenians out of eastern Anatolia, where the Armenians were trying to establish a separate state. with support from the French, British

and Russians. Turkey contends that, instead, hundreds of thousands of Turks were killed by Armenians as they tried to establish themselves as the majority population in that region. Prof. Yusuf Sarinay said.

The list issued today was compiled based on reports by the regional authorities sent to Ottoman officials in Istanbul, as well as the written accounts of international observers, said Mr. Sarinay, the director of the Office of State Archives. "Europe has used Armenians as a tool in extension of their policies over Turkey, for which Turks and Armenians suffered," Mr. Sarinay was quoted as saying by the Anatolian news agency.

"Europe should also face her own history."

Hirant Dink, a leading figure among Armenians in Turkey called the list an official attempt to create an alternate version of an internationally recognized reality. He said that such documentary analysis and confirmation of its accuracy should be left in the hands of international academics.

"Figures and documents should be researched and analyzed," Mr. Dink said, "However, talking merely in figures means that Turkey doesn't understand the pain of the other side; what is undermined here is the conscience and human factor behind all." Courtesy: The New York Times

Islamic benchmarking

When we discuss the Golden Age of Islam, do we qualify why a particular point of time is in fact "golden"? Since Golden Age refers to the period when an empire is at its peak, it means that other periods of the empire is somehow lesser than the Golden Age. How do we then, determine an age as being better than another?

And what is the significance of understanding the importance of one age over another? Should we assume that Islamic history is a plain ground or one that undulates with hills and valleys?

Islamic history tells us of heights of glory and lows of disaster. It tells us of periods when Muslim scholars carried the torch of knowledge and times when the population was massacred. It is a history wrought with contrasting periods. The challenge for us is to understand the influences that shape a period in order for us to fashion a suitable approach towards developing the society.

And that is the significance of understanding the Golden Age. It is about learning the forces that determine an outcome. How did the Muslims develop into the strongest force in the known world and how did they end up as a people persecuted? Determining the Golden Age allows us to aim for our bright sparks and hopefully, move us into the quest of replicating the values and strengths that brought us there.

While the term "Golden Age" has been carried and bandied about ad nauseam, the only way we can determine an age, if we are inclined to do so, is by comparing it with other periods.

But what should be the items for comparison? Should it be the amount of intellectual debates? How do we determine, hundreds of years after a period, the number

of debates that has taken place? Does the publication of books at a particular period and its continued reference reflect the intellectualism of an age? Or is keenness to debate, intellectual or otherwise, a desired characteristic of the Islamic mind?

Or should it be the size of an empire? If so, then is military might the sole or main determinant of a nation's progress? And do we compare a nation to others in its time? That cannot be as that will mean that a nation will have multiple Golden Ages in different times. We should then compare the size of a nation in different periods.

But then, it will mean that Russia reached its Golden Age between 1945-1989. While it was the most dominant member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Big Brother of the Eastern bloc, Russian history bears testimony to far greater times where culture, the economy and the Russian civilization as a whole flourished.

Should it be wealth? Or culture? Or the piety of its rulers? Or should that be the population? How do we measure piety? If piety is immeasurable except by Allah (s.w.t.) alone, then what should be the best measurement? And to make it even more difficult, while there are some overlaps, the development of piety, culture, military, wealth and intellectualism also existed at different times in the ages of Islam.

What then is the measurement of the Golden Age? One way is to measure an age not just with itself, as different ages will have different emphasis, but to measure it against another empire. One way is to look at the Roman Empire and determine how

the Islamic empire fared in comparison. It is possible for us to utilise the pax Romana as a benchmark of our own history. But the Roman empire lasted for hundreds of years and it is impossible to pick out one era for comparison. We can choose to benchmark Rasulallah's (s.a.w.) society against any other times in Islamic history.

But that will mean that Rasulallah's (s.a.w.) period will be left out of our estimation of what constitutes a Golden Age as it is being used as a reference point. Or should that be the reason why we should use it as a benchmark, since being the best of communities, Rasulallah's (s.a.w.) generation is by default the Golden Age?

Benchmarking is not a new concept. And it is not an alien concept in Islam. Various issues in Islamic jurisprudence rely on benchmarking. For example, Islamic financial institutions use national interest rates to benchmark their own profit rates. It does not mean that they are directly tied by interest rates, but benchmarking to national rates removes arbitrary decisions as clients can have clearer expectations and the institutions are better able to determine their own costs and value of financing.

