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We stand for:

- *Inter-faith and inter-civilisational dialogue*
- *Respect for the human race and rights*
- *Cooperation for the good of people*
- *Moderation*
- *Modernity*
- *High standards of spirituality*

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Lessons for human existence from Ramadan

As the days and nights of the holy get by, the feelings of achievement, self-satisfaction and peace intensify among those performing the fast. The rhythm of life gradually settles down and the broken daily routine ceases to be an irritant. The new cycle of life; eating and drinking only at night replaces the normal one. After the end of Ramadan, many feel sad about going back to the old habits after they have gained affinity towards the feeling of hunger. Ramadan thus provides the people with strong will to tolerate hunger and other temptations. No other discipline can achieve such results within such a short time. Here the change is pluralistic. The whole community takes part in the process which makes it easier to grasp and emulate. It also emphasizes how the individual contributes to the social change that becomes a phenomenon to transcend individualism. The social care that is often embraced by the individuals and groups during the month is phenomenal. Even in the Western capitals the recent years have witnessed unprecedented awareness among the Muslim communities to care for the homeless, the dispossessed and the victims of natural disasters. Last year the Grenfell fire brought out the human goodness of Muslims when they opened their mosques to lodge the victims, fed and clothed them. While the sour memory of that fateful night in Ramadan causes agony and sorrow, it also gives hope in the quality of mankind.

One prominent feature of the fasting during the month of Ramadan is the realization of the unity of the Muslim Ummah (community). Scholars often highlight this oneness with arguments relating to the shared religious practices, the

holy text of the Quran, the one prophet etc. But Ramadan shows the world that quarter of the world's population are definitely distinct in their way of life, perception and adaptation to emerging circumstances. When one and a half billion people suddenly change the routines of their daily lives and adopt new ways of living including diet habits, sleeping times and ways of social interaction then there is certainly a mode of unity among that community of people. What does this mean? There are powers in this world which consistently act against what brings the people together for fear of the impact of their collective force. Within the Muslim world these powers aim at weakening the Ummah by ensuring its fragmentation along sectarian fault lines. The media of these powers promote divisive ideologies to facilitate the fragmentation. Ramadan provides a solid testimony to the undisputable oneness of the Muslim Ummah despite the natural differences of opinion within its ranks and files. No person with clear vision can miss this fact when all Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan.

Ramadan is a month of giving, patience, tolerance and awareness. It is a time when evil is abandoned by those who are fasting. In a society where the knife culture has led to the unnecessary loss of young lives there is a need to promote the culture of fasting which helps to cultivate human feelings, love of the neighbor, feeding the hungry, sheltering the destitute and helping the poor. This is necessary if the present culture of death is to be eradicated. While it is necessary to uphold the rule of law and attend to the system of justice, real practical education is necessary to pre-empt evil tendencies which are fallouts of excessive materialism, unbalanced distribution of wealth and dysfunctional tax and social welfare systems. Ramadan is an opportunity to go back to basics for the good of humanity. It is not about promoting Islam but the necessary human values that enhance the quality of life. This is a call to Muslims to embrace the values enshrined in fasting, adopt principles of good citizenship and advocated culture of love, respect and giving. The month of Ramadan is an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the individual and the society. Those are some of the values of Ramadan, the month of fasting.



Contemplating the Quran



On Thursday 14th May, the weekly Abrar meeting was addressed by Dr Sadiq Al Rikabi who talked on: How can Quran become guide in our lives. He said the Quran has several aims; to guide people so that they do not go astray, a dictionary of rules on worship and morality, a reference for right and wrong. This is a sign of God's mercy towards mankind. Before the creation of mankind God's will determined that there should be a diving guide for the people. The individuals is revived by reciting Quran. But not every reader of Quran feels that. We do not practice its guidance in our lives. This is due to several factors; First; some see that Quran is a mere historic text which does not suit our daily lives. Such people do not appreciate that the Quran is for the past, future and present lives. This is the counter the negative aspects of personal and social tragedies. Second; some think that the Quran is God's speech revealed onto Mohammad and addresses him only. But the reality is that it was revealed onto Mohammad so that he may inform us of it. Quran is thus a book for us and not for the prophet. Third; Some do not view the Quran as sacred, not realizing that it would become more sacred if it is turned into a book of life. We must make use of its advice, wisdom and recommendations. Fourth, some do not have full faith in the ability of the Quran to solve our problems. They believe this is fable and imaginations. This is due to the lack of faith itself. Despite holding the Quran at high place, but we do not take it as a way of life. In other place, it says that God would always provide a way out of problems.

How to make Quran a guide in your life? First we have to believe that the Quran is the speech of God which he has revealed to Mohammed. When we listen to the Quran we are listening to God. It is God's speech to us without mediation. Second the real sighting is not in the eyes but in the heart. Many people recite Quran without implementing its edicts. Third when reciting Quran it is recommended we have to curse and distance ourselves from evil. Four; Among the biggest God's bounties is to speak to us and made us understand it. Fifth, God has prescribed ways to deal with our daily lives. When someone attacks us God commands us to forgive him. It also tells us how to give respect to God through the story of Sulaiman with the ants. He spoke in the ants language and removed his army away from the ants. He tells us how to deal with the kings using soft language. Also we are

taught the significance of patience in our lives and how not to give in to circumstances but attempt always to pursue our goals.

