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- *Respect for the human race and rights*
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- *Moderation*
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# Abrar

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## Reverberations of Ashur; past and present

The annual Ashura season is fundamentally a religiously-oriented season, but its cultural and political dimensions cannot be overlooked. It is an historic event that altered the course of the early Islamic history. The grandson of Prophet Mohammad was able with his enormous sacrifices to limit the rot that was infecting the youthful Islamic entity created by Mohammad, financed in its infancy by his grandmother's wealth and defended by his father's sword. Islam was the theme that brought together the fragments of Arabia and brightened the horizons of the world. With the blood of the early martyrs like Hamza ibn Abdul Mutallib the slaves started to break the chains, the deaf began to hear and the blind started observing the world. That was the beginning that continued during the life of Mohammad. But soon afterwards tribalism rallied its forces and began to unleash its vengeance against both: Islam and God's messenger. The fifty years prior to Hussain's martyrdom in the year 61 After Hijra (680AD) Islam was subjected to serious distortions by the tribal chiefs who saw their fortunes gradually eroding as more people embrace the new religion sweeping the Arabian peninsula. Imam Hussain took a strategic decision to preserve the genuine identity the religion that his grandfather, Mohammad had established. Martyrs fell in the process until it became impossible for anyone to shake the foundations of Islam. But Hussain realised it was probably late to salvage the whole Mohammadan project which had been relentlessly targeted by the losers. He realised that the Umayyad dynasty had become the rallying axis for those who lost influence or aggrieved by the Islamic emergence.

The other side of the problem was that the Muslims had become largely indifferent to those negative developments. Repression had been institutionalised and reformers were targeted for severe punishment. In the two decades after Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib had been assassinated (in 40AD) violence against non-conformists escalated and took extreme forms of sadism with chopping of the limbs, cutting of tongues, crucifixion, dismemberment and burning. Hussain had to act against the state-sponsored violence, corruption and abandonment of real religion. His vision was that the political system had greatly deteriorated and could not reformed in anyway. The state had become a leviathan, having abandoned Islam as the legal and moral

guidance. When the founder of the tribal system was founded by Mu'awiyah twenty years earlier (40 AH) there was resentment and apprehension but any resistance to this political coup was swiftly crushed. But the situation became worse when Mu'awiyah died in 60AH. He appointed his son, Yazid who was totally unfit to represent Islam as the head of state. Imam Hussain first refused to give allegiance to Yazid, thus starting the most serious challenge to the legitimacy of the whole Umayyad project. He then sought to challenge it openly when he realised that the Muslims had lost the will to challenge injustice and oppression.

By revolting openly Hussain raised the stakes. It was clear that the might of the state would be used to quell any attempt to undermine the Umayyad project. He was ready for that challenge. When he left Mecca towards Iraq where most of his good followers were, he was full of energy, as well as disappointment. But he championed the cause of liberating the mind of the Muslims and enable them to challenge illegitimacy and tribal rule. He wanted the Muslims to rise up to the challenge of upholding Islam and resisting attempts to legitimise a new form of governance based on the tribalism that lacks moral or ethical references. The Imam was the champion of the time and was ready to become the bearer of the reforms and change.

The events of 10th Muharram 61 AH (680 AD) were catastrophic. Major taboos were broken as religious limits were violated by Yazid. Within 24 hours the whole household of Prophet Mohammad was wiped out in most vicious criminal acts. For 14 centuries Hussain has remained the flag bearer of Mohammadan religion, a martyr for his religion, people and humanity at large.



## Worldwide commemorations

The current Ashura season has been marked by Shia Muslims throughout the world in their traditional styles. From Australia and Indonesia in the East to America and Canada in the West millions observed a period of mourning for at least the first ten days of Muharram (the first month of the Islamic calendar) (1st– 10th September). While most of those commemorations passed peacefully there were fatalities in at least two places. The Nigerian army shot mourners in several areas and killed several people. In Iraq a stampede happened on the outskirts of Karbala (the burial place of Imam Hussain, the martyr who is mourned every year) as thousands or mourners were engaged in a traditional run to mark the occasion. On Ashura day (10th September) millions poured to the streets expressing grief to express their horror at what had happened to Prophet Mohammad's grandson, Hussain and at least 72 of his relatives and companions on that fateful day in 680 AD. Chest-beating and other forms of expressions were visible while chanting echoed in cities and towns in almost every country in the world. The epic of Karbala has become a rallying point for the oppressed Shia Muslims who had been targeted over the past 14 centuries for their beliefs and traditions.

In London the Ashura Day was marked by reciting the historic account of that fateful day at most centres of the Shia Muslims. This was followed by two processions starting from Hyde Park; one going through Oxford Street to Trafalgar Square, the other marching westward towards Holland Park.