When the Reserve Bank of Australia raised interest rates recently, MCCA decided to make similar adjustments. While MCCA was not obligated to follow the adjustments, benchmarking and adjusting to the rates means that those who deal with MCCA are assured that changes are not arbitrary. MCCA's decision reflects the removal of uncertainty in its trade and provides for a clearer expectation.

Benchmarking removes uncertainty in

our understanding of ourselves and how we interact. It is with benchmarking that we are able to make comparisons. Rasulallah (s.a.w.) is the benchmark for every Muslim. He is the point of reference. Benchmarking our generation to the time of the companions provides further insights into our own conduct and ways to improve ourselves.

How did Rasulallah (s.a.w.) behave with his family? How did he behave with his companions? How did he behave with those who disagree with him? How did he behave with those who abused and persecuted him?

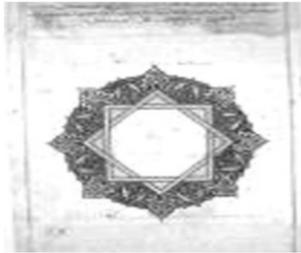
His qualities serve as our benchmark. It is only by looking at Rasulallah's (s.a.w.) conduct can we determine whether our actions and values are Islamically proper.

There has been a lot of discussion about substance and form. Some groups prescribe the value of following the visible forms of Islam. Others argue that it is the essence, the substance that is more important.

However, if we are to benchmark ourselves against Rasulallah (s.a.w.), we can come to only one conclusion. That form and substance are used to reinforce each other. Rasulallah (s.a.w.) instructed the performance of form as it impacts on the substance. And the substance, the intention, the essence, is the primary value of actions in Islam.

Benchmarking to proper indexes, whether it is the time of Rasulallah (s.a.w.) and his companions for Islamic civilizations, national rates for Islamic Financial institutions, Rasulallah (s.a.w.) for the Muslim character and the generation of the companions for our community is the way for us to understand ourselves and self reflect.

It is a mean to understanding without arbitrariness.



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6. MuslimVillage Event of the Year
7. Media Outlet of the Year Awards Process

Judging will be undertaken by an independent panel of experienced and skilled people from a range of fields from the Muslim community. The Panel's assessment of each entry will be bound by the judging criteria. The judging panel will assess each nomination according to the criteria and select the final five finalists in each category and the winners. The panel will only select the winner of the "Achievement Awards". MoH executive committee will only decide the winner for the supportive mainstream organisation award. The Judging Panel will consist of independent panel members that are not affiliated with the sponsoring bodies of the categories and at least 2 MoH executives.

Awards Criteria: Regard will be given to the nominee's achievements in the year immediately prior to the receipt of the Award, as well as their past achievements and ongoing contribution to the community and Australian society. The THREE finalists in each category will be known 1 month before the Awards night on the MoH

website. The judging panel will select the Achievement Awards and their decision is final. Winners' names will be embargoed until they are announced at the Mission of Hope Awards and Fundraiser night on Friday the 8th of July 2005. Venue: Orion Centre, Beamish St, Campsie. See website for more information about this event and conditions of nomination.

How to enter: To enter the 2005 Australian Muslim Achievement Awards, entrants must prepare a written submission, which includes the following: Curriculum Vitae or Organisations' profile (depending on category) A 100-word profile of the nominee for use in presentation events, promotions and media releases. Additional information which is believed significant, relevant and supports the nomination Completed Entry Form, attached to the front page of the submission All materials should then be sent to MoH by mail by May 21st 2005. Upon receipt of the nomination, both nominee and nominator will be advised in writing or email of the Awards presentation process. Please inform us in 100 words or more how have they contributed to the success in their roles and to their community with respect to the category you have nominated them for? How have they demonstrated excellence in their field and have contributed to the development of the Australian Muslim community? All nomination forms must be faxed to (02) 9708 0293 (if less than 7 pages) or sent to: Mission of Hope Australian Muslim Achievement Awards night PO Box 675 Lakemba, 2195. Supporting material can be sent in by post or email info@missionofhope.org.au. Note: Selection for the winner will not be based on the amount of nominations an individual candidate/organisation has, but based on a selection criteria. We hope to see you all at the awards night on July 8th at the Orion Centre, Campsie. Please visit www.missionofhope.org.au for ticket information, updates and other MoH information.