Fasting and peace

The annual Ramadan Experience programme was held on Tuesday 22nd May at Abrar. It was sponsored by The Open Discussion and The Gulf Cultural Club. The topic was "Fasting as a catalyst for personal and world's peace." It was addressed by three speakers; Luqman Ali, Marigold Bentley and Sheikh Isa Jahangir.

Luqman Ali said: Every Ramadan I am coming home. I am coming back to where I began. The reflections are becoming deeper, more profound, more transformative and more completing of my own personal journey in this world and on my return to the one. I can best describe my talk as a series of reflections but I want to end those reflections on the relationship between fasting and imagination because most of my work evolves round the imagination. When I give talks on fasting I refer to my favourite hadith the hadith al mi'raj which is a narration that took place during the Prophet's ascension. There was a conversation described as having taken place between the Prophet and Allah. What is the benefit of fasting? What does fasting bequeath? Allah said fasting bequeaths wisdom and wisdom bequeaths knowledge of Allah specifically. Knowledge of Allah bequeaths certainly. He went on to describe the spiritual advantages of fasting and how it leads to inner and outer peace.

Marigold Bentley: The challenge before me is try and speak to this particular topic from the point of view of us as a small dissenting faith. I have looked very carefully at our own traditions in order to try and speak at this very intense time as it is because we have no tradition of fasting. What are our commonalities, what are our differences, what can we really talk about together given this huge spread of ideas and huge spread of faithful commitment that we have just heard about from Lukman which has been absolutely fascinating to me. I have had to look into Quaker history and for those of you who don't know Quakers in Britain started during the civil war here in England and it was a time of enormous turbulence and the first time the people read the bible for themselves and interpreted it for themselves. So those Quakers who challenged the state on the many issues that were around at the time were enormously persecuted for making those challenges so that must have meant they had a very profound and very deep

commitment. Fifteen thousand Quakers were jailed by 1689. So Quakers had only been around 20 years by that time. They were that committed that many of them sacrificed their lives for their belief.

Sheikh Isa Jahangir emphasized the concept of peace in Islam. He recited the Quranic verse: "All of you collectively enter into peace." When it comes to peace, being at peace, making peace and spreading peace then God says "enter the peacefulness." Don't follow the devil who is the enemy, the source of animosity and conflict. The big problem with devil is arrogance (istekbar). He was arrogant. He was terribly self centered and selfish, so he refused to obey the command of Allah and respect for Allah.

Attachment to Quran

The first Thursday in Ramadan (17th May) was welcomed by Abrar at its weekly meeting with a lecture on contemplating the Quran. It was delivered by Mr Luqman Al Damad who is a specialist in the holy Quran. There is fear of the holy book; that it is too sacred, too difficult to comprehend. The Prophet will complain to God Almighty that his people have sidelined the Quran. Unfortunately we live the culture that does not allow freed contemplation and understanding of the text and that whoever does that will go to hell. Quran is being alienated from our lives and would only be present at funeral services. Another problem is the claim that only members of the prophet's household may interpret the Quran and that we can understand it only through narrations. This is based on the understanding that the Thaqalayn narrations implies that only Ahlul Bayt are equipped to interpret the Quran. The prophet prescribed a role for Ahlul Bayt and that it is like the teacher who gives the theory and solves some examples. The second point is proving the authenticity of the Quran. Proving its historic advent may be easy but to prove its divinity is something else. The only way to prove its authenticity is by proving its successive and multiple narrators. If this fails then it fails. The Quran needs the prophet to prove its existence. But the prophet needs the Quran to prove his prophethood. But the prophet is not in need of it. We cannot say that Quran proves the prophethood, and then ask the prophet to prove the Quran.



Israelis barred from entry into Indonesia after Gaza massacre



Israeli Foreign Ministry Spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon declared on Wednesday that Indonesian government has prohibited the entrance of Israeli citizens to Indonesia.

Emmanuel Nahshon Israeli Foreign Ministry Spokesman said that Indonesia has prohibited the entrance of Israeli citizens to this country after the recent events in Palestine.

The Israeli official added that the Indonesian government has put into practice this decision since last week.

The Indonesian government has described the suppression of Palestinians against US embassy move as savage and cruel and has categorically condemned the crackdowns.

Nahshon asserted that Israel will do its best to talk Indonesian government out of this decision.

On the day of opening US embassy in Jerusalem al-Quds, Israeli snipers killed 65 Palestinians and injured more than 3000 others who were rallying against the move.

Equating Islam to terrorism "foolish": Pope



Pope Francis stated that equating Islam to terrorism is "foolish." "It might be coming out of many people's mouths, but this equation is a lie and it is foolish," Francis said in an interview on Thursday published by Italian local newspaper L'Eco di Bergamo, according to ANSA news agency. "The most important role (of religions) is that of promoting a culture of encounter, together in the promotion of true education for responsible behavior that takes care of creation."