## Abrar's Ashura programme

The Abrar Islamic Foundation shared the Ashura season with the rest of the world's Shia Muslims, holding daily programmes. For the first nine days of the month, the Abrar's daily programmes started after midday. Noon group prayers were held first, followed with a recitation of the holy Quran. Then a speaker delivered a talk on one aspect of the Ashura events. A special orator followed with another short speech and lamentations. Then

an orator recited poems and other forms of lamentations. The topics covered this year are as follows:

The programme was inaugurated on the first day of the programmes (Sunday 1st September, 1st day of Muharram) was inaugurated by Sheikh Hassan Al Turaiki, the resident Imam of Abrar. He outlined in general terms the Hussaini movement, and how it may be marked annually. It was an attempt to indoctrinate the followers in order to conduct productive methods including deep understanding of the revolt and its religious and political implications. He urged a mixed rational-emotional approach.

On Monday, Dr Saeed Shehabi addressed the concept of "inheritance" as used in a special prayer recited in memory of Imam Hussain. The prayers described Hussain as the inheritor of other prophets: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad. The speaker talked about the concept of inheritance and in people's lives, starting with the material inheritance from deceased parents which has become a source of major legal legislations in the world. He then urged the Muslims to be truthful inheritors of Hussain; his religious commitments, personal morals and behaviour, courage, clarity of purpose, love of others even those who eventually killed him and their religious duties in general.

On the third day, Dr Walid Al Bayati spoke about the concept of sacrifice, citing the words of Zainab bint Ali ibn Abi Talib (Hussain's sister who shared his experience in Karbala and was left to care for the remaining women and children after all men had been slaughtered). She placed her hand under the remains of Hussain and said: God; please accept this sacrifice. He talked about the sacrifice by prophet Ibrahim which fell short of the actual death of Ismael. The speaker presented in an emotional way how Zainab, having lost all her men, remained composed, faithful to God and the cause and presented a role model for women.

Ghanim Jawad addressed the congregation on Wednesday 4th September and talked about the Shia Muslim rituals, drawing a line between rituals and explicit religious performances especially related to Hajj (pilgrimage). He gave a brief history of the development of those rituals from the year 65 AH, four years after the Karbala event when about 1000 men from Kufa, led by Suleiman ibn Surad Al Khaza'ei visited Hussain's grave, cried and pledged to avenge his killing. Then they fought against Yazid's army and most of them were killed. The commemorations of Hussain continued to develop until today.

On Wednesday 5th September Amir Al Basri addressed the session and talked

about two ways of marking the Hussaini events; a rational one that had been adopted by some scholars most notably Murtada Mutahhari and Sayed Mohammad Baqir Al Sadr. The other is the unrestrained approach to the Hussaini revolution whether the exaggeration in the rituals or the demeaning of the characters of revolts. The speaker highlighted the approach of Ayatullah Sistani and how he seeks to rationalise the ways those rituals are conducted.

The sixth speaker was Dr Ali Al Awsie who addressed the phenomena linked to the Hussaini episode. Weeping, he said, is a sign of greatness and strength if it is taken as an expression of the inner feelings of the person. He pointed to the weaknesses of the human souls and how they may be compromised by the money and status. He also discussed the approaches by the Yazidi camp to weaken the resolve of the supporters of Hussain; the use of force and intimidation, financial inducements and political promises.

Sheikh Hatem Abu Daya referred to the responsibilities of believers towards the project of Imam Hussain in opposing oppression and working to uphold justice. His reference is Imam Mahdi, the awaited saviour. What are our duties during his occultation? Imam Hussain wanted to reform the Ummah, the society and not the political system which was beyond reform. The idea of real preaching, creating awareness and upholding the real values of the Imam and Islam are necessary steps to prepare for the eventual emergence of Al Madi.

The last speaker in the series was Dr Sayed Ali Al Saleh who urged the people to be positive when addressing the Karbala episode. He said that the Imam and his followers, by sacrificing themselves for the sake of truth and justice had made a new history to the Muslims. Real believers have made headway in the struggle with falsehood, injustice, dictatorship and corrupt political systems. His positive note was received well by the people who saw in Hussain the beginning of real return to the divine message propagated by Islam through Prophet Mohammad.



## Trump fires foreign policy hawk Bolton

U.S. President Donald Trump abruptly fired his national security adviser John Bolton amid disagreements with his hard-line aide over how to handle foreign policy challenges such as North



Korea, Iran, Afghanistan and Russia.

"I informed John Bolton last night that his services are no longer needed at the White House. I disagreed strongly with many of his suggestions, as did others in the Administration," Trump tweeted on Tuesday, adding that he would name a replacement next week.

Bolton, a leading foreign policy hawk and Trump's third national security adviser, had pressed the president not to let up pressure on North Korea despite diplomatic efforts. Bolton, a chief architect of Trump's strident stance against Iran, had also argued against Trump's suggestions of a possible meeting with the Iranian leadership and advocated a tougher approach on Russia and, more recently, Afghanistan. The announcement followed an acrimonious conversation on Monday that included their differences over Afghanistan, said a source familiar with the matter.

The 70-year-old Bolton, who took up the post in April 2018, replacing H.R. McMaster, had also often been at odds with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a Trump loyalist.