Real casualty rate of US war

By Chalmers Johnson- ZNet

Most young Americans who enlist in our all-volunteer armed forces -- roughly four out of five -- specifically choose non-combat jobs, becoming computer technicians, personnel managers, shipping clerks, truck mechanics, weather forecasters, intelligence analysts, cooks, or forklift drivers, among the many other duties that carry a low risk of contact with an enemy. They often enlist because they have failed to find similar work in the civilian economy and thus take refuge in the military's long-established system of state socialism -- steady paychecks, decent housing, medical and dental benefits, job training, and the possibility of a college education. The mother of one such recruit recently commented on her 19-year-old daughter, who will soon become an Army intelligence analyst. She was proud but also cynical: "Wealthy people don't go into the military or take risks because why should they? They already got everything handed to them."

These recruits do not expect to be shot at. Thus it was a shock to the rank-and-file last month when Iraqi guns opened up on an Army supply convoy, killing eight and taking another six prisoner, including supply clerk Jessica Lynch of Palestine, West Virginia. The Army's response has been, "You don't have to be in combat arms [branches of the military] to close with and kill the enemy." But what the Pentagon is not saying to the Private Lynches and their families is that they stand a very good chance of dying or being catastrophically disabled precisely because they chose the U.S. military as a route of social mobility.

There are serious unintended consequences to our most recent "no contact" or "painless dentistry" wars that contradict the Pentagon's claims of low casualties. The most important is the malady that goes by the name "Gulf War Syndrome," a potentially deadly medical disorder that first appeared among combat veterans of the 1990-1991 Gulf War. Just as the effects of Agent Orange during the Vietnam War

were first explained away by the Pentagon as "post-traumatic stress disorder," "combat fatigue," or "shell shock," so the Bush administration is now playing down the potential toxic side effects of the ammunition now being widely used by its armed forces. The implications are devastating, not just for America's adversaries, or civilians caught in their country-turned-battlefield, but for American forces themselves (and even possibly their future offspring).

The first Iraq War produced four classes of casualties -- killed in action, wounded in action, killed in accidents (including "friendly fire"), and injuries and illnesses that appeared only after the end of hostilities. During 1990 and 1991, some 696,778 individuals served in the Persian Gulf as elements of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. Of these 148 were killed in battle, 467 were wounded in action, and 145 were killed in accidents, producing a total of 760 casualties, quite a low number given the scale of the operations.

However, as of May 2002, the Veterans Administration (VA) reported that an additional 8,306 soldiers had died and 159,705 were injured or ill as a result of service-connected "exposures" suffered during the war. Even more alarmingly, the VA revealed that 206,861 veterans, almost a third of General Schwarzkopf's entire army, had filed claims for medical care, compensation, and pension benefits based on injuries and illnesses caused by combat in 1991. After reviewing the cases, the agency has classified 168,011 applicants as "disabled veterans." In light of these deaths and disabilities, the casualty rate for the first Gulf War is actually a staggering 29.3%.

Dr. Doug Rokke, a former Army colonel and professor of environmental science at Jacksonville University, was in charge of the military's environmental clean-up following the first Gulf War. The Pentagon

has since sacked him for criticizing NATO commanders for not adequately protecting their troops in areas where DU ammunition was used, such as Kosovo in 1999. Dr. Rokke notes that many thousands of American troops have been based in and around Kuwait since 1990, and according to his calculations, between August 1990 and May 2002, a total of 262,586 soldiers became "disabled veterans" and 10,617 have died. His numbers produce a casualty rate for the whole decade of 30.8%.

A significant probable factor in these deaths and disabilities is depleted uranium (DU) ammunition, although this is a hotly contested proposition. Some researchers, often paid for by the Pentagon, argue that depleted uranium could not possibly be the cause of these war-related maladies and that a more likely explanation is dust and debris from the blowing up of Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological weapons factories in 1991 in the wake of the first Gulf War, or perhaps a "cocktail" of particles from DU ammunition, the destruction of nerve gas bunkers, and polluted air from burning oil fields. But the evidence -- including abnormal clusters of childhood cancers and deformities in Iraq and also evidently in the areas of Kosovo where, in 1999, we used depleted-uranium weapons in our air war against the Serbians -- points primarily toward DU. Moreover, simply by insisting on using such weaponry, the Pentagon is deliberately flouting a 1996 United Nations resolution that classifies DU ammunition as an illegal weapon of mass destruction.