Muslim community hosts open iftar for British public

The Ramadan Tent Project (RTP) held its annual Open Iftar event Wednesday which offered members of the British public a free warm meal as well as a



chance to converse with Muslims and non-Muslims from all walks of life.

The project's founder, Omar Salha, kicked off the event by thanking the guests. "It is a real pleasure to have you all here with us tonight. It is also an honor to host such an event, one that is able to bring us all together in this holy month of Ramadan."

Attending the event was Harun Khan, secretary general of the Muslim Council of Britain.

"It is my first time here at RTP, and I have heard many wonderful stories. They are doing great work. It is a real opportunity for me to be here and to join you guys for iftar tonight. I really hope you enjoy it," he said.

The Ramadan Tent Project, founded in the UK in 2013, is a social enterprise dedicated to serving the youth and wider community through creating spaces of spirituality, dialogue and empowerment, according to a statement on its website.

Erdogan: Turkey not to give up on Jerusalem



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday expressed Turkey's resolve to not give up on Jerusalem.

"We are determined to not give up on our rights on Jerusalem. We will never leave our first qiblah

[direction towards which Muslims pray] to the mercy of a state which feeds on blood, tears, and occupation for decades," Erdogan said during an iftar (fast-breaking) dinner with ambassadors in capital Ankara.

"We will continue our fight until Jerusalem becomes home of peace, tranquility, and dignity for all three monotheistic religions," he said.

About the US move to shift its embassy to Jerusalem, the president said the hands of the US are "covered with the blood of Palestinian children."

US President Donald Trump sparked an international outcry last December when he unilaterally recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and vowed to relocate Washington's embassy to the city.

The embassy was officially relocated last Monday, prompting thousands of Palestinians to stage demonstrations near the security fence separating Gaza from Israel.

Scores of Palestinians were martyred -- and hundreds more injured -- when Israeli troops responded to the demonstrations with heavy gunfire.

"The American administration has no longer the right to talk on human rights, democracy and peace anymore," he added. Referring to current regional tensions, Erdogan pointed out diplomacy as a means of solving crises has been eroding.

Mahathir's priority is to revive Malaysia, make it respectable

Malaysia's Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said on Monday that the task of the new administration would be to revive the country and make it respected again throughout the world.

He said it was a challenge to bring back good governance and successful development so that the country was once again recognized as a self-sustaining nation, Bernama news agency reported.

"We must be aware that our country is not accorded the respect it once enjoyed. I am very disappointed (now) because at one time we were known as the best administration among the Commonwealth countries as we carried out tasks well and implemented successful programs and plans. But, today, we find that this country is no longer respected, and the administrators are no longer held in high regard," he said when addressing staff of the Prime Minister's Department at Dataran Putra here.

Dr Mahathir also reminded the staff on the separation of powers in a democratic system, namely the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary, as a form of 'check and balance' to restore the country's honor. "This separation (of powers) is very important. If there is no check and balance like this, it will lead to undesirable consequences which cannot be reprimanded, prevented or objected to. This is what we have to remember. Administrators are the people with the will to carry out tasks to develop the country," he said adding administrators must serve with excellence and

not be distracted by other reasons. This is very important, and I am convinced that you (the administrative staff) all know that we as administrators must adhere to our country's system of democracy.



Pakistan's special foods for holy Ramadan



Like other Muslim countries of the world, Ramadan in Pakistan is in full swing and people along with fasting and prayers also prepare special foods during the holy month. During this period, Muslims keep fast and abstain from food, drink, and other certain activities during daylight hours.

In Pakistan, almost everybody stops to rejoice for a few minutes, following the iftar and azan, the call to prayer and the time to break the day long fasts.

Preparations for iftar commence hours before at roadside stalls. As the iftar time draws near, the evening is lit up with stalls selling savory treats, mostly traditional Pakistani foods, especially prepared in the month of Ramadan.

In Pakistan iftar or the fast break is usually heavy, consisting mainly of traditional samosas, pakora and namak para, besides the dates and water. Other items such as roasted meat, chicken rolls, Shami Kebabs, and fruit salads are also very common. Pakora is a fried snack. Originally from the Indian subcontinent, it is a popular snack across the Indian subcontinent, especially in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. If there is no pakora in iftari time, then it is not a complete iftari.

Samosa is a fried or baked dish with a savory filling, such as spiced potatoes, onions, peas, lentils, macaroni, noodles, cheese, minced lamb or minced beef.

Fruit salad is another dish prepared for Iftari. It consists of various kinds of fruit, sometimes served in a liquid, either in their own juices or syrup.

Dahi Bara is a popular snack in Pakistan. It is prepared by soaking Baras (fried flour balls) in thick yogurt. A combination of coriander and other spices are often used as garnish.

Chana chaat or Chick pea salad is one of most-common iftar things in Pakistani culture. It also consists of potatoes, coriander and other spices.