## ISESCO calls for adopting a new approach to fight literacy

In its statement on the occasion of the International Literacy Day, celebrated on 8 September each year, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) called on its 54 member states to strengthen their capacities and join efforts towards achieving literacy.

The ISESCO noted, that should come as part of the recommendations of the World Education Forum held in Dakar in 2000, so as to adopt a new approach to achieve the principle of education for all, alongside integrating literacy programs at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 on (Promoting constant, inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all, full and productive employment, and providing decent work for all).

The statement of ISESCO indicated that the recent studies and specialized reports made by its experts within the framework of the new vision of the Organiza-

tion affirm the strong link between education and economic growth, given that education is among the production factors that contribute to the increase of commercial growth rate through the correlation between the average level of education of the population and the annual growth of the gross domestic product per capita.

## U.S. senators renew pressure on Saudis with focus on Yemen

Republican and Democratic U.S. senators revived an effort to pressure Saudi Arabia over human rights, by pushing the country to fulfil its commitment to provide \$750 million this year to help the people of Yemen, according to a letter seen by Reuters on Wednesday.

The letter sent on Tuesday to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman acknowledged past Saudi contributions for aid in Yemen, but said the Saudis have provided just a small share of a current \$750 million commitment.

The letter added that the United Nations was counting on that funding for programs to provide vaccinations, food, fuel and medicine.

"If funding is not received by the end of October, 5 million people - in a country facing the largest cholera outbreak in modern history - will lose access to clean water," the letter said.

The war in Yemen, where the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates lead an air campaign against Iran-backed Houthi rebels, is considered one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters.

U.N. officials have called out several countries for failing to meet aid commitments. On Aug. 21, the world body warned that 22 "life-saving" aid programs in Yemen would be forced to close if countries' funds were not provided.

The letter was led by Democratic Senator Chris Murphy and Republican Senator Todd Young, who are among the most vocal U.S. lawmakers pressing for a strong U.S. response to Saudi Arabia over its human rights record, including its role in the war in Yemen.

## Former Turkish PM breaks ties with Erdogan, ruling Party

Turkey's former prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu, once President Tayyip Erdogan's closest ally, said on Friday he resigned from the ruling AK Party and again criticised its ability to govern, though he did not immediately launch a new party as expected.

"The AK Party, which has fallen under the control of a small team, no longer has the ability to be a solution to our country's problems," Davutoglu told a press conference in Ankara.

"It is evident that there is no internal evaluation, that the channels for...negotiations are closed, and that there is no possibility of an internal change," he added.

Five other lawmakers resigned from the AK Party (AKP) alongside

Davutoglu, 60. The party had earlier taken disciplinary action against him over his criticism of its policies, and was expected to soon dismiss him.

"In order to prevent the AK Party's loyal base from living through the sadness of seeing their own chairman dismissed, we are resigning from our party, for which we gave years of brow sweat and guidance," added Davutoglu, a professor.

The AKP, which has governed Turkey since 2002, did not immediately respond publicly to the resignation.

## 'You will never break our will' - Palestinians to Netanyahu

Palestinians tilling the fertile Jordan Valley said on Wednesday they have been rooted for generations to the West Bank land that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to annex, and they vowed never to give it up.

"We tell Netanyahu, and whoever follows him, you will not break the Palestinians' will, you will never break our will, never, never," said Hassan Al-Abedi, a 55-year-old farmer who lives in the village of Jiftlik.

"It's our parents' and grandparents' land. We will hold onto it no matter what it costs."

The right-wing Netanyahu announced on Tuesday that he plans to "apply Israeli sovereignty" to the Jordan Valley and adjacent northern Dead Sea if he prevails in what is shaping up as a tough battle for re-election on Sept. 17.

The plan drew condemnation from Arab leaders and from Palestinians, who seek to establish a state in all of the Israeli-occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The office of U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the plan "would constitute a serious violation of international law."



Protesters in the West Bank hold signs during a demonstration against the Israeli government's plan to annex the Jordan Valley.

## Ashura reminds us that Islam is an integral part of the Abrahamic tradition

By Hussain Makke, 10/09/2019

Islam, far from being an alien Eastern religion, is an integral part of the Abrahamic tradition that binds Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This shared heritage connects more than half of the world's population and is a crucial tool in our efforts to increase co-existence in the world.

This makes it all the more tragic that many of the events that unite the three religions are eclipsed by divisive - or even downright racist - rhetoric pushed out by the Far Right. First amongst these events is Ashura, which falls today. This event is commemorated by Muslims and followers of other religions, even including some Hindus who are known as Hussaini Brahmins.

Ashura is the annual commemoration of the murder of Imam Hussain, the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, at the hands of Yazid, an early ruler of the brutal Umayyad dynasty. It was an event that happened 1300 years ago, but many Muslims see it as the culmination of Islam's Abrahamic heritage and a pivotal date in world history.

Ashura is a date in the Muslim tradition that has been significant in the lives of patriarchs revered in what is often termed the Judeo-Christian tradition. Starting with Adam, through to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, all those Prophets have had, from the perspective of many Muslims, huge life events on the day of Ashura.