DU, or Uranium-238, is a waste product of power-generating nuclear reactors. It is used in projectiles like tank shells and cruise missiles because it is 1.7 times denser than lead, burns as it flies, and penetrates armor easily, but it breaks up and vaporizes on impact -- which makes it potentially very deadly. Each shell fired by an American tank includes ten pounds of DU. Such

warheads are essentially "dirty bombs," not very radioactive individually but nonetheless suspected of being capable in quantity of causing serious illnesses and birth defects.

In 1991, U.S. forces fired a staggering 944,000 DU rounds in Kuwait and Iraq. The Pentagon admits that it left behind at a bare minimum 320 metric tons of DU on the battlefield. One study of Gulf War veterans showed that their children had a higher possibility of being born with severe deformities, including missing eyes, blood infections, respiratory problems, and fused fingers. Dr. Rokke fears that because the military relied more heavily on DU munitions in the second Iraq War than in the first, postwar casualties may be even greater. When he sees TV images of unprotected soldiers and Iraqi civilians driving past burning Iraqi trucks destroyed by tank fire or inspecting buildings hit by missiles, he suspects that they are being poisoned by DU.

Young Americans being seduced into the armed forces these days are quite literally making themselves into "cannon fodder," even if they have been able to secure non-combat jobs. Before we begin to celebrate how few American casualties there were in the brief Iraq war, we might pause to consider the future. The numbers of Americans killed and maimed from Gulf War II are only beginning to be toted up. The full count will not be known for at least a decade. The fact that the U.S. high command continues to rely on such weaponry for warfare is precisely why the world needs an International Criminal Court and why the United States should be liable under its jurisdiction. Because of its potential dangers and because the alarm has been raised (even if the Pentagon refuses to acknowledge this), the use of DU ammunition should already be considered a war crime one that may also destroy the user in a painfully crippling way.

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Women's Interfaith Network



'PATHWAYS TO FRIENDSHIP'

The Women's Interfaith Network aims to bring together women from all the major religious traditions in Australia

to promote harmony, understanding and respect among the followers of various world religions. Members meet monthly in a journey of education, understanding and

mutual friendship.

The Network includes members from the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting churches, the Baha'is, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Muslims. The Muslim community is represented on the Network by Srs Zubeda Raihman, Jamila Hussain and Sarah Taouil.

On a beautiful autumn day, Thursday 14 April, the Hon. Sandra Nori MP, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation and Women kindly hosted WIN's 'Pathways to Friendship' function in the magnificent setting of Government House Sydney. Barbara Perry MP for Auburn also attended. Mrs Josie Lacey from the Jewish community, was, as always, a most able and charming Convener.

Each faith group had been invited to give a short presentation and to invite a number of guests. Among our guests for this occasion were

Sr Aziza Abdel Halim, President of the Muslim Women's National Network, Sr Silma Ihram, Principal of Noor al-Houda Islamic College, Sr Zuleyha Keskin from

Affinity Intercultural Foundation and Sr Faikah Behardien.

The event began with a very professional and colourful 'Welcome to Country' by a group of Aboriginal women, dressed in black and red, who sang and danced to welcome guests from lands near and far to their country. They were followed by singing and chanting of devotional songs by Baha'i, Buddhist, Sikh and Christian groups, and a beautiful a Capella performance by the Cantor and singers from Temple Emmanuel Woolahra. The Muslim contribution was presented by students from Noor al-Houda Islamic college at Strathfield who sang Yusuf Islam's 'Colours of Islam' in a very charming manner.

The scene was extremely colourful with Indian ladies in beautiful saris and salwar kameez, the Catholic Sudanese choir in their bright clothing and Hindu and Buddhist nuns in the orange robes. The atmosphere was one of friendship, good fellowship and co-operation, and as such was an excellent example of inter-faith principles working to promote friendship and understanding between people of different traditions.

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Importance of Volunteering



The Importance of Volunteering in our Community

In today's troubled world, one does not have to look far to see the issues plaguing humanity. War, occupation, lack of development in many countries, environmental problems, social dysfunction and homelessness. Some of these issues seem too far away for contemplation, while others are too close for comfort.