Other important foods for Iftar in Pakistan are Kachori and jalebi.

For sehri times khajla and pheni are prepared. Eaten with milk at the start of fast on sehri, both khajla and pheni are considered to give extra energy while being light on digestion. During the month, special and traditional drinks are also prepared. They can be sweet or salty. There are many other dishes which are prepared in different parts of Pakistan and vary from area to area.

Hardline Danish minister: Ramadan 'dangerous for society'

A Danish minister known for her strong anti-immigration views on Monday called for Muslims to take time off work during the fasting period of Ramadan, saying the practice is "dangerous for all of us."

The comments from Immigration and Integration Minister Inger Stojberg, who is a member of the center-right Liberal Party, come after the holy fasting month of Ramadan began last week.

"I want to call on Muslims to take leave from work during the month of Ramadan to avoid negative consequences for the rest of Danish society," Stojberg wrote in a column for the BT tabloid. "I wonder if a religious order commanding observance to a 1,400-year-old pillar of Islam is compatible with the society and labor market that we have in Denmark in 2018." She also said she feared the fasting could affect "safety and productivity," giving an example of bus drivers who have "neither had a drink nor eaten for more than 10 hours."

"This can be dangerous for all of us," she said.

Stojberg previously stoked controversy last year when she posted to Facebook a photo of her smiling and holding a cake to celebrate Denmark's 50th measure for toughening immigration laws.

One of the strongest measures came into force in 2016, allowing police to seize valuables from refugees, although the government's guidelines exempted wedding and engagement rings after critics likened the plans to the confiscation of gold from Jews by the Nazis during World War II.

Over the last 15 years, the country has tightened its immigration policies, insisting that migrants must learn the country's customs and language in order to adapt to the labor market.



Labour Party leader greets Muslims on Ramadan

Jeremy Bernard Corbyn, leader of the British Opposition Labour Party, congratulated all Muslims around the world on the holy month of Ramadan, according to media reports.

In a video message, Corbyn said: "Ramadan is a time



for Muslims to renew their faith and strengthen their resolve to do better for themselves and their communities. But it is also a time of reflection."

"We reflect on the horror of rising Islamophobia and remember that is always stronger when we work together." I know many mosques will again be opening their doors to look after homeless and hungry people, as they do every year. We all have something to learn from Ramadan, he added."

I hope everyone will come together with members of the Muslim community at this special time, to join in the festivities. Ramadan Mubarak and peace be unto you all," Corbyn concluded.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar which commemorates the first revelation of the Qur'an to Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him).

Lasting dawn to sunset for a period of 29-30 days, Muslims abstain from eating and drinking during sunlight hours.

The fast is broken by meals named Suhur and Iftar. Suhur before the sun comes up, and Iftar after it has set. Sunrise can be as early as 4:40 am in the later stages of Ramadan, with the Suhur meal happening around 2:30 am.

The Iftar is more of a community affair, with many gathering to break the fast together, as late as 9:40 pm towards the end of the month.

A typical Iftar meal varies around the world; however, traditionally it is broken with dates and juice, milk or water as it is believed the Prophet ate three dates when he broke his fast.

Prayer, Suhur and Iftar times can vary throughout the month based on when the sun rises and sets, and where you are in the country.

Good deeds are also a big part of Ramadan, with more prayers, charity work and studying the Qur'an thought to increase spiritual reward or thawab during this time.

The timing of Ramadan changes each year as the Islamic calendar is based on lunar cycles, so it is pushed back by 11 days each year.

Turkey's Muslim-friendly holidays find a modest place in the sun

Turkey's \$26 billion tourism industry has been battered by security fears and political disputes in recent years but one corner of the market is quietly growing - beach holidays for conservative Muslims.

Dozens of hotels and resorts on Turkey's shores, featuring separate pools and beaches for men and women to meet religious strictures on modesty, are attracting families from Turkey, the Middle East and Muslim communities in the West.

While still only accounting for a small fraction of tourists, the market for "halal", or Islamic-compliant, holidays has shrugged off the turmoil and looks set for more growth.

"In the last couple of years there was a boycott of Turkey as a tourism destination but we have seen halal-friendly tourism booming throughout this period," said Ufuk Secgin of halalbooking.com, which promotes international Islamic holidays.

"Halal conscious travellers are more resilient. They are not easily scared by headlines," Secgin said, speaking over loud pop music at a men-only pool and water slides in Elvin Deluxe resort.

The total number of tourist arrivals in Turkey dropped by a quarter to a 10-year low in 2016, hit by a failed coup, a wave of bomb attacks and a dispute with Moscow which kept millions of Russians away. It bounced back last year and the government expects 40 million visitors this year.

Secgin's company brought 12,000 tourists in 2015, almost doubling that number in each of the next two years despite turbulence in Turkey. This year it expects 70,000 to come to visit country whose president, Tayyip Erdogan, is a pious Muslim who has brought religion back into mainstream public life.