Both the raising of Jesus' soul to heaven (analogous to the crucifixion in Christian belief), and the splitting of the Red Sea by Moses (celebrated by Jews during Passover) are believed by many Muslims to have occurred on Ashura, the tenth day of the month of Muharram in the Islamic calendar.

And the themes of the slaughter of Imam Hussain are universal enough that they can help non-Muslims relate to Islam in a way that can sometimes be difficult in the current climate.

It is important that as Muslims around the world remember this date, broader society embraces it as an interfaith event. As a tragedy that belongs not only to Muslims, but to all of humanity. Imam Hussain's stand for social justice was driven by his faith; he knew that he and his 70-plus followers (many of whom were women and children from his family) had no chance of surviving

the assault by the Umayyad army. But it was essential for him to take a stand, regardless of the outcome.

Acting out of principle to make the world a better place is key to the Jewish belief of Tikkun Olam, repairing a broken world.

Similarly, the Prophet's family's ultimate sacrifice is an image many Christians can readily identify with. Suffering and penance are a key part of Christian belief, and the bloody reality of Imam Hussain and his family being murdered in cold blood by a powerful military force is closely analogous to the Romans and their crucifixion of Jesus in the Christian tradition.

It is important that as Muslims around the world remember this date, broader society embraces it as an interfaith event. As a tragedy that belongs not only to Muslims, but to all of humanity.

Muslims love Imam Hussein and the Prophet Muhammad's family, not only because they are descendants of Muhammad, but because they are descendants of Abraham.

We often hear about the "Judeo-Christian" tradition, but in fact it is the Judeo-Christian-Muslim, i.e. Abrahamic, tradition. "Judeo-Christian" has become a euphemism for Western culture, the exclusion of Muslims from this heritage a subtle hint of the kind of Eurocentric supremacy that has damaged so much of the world in the 20th century - and must be kept at bay in the 21st.

The murder of the Prophet's family on Ashura changed the course not only of Islam, but of world history.

The struggle between the divine and the temporal, justice and tyranny, truth and falsehood is a fight that continues to this day, not only in the Islamic world, but across all major faith traditions and cultures.

This is a struggle that Muslims are embarking upon, along with their fellow believers from Christianity, Judaism and other faith traditions. This makes it all the more unfortunate

that Islamophobia is taking root amongst some camps of Evangelical Christians and conservative Jewish groups.

We are all up against the same wall, and it is high time we worked together for the shared causes of social justice and reform.

*Hussain Makke completed a Master's degree in Religion and Global Politics at SOAS University of London before going on to study at the Islamic Seminary in Lebanon. He is producing the documentary feature *In Search of the Sacred*."*



## Iraq Stampede kills 31

A walkway collapsed and set off a stampede in the holy city of Karbala on Tuesday as thousands of Shiite Muslims marked one of the most solemn holy days of the year. At least 31 people were killed and about 100 were injured, officials said.

It was the deadliest stampede in recent history during Ashoura commemorations, when hundreds of thousands of people converge on the city, some 80 kilometers (50 miles) south of Baghdad, for the occasion every year.

The stampede happened toward the end of the Ashoura procession, causing a panicked rush among worshippers near the gold-domed Imam Hussein shrine, according to two officials who spoke to The Associated Press from Karbala.

Afdhal al-Shami, a shrine official, denied that there was a collapse or any cracks in the walkway. "It was a stampede that led to this incident," he said.

Mohammed Shenin Jebir, a pilgrim, said everything happened very suddenly. "Visitors suddenly fell on the ground and there was a strong stampede, there were many pilgrims who all fell on top of each other," he said, speaking after being treated at the Hussein Medical City in Karbala for cuts and bruises above his right eye.

The somber day of Ashoura commemorates the killing of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Imam Hussein, by a rival Muslim faction in Karbala in what is now Iraq, in 680 A.D. Hussein and his descendants are seen by Shiites as the rightful heirs to the prophet.

In recent years, Ashoura processions have been attacked by extremist Sunni militants. In 2004, at the height of Iraq's sectarian violence, 143 people were killed in near-simultaneous suicide and other bombings at shrines in Baghdad and Karbala during the Ashoura procession.

In 2005, rumors of a suicide bomber among worshippers crossing a bridge during a different religious holiday caused a massive stampede killing more than 950 people, many of whom jumped, in their panic, into the Tigris River. The commemorations were peaceful until the walkway collapsed, triggering the chaos.



## Karbala: unprecedented story of courage

*Huzaima Bukhari*

“O’ God! Surely you know that whatever we did was not a competition to gain worldly positions and worthless physical attractions of the world but to show the true religious ways and to remove corruption from your lands, so that the oppressed feel secured and act according to your teachings and rules.”-

*Imam Hussain AS.*

When people plan to take a big risk in life there are many things they usually consider before taking the leap. What could be the possible outcomes are among the first thoughts. Hope of success and fear of failure keeps looming over the horizons of optimism and apprehension. Both positive and negative ideas keep baffling the mind. How would others react; or in their endeavour to achieve something would they be putting at stake other people’s future. Many mixed thoughts result in sleepless nights in trying to strike a balance between the pros and cons of any precarious decision. These risks can pertain to change of job or career, a new business, a new marriage, migration to a different country, a long cherished adventure that could be life threatening and many more. To do or not to do remains the question.