Yet on the sunny side, it is heartening to see the increasing number of people searching for ways to make a positive difference. As Ethan Hawke's character says to Julie Delpy's humanitarian ("The world is a mess!") in *Before Sunset*, "People are gonna fight back. The world might be getting better because people like you are educated and speaking out. Even the very notion of conservation, environmental issues...weren't in the vocabulary until fairly recently."

So what is happening now that has made us more aware? Is it because we are producing a media-savvy generation embracing the global Internet infosphere? Is it our instinct to not sit on the sidelines? Or are there still too many not accepting that they are able to make even a small contribution to the earth's problems? After all, while it is admirable to step into a troubled area of the world as an aid worker, or to provide skills acquired through education or work experience, this is not, realistically, for everyone.

Yet as human beings, it is important to contribute to the "housework" of this world. As Muslims, it is our duty. It is essential to be aware of the ways in which we may locally assist. For example, volunteering some of one's spare time to charitable or humanitarian organisations are beneficial and significant acts. It takes us out of our comfort zones, allows us to embrace our world with greater warmth and understanding, and especially to remember our blessings. But this is putting it simply.

At a deeper level, the benefits, without being self-serving, are to both the person helping and the one receiving that

assistance. As psychologist Hanan Dover points out, "volunteering has many unseen benefits such as building positive character, increasing one's self-esteem, as well as allowing one to use their skills and abilities to make a difference to the world around them."

Hanan Dover is an active member of the Sydney Muslim community and founder of Mission of Hope, a not-for-profit, community organisation that focuses on health and community welfare. Mission of Hope is a prime example of how one may take their professional skills and passion and use it to make a significant contribution to the community. The organisation works on the strength of its volunteers and provides a service that is sensitive to the health and community development needs of the Muslim community. Its latest initiative, the Australian Muslim Volunteer Network (AMVN), offers a pool of volunteers to assist at local functions and events. AMVN offers another opportunity for Muslims, young and old, to offer some of their time when the need arises. Considering the current flourishing state of the Australian Muslim community, such assistance is certainly needed.

We are members of a global community and locally we form part of the overall Australian community. But we feel for each other as humans. Hopefully, our local -- not just our global -- problems resonate with us. In any case, they need our attention.

"For each of us is a goal to which Allah turns one to; So compete with each other in all that is goodness. Wherever you may be, Allah shall bring you together, for Allah is the Possessor of Power over all things." (2: 148)

Your local community needs you. Contact your local Muslim organisations to find out more on how you may contribute in a voluntary capacity.

Amal Awad - Australian Muslim Volunteer Network (AMVN)

<http://www.missionofhope.org.au/addme.php>

Tariq has a point

By Irfan Yusuf



Two prominent Muslims recently graced Australian shores. Tariq Ramadan delivered lectures and moderated workshops in Sydney and Melbourne. He brought a message of Muslims needing to engage in and with the societies in which they live. He also gave us a taste of the inner aspects of faith, the *tasawwuf* (often misnamed as 'sufism'), that his grandfather (the late Imam Hasan al-Banna) so thoroughly reflected.

Months later, Anwar Ibrahim visited Australia and spoke to packed audiences in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. These included 2 public lectures specifically targeted at Muslim communities.

Anwar delivered a similar message to his Muslim audience -- that we need to engage with non-Muslims, that we need to stop pretending we are not part of the communities we live in and benefit from. Recently Dr. Ramadan has made the headlines with his claim that there should

be a moratorium on corporal punishment, stoning and the death penalty (collectively known as *hudud*) in the Islamic world. His comments have been condemned by Muslim writers and scholars, including those claiming to follow the legacy of Dr. Ramadan's grandfather. Sharia is not just about criminal justice, stoning adulterers or chopping hands and heads off. Sharia is a complex and sophisticated legal tradition encompassing a broad range of opinions from things as fundamental as how rules are derived to things more mundane as where to place your hands when praying the *salaat* or *nemaz*. *Hudud* punishments are a small portion of the corpus of sharia. But the way some of our scholars are reacting, one would think that perhaps all those News Limited columnists are right and that sharia is little more than nasty punishments. Criminal justice does not just exist in statute books or scholarly dissertations. Between crime and punishment is a whole series of steps. The person must be apprehended and charged. A decision needs to be made on bail. Then there are issues relating to court evidence and procedure. Finally, upon conviction, there must be sentencing guidelines for the judge to follow. Not every theft leads to an automatic amputation. All this requires specially trained law enforcement agencies. In the case

Continued on page 20



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Reflections on interfaith relations

Continued from page 9

and who are answerable to their Creator. Acceptance of plurality does not mean accepting the plurality of ultimate truths, nor does it preclude sharing one's faith with others and even inviting them to it. Plurality means peaceful coexistence with those who hold differing beliefs and convictions.