Only 60 or so hotels and resorts offer halal-friendly breaks, out of many thousands of hotels across Turkey, but a report in November said Turkey has jumped four places to the third most popular destination for Islamic holidays, behind the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia.

In a sign of the popularity of the halal hotels, they were all fully booked in Turkey last year for the Eid al-Fitr holiday which marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, unlike traditional hotels, according to the State of Global Islamic Economy Report prepared by Thomson Reuters and Dinar Standard.

"Noting the consumer demand at the country's 60 halal hotels, Turkish hoteliers have started to diversify away from conventional tourism by focusing on this emerging segment."

SUN, SEA, SINGLE-SEX

In Alanya, a Mediterranean resort known for its wide sandy beaches, halal hotels offer a Muslim prayer rug in every room, pools and beaches separately designated for men and women, and mixed areas of

families. Food at the buffet meals is all halal, and alcohol is not served.

At the Wome Deluxe hotel, women-only pools with female security guards and spa staff are shielded from outside view by large panels. Guests can only enter after handing in phones and cameras.



"A couple of years ago, 80-90 percent of our guests were from Turkey. Currently more than 60 percent of our guests are foreign Muslims," said general manager Yusuf Gerecker.

Many of those foreign guests are Muslims from European countries, who say that the rise of right-wing and anti-immigrant sentiment has made them want to take holidays elsewhere. Moves by municipal authorities in France to ban the body-covering burkini swimwear also made them uncomfortable.

"There are prohibited activities for Muslim women in France, we can't go to beaches or swimming pools," Rihab Hassaine said, relaxing beside the covered women-only pool with her friends.

"It is not possible to find this kind of holiday with a Muslim concept over there," Hassaine, from France, said sipping her soda in a bikini at a women's only pool in southern tourist destination of Alanya.

Yavuz Tanriverdi, born and raised in Germany, playing with his children on a mixed beach in Alanya said he came to Turkey because he wanted to fit in.

"My wife wears a burqa covered bikini, for the people here it's completely normal, in Germany it wouldn't be that way," the 36-year-old father said. "Everyone looks at you as if you don't belong."

Palestinian population grows nine times since Nakba

Despite the displacement of more than 800,000 Palestinians in 1948 and more than 200,000 Palestinians to Jordan and other countries after the 1967 war, the 2017 population, housing and establishments census showed that the Palestinian population in the State of Palestine at the end of 2017 was recorded as 4.8 million, both in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in addition to 1.56 million in the occupied territories in 1948.

The demographic statistics reveal that the Palestinian population has doubled nine times since the Nakba, known as "The Catastrophe," which refers to the process of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population, including killings, systematic displacement of the population from their land and homes, etc.

The population of Palestine in 1914 was around 690,000, of whom only 8 percent were Jewish. In 1948, the number of Palestinians exceeded 2 million, 31.5 percent of them were Jewish. The number of Jewish doubled more than six times during this period. Between 1932 and 1939, the largest number of Jewish immigrants to Palestine reached 225,000 people. Between 1940 and 1947, more than 93,000 Jews poured into Palestine. Palestine received

around 318,000 Jews between 1932 and 1947 and 540,000 from 1948 to 1975.

In Jerusalem (Al-Quds) Governorate, Palestinians count around 435,000 people, according to the census of 2017 results, of which 64.6 percent (281,000 people) live in those parts of Jerusalem, which were annexed by Israeli Occupation in 1967. These data showed that the Palestinians represent 49.4 percent of the population of historic Palestine.

It is worthy to mention that the number of Palestinians in the world reached around 13 million people by the end of 2017. This means that the number of Palestinians in the world has doubled more than nine times since the events of the Nakba in 1948.

The Nakba resulted in the displacement of 800,000 out of the 1.4 million Palestinians who

lived in historical Palestine in 1948 in 1,300 villages and towns. The majority of the displaced Palestinians ended up in neighboring Arab countries, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and other countries around the world. Furthermore, thousands of Palestinians who stayed in the area controlled by the Israeli occupation in 1948 - were driven out of their homes and lands, seized by the Occupation Power.



French Muslim student Maryam Pougetoux hits back over headscarf

Pougetoux received abuse on social media after appearing on TV while wearing her headscarf

A French student union leader who has been accused by ministers of using her headscarf for political gain has hit back, calling the claims "pathetic".

France's interior minister has personally criticised Maryam Pougetoux, who is Muslim, for being interviewed while wearing her headscarf.

"It's my faith," the student told BuzzFeed News, adding: "[My hijab] has no political function."

Ms Pougetoux, 19, is the president of the student union at Paris's Sorbonne.

She appeared in a documentary talking about student protests against the French president's educational reforms while wearing a hijab, or Muslim headscarf.

The French Equality Minister Marlene Schiappa said it was a "form of promotion of political Islam", adding that the students' union Unef "should tell us what values it wants to promote, clearly and coherently".

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Gérard Colombe said Ms Pougetoux's appearance in a hijab was a "provocation" that he found "shocking".

Wearing the Muslim headscarf was banned in French schools and some other public buildings in 2004 but it remains legal in universities.