So, before venturing on a perilous path, a number of precautionary measures are contemplated to prevent damage or reduce harm to the minimum before the occurrence of an event. These maybe in the form of some kind of guarantees, defences, legal advice, contingency provisions, protection or such other action to diminish chances of regret. In the days of monarchs, anyone desirous of openly speaking his mind in the court would seek assurance of his life being spared before he dared utter words that could invoke the king’s wrath. Even today, those babbling dissenting or boisterous voices either do it in a way that their real identities remain hidden because the easily identifiable ones are sure to suffer for their brazenness.

Courage is a characteristic that very few are actually blessed with. Our ability to take risks is proportionate to the precautionary steps that we can undertake. The concept of ‘leap of faith’ is considered to be a gamble the result of which is uncertain. It could make or break but the fact is that all acts of valour, discoveries, innovations and inventions, bringing riches and fame sprout from determination and courage. Many an act of so-called imprudence sometimes have consequences that leave the people totally perplexed. Their expectations of a downfall are

met with untold avalanche of fortune for the brave, who had the nerve to take risk.

Majority of the peoples of this world are those who prefer status quo over agitation or struggle to change. A happy-go-lucky life-style in which there is some consistency, no outside interference and a reasonably comfortable living is what many run after. Once this is achieved, then the quest for any form of insurrection is pushed behind. It is of no concern to them if there are others who could benefit from their support or co-operation or even some words of encouragement. They are least bothered about whatever is going on around them so long as it does not affect their lives. Contrary to such nonchalant people are ones whose life is courage personified. For them principles are more important than their own lives and that of their loved ones. They are the ones who can step up and speak for the rights of others without once thinking about any adverse effects on them. Totally unmindful about their own interests, they are willing to sacrifice their possessions and even lay down their lives.

History has seen one such person in the form of Imam Hussain AS, the hero of Karbala, the king without a worldly throne, the defender of principles and the epitome of Islam. He defied a tyrant named Yazid who was bent upon spreading corrupt practices, making lives of the people a living hell, unjustly using public property, destroying the moral fabric of society and above all distorting the image of Islam. These were intolerant acts but there were silent spectators all around because if anyone in the kingdom boldly pointed his finger at this insanity, he was immediately eliminated. No ruler is ever brought down by the effort of just one. It is only when there is true public outburst and the nation unites to fight that matters start taking a turn.

Armed with the important tenet of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong (amr bil-ma’ruf and nahy ?anil-

munkar) Imam Hussain AS along with his small army comprising his close family members, including women and children, and friends, proceeded to face one of the most unique battles ever recorded in the annals of human history. His unwavering courage and that of his companions have left such indelible marks that despite the efforts of their enemies, these are getting more and more etched in the hearts and souls of people.

For as long as he could, Imam Hussain AS used his full strength to avert conflict and bloodshed, raising the flag of humanity and preaching forbearance but when things got out of control, when sense got overcome with madness, when thirst for blood got the better of the brute forces, when words fell on deaf ears, when efforts to direct the misled towards a dignified life failed, then he was left with no option but to take up arms. He sacrificed himself and his family members-from the eldest to the youngest (six months old Ali Asghar AS)-but refused to surrender to injustice and cruelty.

Many a martyr has found a high place in history but none has been celebrated the way Imam Hussain AS has been for centuries. None has been revered by followers of all leading religions, none has shown a steadfast character in the event of witnessing the brutal killings of near and dear ones, picking up mutilated bodies from the battle field, anticipating the enemy’s ruthlessness with the women and children after his martyrdom. His cause of establishing peace and harmony in society as against snatching the throne, was paramount to his fortitude. It was this impetus that led him to the ultimate sacrifice. A number of scholars and critics have questioned his prudence and level of risk in taking along women and innocent children but there was an important reason. Had he not done so, no one would have known the real facts of Karbala and the whole episode would have been distorted to be depicted as the defeat of a rebel.

The entire harem of the great Imam AS signified courage, spiritual strength and a resolve that can never be imitated by the weak. Hazrat Zainab’s AS oratory in the full court of Yazid speaks volumes about her bravery and faith in the cause of her brother because of which this great sacrifice is remembered year after year after year.



## Boris Johnson refused to apologize for 'racist' comments about Muslim women

In his first Prime Minister's Questions, Boris Johnson came under fire for "racist" comments he has made in the past.

Opposition Member of Parliament Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese, who is Sikh and wears a turban, demanded that the prime minister apologize for comments about Muslim women in a newspaper column in August 2018.

Johnson wrote that women who wear the burka look like "letter boxes" in a column for The Telegraph newspaper last year, a month after he resigned as the UK's foreign secretary.

Dhese asked "when will the prime minister finally apologise for his derogatory and racist remarks ... which have led to a spike in hate crime?" He also asked when the Prime Minister would order an inquiry into allegations of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party. Earlier this month, the Conservative Party chairman James Cleverly committed to such an inquiry.