Prohibition of compulsion in faith: Sharing or propagating faith is not the same as compulsion in religion. The Qur'an makes it a duty on believers to communicate the message of Islam to fellow humans and to be witnesses to humankind.

[And thus We (Allah) made of you (O Muslims) a justly balanced community that you might bear witness (to the truth) to humankind and the Apostle might bear witness over you.] (Al-Baqarah 2:143)

Being witnesses for Allah includes both witnessing through righteous deeds and sharing what one believes is the truth, which is beneficial to humankind. Some communities use the term conversion to designate that later form of witnessing. The Qur'anic term for such sharing is da'wah, which means, literally, "invitation." The term itself means that the invitee has every right to accept or reject that "invitation." Compulsion, threats, bribery, deception, manipulation, and exploitation of the invitee's vulnerability (such as hunger or illness) are inconsistent with the notion of "invitation."

The Qur'an gives guidance on how to invite others to Islam. Invitation should be with wisdom and in the most gracious way.

[Invite (all humankind) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and argue with them in the most kindly manner, for, indeed, your Lord knows best as to who strays from His path, and best who are the right-guided.] (An-Nahl 16:125)

In numerous verses in the Qur'an, compulsion in religion is forbidden:

[There shall be no coercion in matters of



faith.] (Al-Baqarah 2:256)

[And so (O Prophet), exhort them; your task is only to exhort. You cannot compel them (to believe). As for one who turns away, being bent on denying the truth, him or her will God cause the greatest suffering (in the life to come). For verily, unto Us will be their return, and verily, it is for Us to call them to account.] (Al-Ghashiyah 88:21-26)

[Had your Lord so willed, all those who live on earth would surely have attained faith, will you then compel people, against their will, to believe?] (Yunus 10:99)

The Qur'an does not prescribe any punishment for rejecting the "invitation" to accept Islam.

[But if they turn away (from accepting Allah's message, then know that) We have not sent you to be their keeper. Your duty is only to convey (the message).] (Ash-Shura 42:48)

Universal mercy: The essence of Islam and its Prophet's mission is summed up in the following verse:

[And (thus, O Muhammad), We have not sent you, but as mercy to all the worlds.]

(Al-Anbiyaa' 21:107)

To remove any particularization of this mercy, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) explained that mercy is not being merciful to one's companions but merciful to all. He also explained, "He who is not merciful to others, will not be treated mercifully." It is obvious that Muslims are not the only dwellers of the earth. Hence the command to be merciful applies to all. In fact, mercy applies as well to animals and other creatures of Allah. A logical fruit of this attitude of mercy is to love humankind as persons and fellow honored creatures of Allah, while dissociating oneself from their erroneous beliefs or even rejection of Allah. This love finds its greatest form by loving good and guidance for them. This does not mean loving their wrongdoing or their rejection of faith in Allah. It is the love of their guidance and well being in this life and in the life to come.

Universal peaceful coexistence: The basic rule governing the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is that of peaceful coexistence, justice and compassion. The following two verses are key verses that embody that general rule:

[As for such (non-Muslims) who do not fight you on account of (your) faith, or drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness (also love and respect) and to deal with them with equity, for God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of (your) faith and drive you forth from your homelands or aid (others) in driving you forth. As for those from among you who turn towards them for alliance, it is they who are wrongdoers.] (Al-Mumtahanah 60:8-9)

This verse makes it a Muslim's duty to treat peacefully coexisting persons with equity (qist) and berr. The term berr and its

derivatives are the same expressions used in the Qur'an and Hadith to refer to one's relationship with his or her parents. Such a relationship is more than kindness, since it includes also love and respect. Many English translations of the Qur'an have translated this Qur'anic term as kindness, a translation that falls short of the richer meaning of the original Arabic term. To ameliorate this problem, the bracketed statement (also love and respect) was added above. The term qist has been translated as "justice." Justice, however, is closest to another Arabic word 'adl. This word, however, refers to giving the other his or her rights, no less and no more. Other scholars argue that the Qur'anic term qist means "going beyond justice by giving more than what is due to others."