Islamic veil across Europe

'Burkini' ban: What do Muslim women think?

'Hate messages'

In the BuzzFeed interview, Ms Pougetoux said (in French) the comments from politicians following her appearance on television were "pretty bad".

"I did not expect it to go up so high that it's almost a state affair. It is rather pathetic for a minister of the interior to make such remarks," she said.

Students began demonstrating in March over plans to give public universities the power to set admission criteria for basic degree courses for the first time. This is in contrast to the present policy which guarantees graduates a place at a public university.

Ms Pougetoux has also been the target of abuse on social media and said she had received "hate messages" after her phone number was shared online.

She told BuzzFeed she felt "fear" and that she had to be "careful" in public "because I did not know what could happen".

The student union has said that Ms Pougetoux is a victim of "racist, sexist and Islamophobic hatred".

France and the Muslim headscarf

A ban on Muslim headscarves and other "conspicuous" religious symbols at state schools in France was introduced in 2004.

It received overwhelming political and public support in a country where the separation of state and religion is enshrined in

law.

What's the difference between a hijab, niqab and burka?

In 2011, France became the first European country to ban the full-face Islamic veil in public places, while alternatives



such as hijabs, which cover the head and hair, remained legal.

Under the ban no woman, French or foreign, is able to leave their home with their face hidden behind a veil without running the risk of a fine.

Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, whose administration introduced the ban, said veils oppress women and were "not welcome" in France.

France has about five million Muslims - the largest Muslim minority in Western Europe - but it is thought only about 2,000 women wear the full-face veil.



Muslim Woman: Hindu college disregarded Nafisah's human right

The suggestion that Nafisah Nakhid should have had to remove her hijab to enter the Lakshmi Girls' Hindu School is inflammatory and disregards her fundamental human right as a Muslim woman.

That's the position taken by the National Muslim Women's Organisation (NMWO) which has spoken out against what it describes as a denial of Nakhid's constitutional right as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

"It is enshrined in the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago, the freedom to uphold the beliefs and practices of ones religion without discrimination," the organisation noted.

Nakhid was refused entry into the Lakshmi Girls' Hindu School where she was assigned an OJT. The basis for the refusal of her entry onto the compound was the wearing of her religious head covering.

"In Islam, wearing the hijab is in guidance given within the Quran and a practice Sister Nafisah upholds since age nine.

The suggestion made to her to "remove the covering" on the compound of Lakshmi Girls' Hindu College is inflammatory and disregards her fundamental human right as a Muslim Sister," the NMWO said.

"It is unacceptable that such demands were made and incredibly disheartening that this

experience took place within the month of Ramadhan where religious practices of Muslims are often amplified," the group added.

Offering support to the young woman, the organisation said the circumstances have "reopened widespread national dialogue on the freedom to uphold the beliefs and practices of ones religion without fear and bigotry."

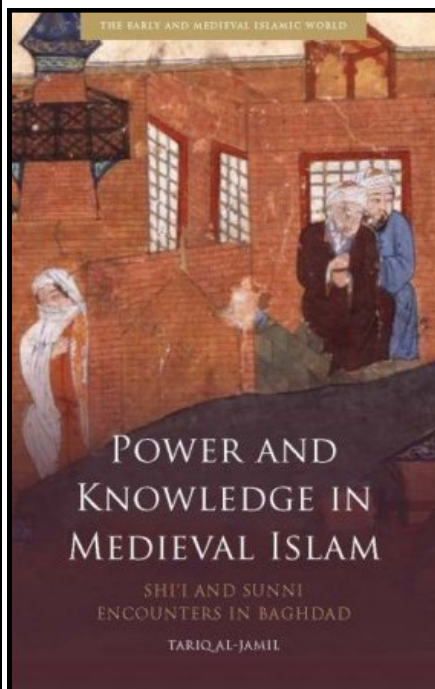
The group added that it stands with all right-thinking citizens who are protected under the rights that are enshrined in the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, internationally regarded as countries that place significant importance to diversity and inclusion, and adhere to the watchwords of: Discipline, Tolerance and Production, where "Every creed and race finds an equal place."



Power and Knowledge in Medieval Islam: Shi'i and Sunni Encounters in Baghdad

Tariq Al-Jamil

During the period of Mongol occupation from 1258-1386, Baghdad was a site of intense intellectual debate and dialogue between Shi'i and Sunni communities. In this long-established centre of learning in the Islamic world, scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya and the influential Imami Shi'i scholar Allamah al-Hilli participated extensively in the



transmission of knowledge across sectarian lines, as both students and teachers. Tariq al-Jamil here contextualises the social and political climate of Iraq during this time, examining the dynamic and complex nature of Shi'i-Sunni relations and their competition for authority and legitimacy. This significant new history provides a challenge to contemporary discourses - both scholarly and in the popular media - that tend to falsely attribute the current political conflict in Iraq to pre-modern Shi'i-Sunni relations in the region. Instead, al-Jamil articulates a framework for understanding the negotiation of boundaries between Shi'i-Sunni religious communities, broadening the consensus of critical historical knowledge concerning what it meant to be Shi'i or Sunni.