"For those of us who from a young age have had to endure and put up with being called names such as towelhead or Taliban or coming from Bongo-Bongo Land, we can appreciate the hurt and pain felt by already vulnerable Muslim women when they are described as looking like bank robbers and letterboxes."

(MORE: Churchill's grandson and 20 other MPs expelled from the Conservative Party for voting against hard Brexit)

ABCNews.com

VIDEO: Parliament and Prime Minister Boris Johnson at war over Brexit Dhese's comments come two days after non-profit The MAMA Project, which measures anti-Muslim attacks in the U.K., issued a report in which they said there was a spike in incidents reported to them after Johnson's column was published -- from eight incidents the previous week to 38 anti-Muslim attacks the week following publication.

Johnson's August column, titled "Denmark has got it wrong. Yes, the burka is oppressive and ridiculous -- but that's still no reason to ban it" argued that it was not a sensible political strategy to ban the burka, while at the same time using language that many found offensive.

"It is absolutely ridiculous that people should choose to go around looking like letter boxes," he wrote. He also compared women who choose to cover their faces to bank robbers.

His remarks prompted dozens of complaints and he was called on to apologize by Theresa May, the Prime Minister and head of the Conservative party at the time, the BBC reported. However, a panel convened to assess whether he had broken the Conservative code of conduct found that he had not.

Victim Support, another British non-profit organization who assist victims of hate crimes told ABC News that in 2018 they "offered information and support to around 25,000 people who had experienced hate crime, the majority of which was racially or religiously motivated, which is an increase of 23% on the previous year."

(MORE: British lawmakers rule out no-deal Brexit, reject Prime Minister Boris Johnson's election plan)

Diana Fawcett, Chief Executive of Victim Support said that "We know that hate crime is still underreported and one of the main reasons is that victims fear they won't be taken seriously."

The Prime Minister, who has only been in the job since July, refused to apologize for his remarks saying that "If he took the trouble to read the article in question, he would see that it was a strong liberal defense ... of everybody's right to wear whatever he wants in this country."

Johnson went on to say that he had Muslim ancestors and was related to Sikhs while retorting that the Labour Party should look into its own history of anti-Semitism.

## Woman' voice shakes tyranny

Zainab's Address in the Court of Yazid

Though the story of the Lord's face has six facets

I who am the inheritor of the Lord

Arrive to stand with naked head among the riot of enemies

Now you are facing

The progeny of Haidar-e-Karrar

I will narrate the facts about the thirsty ones

How darkness became a permanent abode

I also clarify and examine the army of tyranny

I take the oath upon death not to take mercy on me

These daughters of the Prophet have come with heads uncovered

In your court today

After the journey to Kufa and Syria

I know you are not destined for victory

I ask based on what arrogance after all did you

Sever

The blessed neck of the sovereign king For the offering of the seventy-two martyrs of Nineveh

You are not about to be elevated

The Judge on Doomsday recognizes your register of deeds

The collar of humiliation indeed knows your cruelty

We are Syedanis

Do not consider us helpless

We possess the desire for the power of endurance

By the grace of Asadullah this pride we possess

We cannot be the ones slain on the path of the hunted

We are oppressed, but cannot be afflicted

You dare not remember the Prophet's family's sincerity

Sellers of truth! Neither did you remember shame and modesty

You indeed let the children die of thirst

You made the sovereign king restless, by isolating him

Life will not let you rest Yazid

I am indeed the sister of the oppressed, look at me

You Yazids will never rest in peace

The faith of the Muslims will never taste defeat



## Forever Karbala; Imam Husayn and the enduring conflict

by Frank Julian Gelli

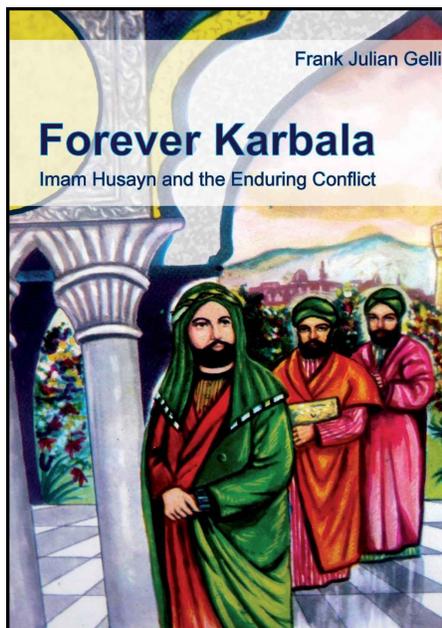
This book is written by a Christian priest who has been mixing with Muslims in UK for many years. He has also had first hand personal experiences with the Shia Islam, through his social and interfaith work. Moreover, Father Frank Gelli has travelled to several places and visited holy shrines in Iran and Iraq. He has been particularly attracted to the epic of Karbala because of his personal character that has been characterized by love of freedom, support of those who struggle to achieve it and the spiritual dimensions of Imam Hussain himself. One aspect of the events of Karbala in the year 680 had attracted his attention; the presence of some Christians among the group of Hussain's supporters, and their eventual martyrdom. One these, according to him is Wahab al-Kalbi, who, he claims, was A Christian.