Peaceful dialogue, especially with the People of the Book: All of the above nine principles apply to all non-Muslims. The Qur'an accords the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) a special position. The very term to designate them distinguishes them from others such as idolatrous Arabs (Al-Bayyinah 98:1). It is a complimentary title as it acknowledges that, like Muslims, their faiths are based on revealed books or scriptures. In its family and dietary laws, the Qur'an gives a special consideration to the People of the Book. For example, a Muslim male may marry a believing Jewish or Christian woman (Al-Ma'idah 5:5). The Qur'an exhorts Muslims to engage in peaceful dialogue with Jews and Christians:

[Say (O Muslims), O People of the Book! Come to a common term which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to none beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lord beside Allah, and if they turn away, then say: bear witness that we submit ourselves unto Him.] (Aal 'Imran 3:64)

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Mammoth Mosque of the Month



This issue's Mosque of the month is the largest in the South East Asia. With a capacity of 100000 people Jakarta's Istiqlal Mosque is huge. The mosque has five levels representing the five daily prayers. There are 12 massive pillars which represent the months of the Islamic calendar, and the minaret is 6666 cm high representing the verses in the Holy Quran. The mosque was designed in the 50's by a Christian Indonesian architect, who surreptitiously designed rows of crosses at the very top of the interior walls.



Tariq Ramadan has a point continued from page 18



of Anwar, the law enforcement agencies were specially trained to deliver him a black eye and serious injuries that will affect him for life. He was lucky. Had he been Mamdouh Habib (the Australian citizen recently released from detention at Guantanamo Bay), he may have been shipped to Egypt where the law enforcement would have been less gentle. And imagine if hudud punishments were applied to Anwar after being wrongly convicted of sodomy. We would not have been listening to him some weeks back. All that we could have seen of him would have been a gravestone with his name engraved onto it. Also required are qualified and independent judges. I have relatives in Pakistan who are lawyers. They tell me how wonderfully independent judges there are – to the highest bidder. The judge initially hearing Anwar's case was also totally independent in doing the

bidding of the government. Before pro-Ikhwan writers attack Dr. Ramadan over his proposal, they should provide one example of a Muslim country where the rule of law is supreme, where judges are qualified to understand and justly enforce hudud and where police and other law enforcement agencies are relatively corruption-free. Sharia may be (and I believe is) a divinely-inspired legal system. But in the hands of the wrong people, it's criminal punishments can become part of the devil's handiwork. The late Syed Maududi, a chief proponent of the introduction of sharia into Pakistani law, was also strongly opposed to the introduction of hudud until the moral, social and educational conditions were right. No point chopping hands for theft when the entire economy is based on a reverse Robin Hood system – stealing from the poor majority to give to the rich minority. And what a nightmare it would be if the proponents of sharia turn out to be the ones behind the creation

of a system in which sharia lost all credibility in the eyes of the people it was meant to guide and save. Imagine an international Muslim community filled with millions of Amina Lawals. Caliph Umar had the right idea. He suspended the punishment for theft during times of severe poverty arising from a famine. When people are forced to steal just to survive, amputating their limbs hardly seems just. When Muslim scholars take absurd positions and oppose anything that resembles compromising (a portion of) sharia, they undermine their own credibility. For many, it also involves them speaking and judging in areas beyond their expertise. The trial judge who sentenced Amina Lawal on the basis of a minority (and largely discredited) position within the Maliki school of law was a classic example of this. These scholars also make it hard for other scholars, writers, professionals, business people and other ordinary Muslims who are busy trying to engage with their fellow humans. It is hard

to tell someone that your intentions are peaceful when your religious scholars are intent on imposing criminal sanctions seemingly based on mindless violence. So much being able to fruitfully engage with non-Muslims! Law does not exist in a social vacuum. Let's get our Muslim societies in order before we start drastically increasing the severity of our criminal punishments. Let's ensure we have in each Muslim country an independent judiciary, a corruption-free police force, court officials who do not take bribes, politicians who feel the full force of the law and social conditions which mitigate against theft, murder and every other crime the subject of hudud. Tariq Ramadan has a point. And Anwar Ibrahim is living proof that no Muslim country is ready for hudud. Let the Muslim country bound by the rule of law cast the first stone.

Irfan Yusuf, an Australian industrial and employment lawyer, is a freelance writer.

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