A well researched and thoughtful book... Al-Jamil's provocative study makes it clear that we can no longer understand the history of the transmission of knowledge in Medieval Islam within an exclusionary framework in which Shi'i are absent or marginalized. The complexity of Tariq al-Jamil's presentation of the interaction between Shi'i and Sunni scholars in medieval Baghdad will provoke new discussions in our field. --Shaun E. Marmon, Associate Professor, Department of Religion, Princeton University.

A serious new contribution to our histor

ical understanding of a decisive period and controversial topic with important contemporary political and cultural ramifications, since the underlying polemics between extreme Hanbali perspectives (represented then and now primarily by the key figure of Ibn Taymiyya) and learned clerical forms of Imami (Twelver) Shi'ism has currently taken on often violent public ramifications-rooted in Arab-Iranian struggles for regional and even global political influence- that are today considerably visible and widespread in the Muslim world.. a solid, original work of social and intellectual history focusing on a key turning point (the post-Mongol, pre-Ottoman period) in Middle Eastern culture and history that was to be marked by the rapid expansion and development of Islam as a world religion... a highly readable work. --James W. Morris, Professor of Islamic Studies, Boston College

Tariq al-Jamil is Associate Professor of Religion and Islamic Studies at Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania. His research focuses on Shi'ism and intercommunal violence, religious dissimulation, the transmission of knowledge in medieval Islam, and gender, sexuality, and the body in Islamic law and social practice. Al-Jamil received his BA from Oberlin College, MTS from Harvard University, and MA and PhD from Princeton University.

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Hamas Contained The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Re-

Bay Tareq Baconi

Hamas rules Gaza and the lives of the two million Palestinians who live there. Demonized in media and policy debates, various accusations and critical assumptions have been used to justify extreme military action against Hamas. The reality of Hamas is, of course, far more complex. Neither a democratic political party nor a terrorist group, Hamas is a multifaceted liberation organization, one rooted in the nationalist claims of the Palestinian people.

Hamas Contained offers the first history of the group on its own terms. Drawing on interviews with organization leaders, as well as publications from the group, Tareq Baconi maps Hamas's thirty-year transition from fringe military resistance towards governance. He breaks new ground in questioning the conventional understanding of Hamas and shows how the movement's ideology ultimately threatens the Palestinian struggle and, inadvertently, its own legitimacy.

Hamas's reliance on armed struggle as a means of liberation has failed in the face of a relentless occupation designed to fragment the Palestinian people. As Baconi argues, under Israel's approach of managing rather than resolving the conflict, Hamas's demand for Palestinian sovereignty has effectively been neutralized by its containment in Gaza. This dynamic has perpetuated a deadlock characterized by its brutality—and one that has made permissible the collective punishment of millions of Palestinian civilians.

About the author

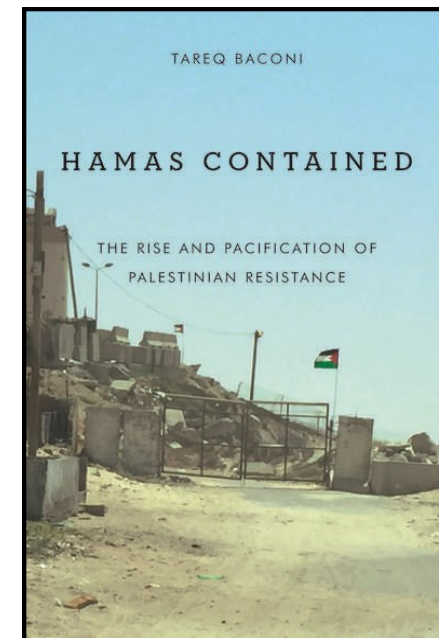
Tareq Baconi is a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University's Middle East Institute and a Visiting Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. He received his PhD from Kings College London. His writings have appeared in *The Nation*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *The Guardian*, and he has provided commentary on Middle East affairs to National Public Radio, *Democracy Now*, and *Al Jazeera*.

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Feasting and Fasting

By Kamila Gerasim

The call to prayer emanated from the minarets just down the street. These mosques built by the Ottomans roughly around 1580 stand majestic along the Bosphorus river.

I was in Istanbul on vacation for a week, and the end of my time there was the start of Ramadan. Istanbul wraps around landmasses bridged together over the sweepingly beautiful turquoise waters connecting the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. Just another face in the crowd of masses of people, I stepped off the ferry that had delivered me to the shore of the Asian side of Turkey. A few minutes' walk had me standing squarely in front of my friend's apartment where they were busily preparing for the first Iftar (the meal eaten after sunset during the Ramadan). We sat down to eat after the call to prayer had rung out and delighted ourselves with the delicious food and worthwhile conversation.

Weeks removed from this first night of Ramadan in Turkey, I am back in Bethlehem and find similar practices observed.