So he embarked on writing this book.

In the opening chapter, Father Gelli says: I owe my joyful discovery of Wahab al-Kalbi to a play. One of a special kind, called Tazieh. A theatrical genre characteristic of Persian culture. To see it, I had no need to fly to Tehran or Isfahan, only to travel by Virgin Train to Leicester, an English city in the East Midlands, 101 miles North of Lon-

don. The local community of Khoja Shia Muslims had invited me to attend their Ashura service. The final culmination of the first ten days of the month of Muharram to Muslims is called Ashura".

He further adds: Tazieh plays were and still are the people's theatre. The actions they enact powerfully affect the



spectator. I found myself mesmerized in watching them. It was my first, unforgettable encounter with the sacred drama of Islam, Music, trumpets and drums accompanied the performance. An emotion-stirring feature, also giving the lie to the canard that the Qur'an forbids the use of musical instruments." As for his attraction to the Christian dimension of Ashura, the author says: A moving scene from the play has haunted my imagination ever since. Al-Kalbi after his capture is tied with heavy iron chains to a a kind of wooden yoke shaped like an X, like a rudimentary St Andrew's cross. The executioner stands by, ready to strike the victim with a huge axe. The young, innocent-looking Al-Kalbi wears a bizarre body armour, a bloodied collar, while a spiked, Prussian-style helmet lies discarded on the ground. A weeping woman kneels at this beet, her hands covering her face. Nearby is the hero's shield, with a cross engraved on it. That bold detail struck me. A cliché assumption is that Muslims are deadly enemies of the cross, that they cannot stand even the sight of it. But there before me was one the chief heroes of this artful Islamic play, portrayed with the emblem of his faith in full evidence.

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## Sites of Pluralism: Community Politics in the Middle East

By Firat Oruc

Scholars and policymakers, struggling to make sense of the ongoing chaos in the Middle East, have focused on the possible causes of the escalation in both inter-state and intra-state conflict. But the Arab Spring has shown the urgent need for new ways to frame difference, both practically and theoretically.

For some, a fundamental incompatibility between different ethno-linguistic and religious communities lies at the root of these conflicts; these divisions are thought to impede any form of political resolution or social cohesion. But little work has been done to explore how these tensions manifest themselves in the communities of the Middle East.

Sites of Pluralism fills this significant gap, going beyond a narrow focus on 'minorities' to examine the larger canvas of community politics in the Middle East. Through eight case studies from esteemed experts in law, education, history, architecture, anthropology and political science, this multi-disciplinary volume offers a critical view of the Middle East's diverse, pluralistic fabric: how it has evolved throughout history; how it influences current political, eco-

nomic and social dynamics; and what possibilities it offers for the future.

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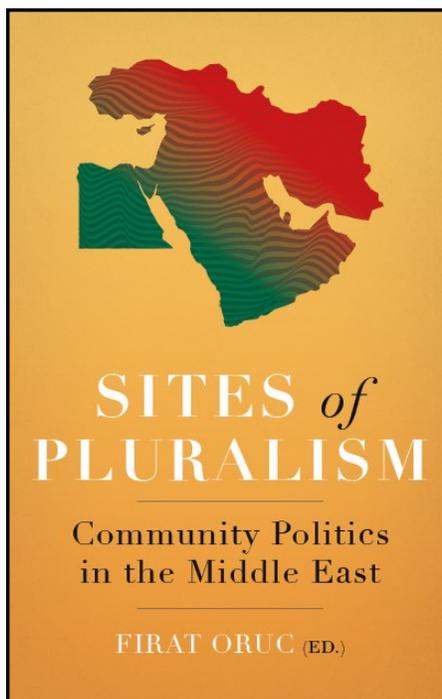
Foreign Service in Qatar. He specialises in cultural studies of the Middle East, global literatures, and world cinema.

Reviews

'Across the Arab world, communities defined by ethnicity, tribe, religion and sect experience differential treatment politically, economically and socially. What explains such disparity? Sites of Pluralism is a timely volume addressing this question through numerous, detailed case studies.' — Steven Vertovec, Director, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

'Oruc's timely edited collection highlights the limitations of a Statist approach to understanding the Middle East and its interlocking identities. With well-written pieces by leading authorities, coherently welded together, the book provides fresh insights into long-standing conundrums.' — Joshua Castellino, Executive Director, Minority Rights Group International, and Professor of Law, Middlesex University  
Publisher: Hurst

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13. HE IT IS WHO SHOWETH YOU HIS SIGNS, AND SENDETH DOWN SUSTENANCE FOR YOU FROM THE SKY: BUT ONLY THOSE RECEIVE AD-MONITION WHO TURN (TO ALLAH..

14. CALL YE, THEN, UPON ALLAH WITH SINCERE DEVOTION TO HIM, EVEN THOUGH THE UNBELIEVERS MAY DETEST IT.

15. RAISED HIGH ABOVE RANKS (OR DEGREES), (HE IS) THE LORD OF THE THRONE (OF AUTHORITY): BY HIS COMMAND DOTH HE SEND THE SPIRIT (OF INSPIRATION) TO ANY OF HIS SERVANTS HE PLEASES, THAT IT MAY WARN (MEN) OF THE DAY OF MUTUAL MEETING, -

16. THE DAY WHERE-ON THEY WILL (ALL) COME FORTH: NOT A SINGLE THING CONCERNING THEM IS HIDDEN FROM ALLAH, WHOSE WILL BE THE DOMINION THAT DAY?" THAT OF ALLAH, THE ONE THE IRRESISTIBLE!

17. THAT DAY WILL EVERY SOUL BE REQUITED FOR WHAT IT EARNED; NO INJUSTICE WILL THERE BE THAT DAY, FOR ALLAH IS SWIFT IN TAKING ACCOUNT.

(THE BELIEVER)

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## Ashura: How reflecting on Hussein's sacrifice made me honest

Will somebody turn off that alarm?!

As my alarm clock rang, feelings of insecurity began to run through my skin. My body turned cold and the hairs on my arm raised as a thought entered my mind — was my final presentation this morning? “Man. This is 35 percent of my grade,” I thought to myself. I quickly ran to my computer to check the syllabus, and to my dismay, I was right. How could this have slipped my mind? I started to draft an email to my professor, and thoughts of Hussein’s sacrifice in Karbala began to surface...

Long ago, Hussein, a distinguished spiritual leader in Arabia faced an incredible challenge: accept the rule of a wicked tyrant and live, or reject the immoral leadership and be martyred? Hussein was no ordinary cleric. His grandfather, the Prophet of Islam, denoted Hussein as a “Chief of the Youth of Paradise.” As a result of Hussein’s authority, Yazid, the newly appointed leader of the Muslim Ummah (nation) required the allegiance of Hussein in order to be effective. However, Hussein accepting the leadership of Yazid would mean legitimizing a corrupt drunkard who engaged in pedophilia among other vices.

Pressure was put on Hussein to accept the authority of Yazid; the climax of which occurred in the desert of Karbala, when Hussein and his group of 120 friends and family were surrounded by the forces of Yazid, numbering in more than 30,000 (yes, that is the right number of zeros). At this point, Hussein was posed a final ultimatum: accept the leadership of Yazid or be mercilessly butchered.

On the 10th of Muharram (first month of the Islamic calendar) in the year 680 C.E., Hussein and his companions were murdered. The forces of Yazid spared no one, even decapitating the 6-month-old baby of Hussein. Once dead, the bodies of Hussein and his companions were trampled by horses, and the women of Hussein’s family were paraded over 500 kilometers and imprisoned. While Hussein and his family were killed on that Muharram 10th day, known as Ashura, a message of righteousness and reformation was born.

Bidding Good

As a child, I would watch superhero’s on TV say, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” However, the story of Hussein is not one of imagination; rather, a real life super hero who spurred a revolution, founded on the idea of standing up for good, no matter what the price. After the death

of Hussein, the lay people within the Muslim Ummah woke up to the atrocities of their government. Yazid’s reign was soon toppled, lasting only three years.

In the second chapter of the Quran (verses 155-158), God promises that every person will be tested with challenges. He further says, in order to be successful during these challenging periods, one must remain patient, believing “to God I belong, and to him I shall return.”

Frequently, one might feel a sense of control or ownership. However, God indicates in the above verse that there is little that is under our control and in fact, we don’t even own our bodies. In effect, the only thing that we control, and have ownership over, is our actions.

When we are put into challenging situations, and are tested, our goal should be to control what we can control — our actions. The rest should be put onto the shoulders of God such that we may remain patient, assuming that justice will be dealt. While Hussein was killed on the day of Ashura, his message of righteousness has survived more than 1,400 years, a clear indication of victory.

Hypocrisy

It is notable to distinguish that the lives of Hussein and his companions were taken by the hands of other Muslims. In fact, a striking metaphor can be drawn from this situation as the majority of Muslims on the sands of Karbala were not on the side of righteousness that tragic day. Hussein and his companions numbered fewer than 200, while the opposition was more than 30,000. Hussein was reported to have said that “as long as people live favorable and comfortable lives, they are loyal to religious [moral] principles. However, at hard times, the times of trials, true religious [moral] people are scarce.”

A “hard time” certainly made its way into my life as I contemplated what to write my professor. Missing the final presentation would certainly mean failure. However, the initial thought of crafting an elaborate excuse to somehow justify my forgetfulness vanished. Instead, I used the opportunity to define my character with honesty — fessing up to the mistake and embracing the spirit of Hussein’s stand for righteousness on the sands of Karbala.

The result? My professor replied, noting that I was the first student to have missed the final presentation without an elaborate excuse; appreciating my honesty, she let me give the presentation second!

You can take a guess at who set the curve. :-)