Conversation

I skirted across town in the mid-morning heat to the part of Bethlehem that usually bustles with taxis, students and shops. This morning, a Thursday, the streets are quieter, students are on summer holiday and shops open later and close earlier due to the fasting of Ramadan. I entered the tall building, pressed the elevator button to the fifth floor, and ascended for my meeting. I entered the office, and found the Mufti of Bethlehem on the phone as he motioned me to a seat across from another woman. I sat, and after his call ended, he greeted me, "Ramadan Kareem!" (Blessed or generous Ramadan!)

My previous encounters with the Mufti were always informative and helpful in understanding more about Islam, so upon my return from Istanbul, I asked if he would be willing to meet with me and help me to better understand Ramadan.

A Muslim woman from France sat across from me and served as both an ample resource as well as helpful translator. Her presence was unexpected at the meeting, but it was perhaps one of the best parts of it by the end. She was sweet and very gracious in helping to explain Ramadan more fully to me. She, herself, had converted to Islam just a few years prior. Her learning endeavors into her new faith struck me as genuine and thoughtful.

She and the Mufti helped to explain that Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar dedicated to fasting. The month is set aside to commemorate the first revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad by fasting.

By abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual relations from dawn until sunset, this discipline is to guide the adherent to righteousness. (Qur'an, Surah 2:183) The Mufti explained a heightened awareness of one's needs and the necessity of God.

We continued on in our discussion and after some time of chatting, the Muf-

ti went to his computer and searched YouTube for Cat Stevens (i.e. Yusuf Islam after his conversion to Islam). Yusuf Islam has several songs about Islam, and we sat and listened to several. The Mufti translated parts of the songs, and I sat smiling and tapping my foot to the beat.

Cravings

In my attempts to remain sensitive to the culture surrounding Islam, I refrain from eating or drinking out on the streets. One specific instance, however, made this difficult. I was on my way to the southern Palestinian city of Hebron when the man that sells bread and eggs was walking down the street calling for someone to buy from him. The friend I was with stopped to ask him a question, and lo and behold suddenly we were handed a bag full of bread and falafel. Insisting that we did not want the bread and falafel, he refused to let us give it back to him. We were now stuck with food that we would have to carry all day long around a more conservatively Muslim city while they all fasted. We opted to walk back to the house, drop off the food and be on our way.

Dinner Time

While the streets have become slightly quieter throughout the duration of Ramadan, the evenings after Iftar make up for any kind of lull from earlier in the day. The streets are filled with families, couples and young people all out walking, playing in the street and enjoying time with one another after a tasty meal. Traffic is backed up, and getting around becomes more time consuming due to the incessant stopping for children to cross the road and combating other cars for space in lanes. Generally, people are happier and more lively, rightly so, and that is a jovial nature to the city by nightfall.

Kindness of people goes beyond the traditional hospitality of Palestinians, and one night I was even brought a meal to my home from a Muslim friend to be sure I had eaten.

Dessert

The final touches of Ramadan are not confined to the actual sweet treats like qatayef that come around but once a year. Rather, there have been parades and celebrations throughout Palestine as Ramadan comes to a close. In a similar fashion to how Christmas is cause for special events and celebrations for Christians, the same is true of Ramadan for Muslims. Beautifully, the intersection of these faith groups allows for one another to partake and experience the richness that comes with the celebration. Iftar is a time to come together, chat and enjoy the company of one another after having spent the day fasting and, perhaps, contemplating matters of faith more often than usual.

I circle back to the first Iftar of this Ramadan, and I recall being encouraged by the blessing of community. My travel from Turkey to Palestine was a two-hour flight and a few buses and taxis away, but the linkages and connections that span across time and history bring us to the table yet again in a way that allows us to share in life and community together.

185. RAMADHAN IS THE (MONTH) IN WHICH WAS SENT DOWN THE QUR'AN, AS A GUIDE TO MANKIND, ALSO CLEAR (SIGNS) FOR GUIDANCE AND JUDGMENT (BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG). SO EVERY ONE OF YOU WHO IS PRESENT (AT HIS HOME) DURING THAT MONTH SHOULD SPEND IT IN FASTING, BUT IF ANY ONE IS ILL, OR ON A JOURNEY, THE PRESCRIBED PERIOD (SHOULD BE MADE UP) BY DAYS LATER. ALLAH INTENDS EVERY FACILITY FOR YOU; HE DOES NOT WANT TO PUT TO DIFFICULTIES. (HE WANTS YOU) TO COMPLETE THE PRESCRIBED PERIOD, AND TO GLORIFY HIM IN THAT HE HAS GUIDED YOU; AND PERCHANCE YE SHALL BE GRATEFUL.

186. WHEN MY SERVANTS ASK THEE CONCERNING ME, I AM INDEED CLOSE TO THEM: I LISTEN TO THE PRAYER OF EVERY SUPPLIANT WHEN HE CALLETH ON ME: LET THEM ALSO, WITH A WILL, LISTEN TO MY CALL, AND BELIEVE IN ME: THAT THEY MAY WALK IN THE RIGHT WAY. (THE COW)

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